australian UCator

Summer 2011/12 Issue 72 \$4.40 Leading by example

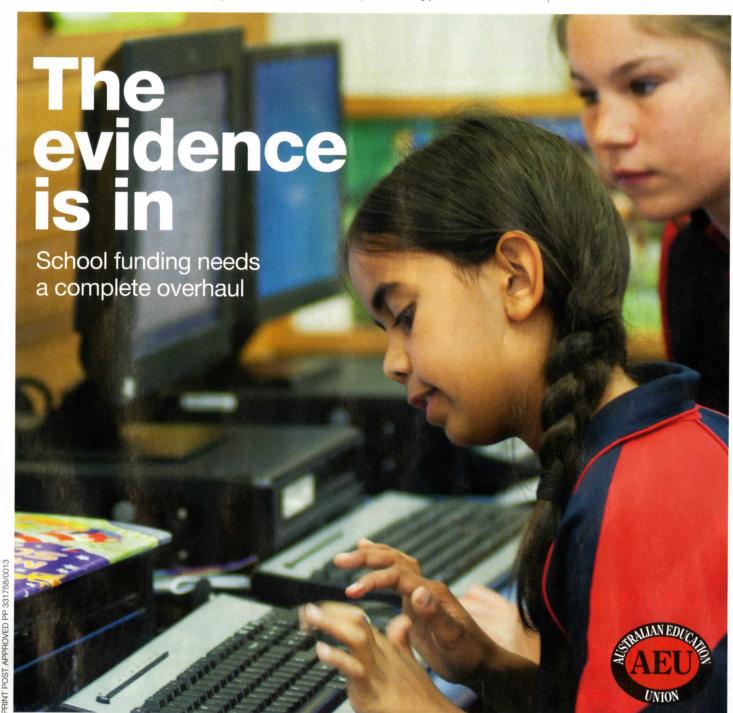
Influencing the climate change debate

The gender trap

Challenging sexual stereotypes

Broadcast news

The power of internet radio



Environment

Tree change

Students at hundreds of Australian schools are involved in DeforestACTION, a global environmental campaign with a captivating range of educational spin-offs.

by Cynthia Karena

Briefly

- Australian students are strongly supporting DeforestACTION, which focuses on saving wildlife habitats in Borneo.
- Teachers are encouraged to involve their students in the technology-driven project's innovative activities.
- Activities include monitoring atrisk blocks of forest by satellite.

layton Carnes, the principal of Hermit Park State School in Townsville, was at an education conference in Brazil two years ago when former World Bank vice-president Jean-François Rischard said the fate of future generations depended on the capacity to address 20 pressing global issues.

"As educators, we thought there must be something we can do," says Carnes. "There must be a better way for students to make a difference other than writing letters to local parliamentarians. We wanted to put students in the driving seat, to think big and dream big."

When the 20 issues were presented to

students in many countries including Australia, they thought deforestation was the most important.

DeforestACTION was formed as a result. A partnership between Canadian youth social action group TakingITGlobal and Microsoft, it uses technology to encourage young people to become informed about deforestation and find solutions. DeforestACTION's ultimate goal is to stop deforestation and create permanent habitats for species that depend on forest ecosystems. Its initial focus is the Indonesian portion of Borneo.

The project has grown quickly to involve at least 50,000 students in 35 countries, including students at more than 350 schools in Australia. Its website has a teachers' guide with suggestions on how to use its virtual classroom tools.

Endangered species

At Taroona High School in Hobart, DeforestACTION is integrated into geography and environmental studies, and English lessons include reading *Escape to Kalimantan*, a novel which explores the destruction of Borneo's wilderness and wildlife.

"Logging and monoculture farming of palm oil in Indonesia is endangering orang-utans and other species," says Roxanne Pritchard, a Year 7 English and society and history teacher at Taroona.

The school recently held an International Ranga Day to raise awareness. It included a conference with politicians Andrew Wilkie and Christine Milne, and representatives of Forestry Tasmania and the Wilderness Society.

Pritchard says the conference was streamed live online to schools around the world and to key DeforestACTION members in London. It also had an open Skype session.

Milne took the opportunity to announce her palm oil labelling bill at the conference, and later, in the Senate, she highlighted Taroona High School's involvement in DeforestACTION.

The school uses
Facebook, Twitter,
Illuminate, Windows Live and
Skype to communicate with
students and teachers globally.
Students have set up two
DeforestACTION Facebook accounts,
Tazz D'ville and Orrie Anotan.

"Orrie has gone viral on Facebook and Twitter," says Pritchard. "He has over 2,000 friends around the world, including the CEO of TakingITGlobal."

Varsity College, on the Gold Coast, is participating in DeforestACTION in response to student requests for more relevant learning experiences.

"It's all about giving students real-life opportunities," says principal Jeff Davis. "Embracing these programs allows students to see that their actions can change the future of the world."

Next year, Year 9 students will be given a block of land to monitor using the satellite technology Earthwatchers, which is available through DeforestACTION.

"From their classrooms and homes, students will be able to check their parcel of land and report suspected illegal logging or other disturbances," says Year 9 maths and science teacher Kelly Rabelink. "Project leaders on the ground in Borneo will investigate student concerns about 'at risk' parcels and supply evidence to local authorities.





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Hermit Park State School Principal

The aim is to prosecute offenders and put an end to illegal operations that are pushing orang-utans to the brink of extinction."

Land blocks neighbouring the Varsity blocks are monitored by schools from Canada, Hong Kong, France and the Netherlands.

Orang-utan rescue

W 000

Dallas Brooks Community Primary School in Melbourne takes part in a monthly global videoconference where adult DeforestACTION 'eco-warriors' talk about what it's like being on the ground in Indonesia.

> "Last month they showed us a baby orang-utan they rescued from pet trafficking," says campus principal Amanda Henning.

Students created an online shop to support the sanctuary.

"It took learning in so many different ways," says Henning. "Because of copyright and

royalties, students developed their own orang-utan artwork and logos to be used on products sold online." The students investigated the reasons behind the Indonesian logging, made a video on the issue – *Our World Wrapped Up* – and posted it on YouTube.

"They started with deforestation – why do we chop down trees? Then they became interested in the issue of carbon footprints, which led to investigating the effects of packaging on the local and global environments."

Other Dallas students made and sold 'meringue-utans' to raise money for DeforestACTION projects. TakingIT Global is holding all money raised by schools in trust until it has enough to replant a section of Indonesian forest for an orang-utan haven. •

Cynthia Karena is a freelance writer.



Resources

- http://www.tigweb.org/tiged/projects/ deforestaction
- http://store.tigweb.org/files/ DFAGuide.pdf
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v= HjsuAc-n8-E

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