



School population audit

What you are auditing?

You will determine the size of the school population. This includes students, staff and visitors during school time; those people that live at the school; and, also others who use the school after hours, on weekends and during the school holidays.

Why are you auditing it?

By making an accurate estimate of the size of the school population you can determine the average footprint of the school per person with greater confidence. You can then compare it to the average Australian footprint of 7.2 hectares. The population figures you enter into the calculator are also used in the calculations for other sections of the footprint.

Regular community use of the school, including night classes, sporting activities and weekend church services also contribute to the size of the schools ecological footprint. This use can have positive and negative impacts on the schools footprint. For example, if night classes are a regular activity at your school the footprint impact from consumable resources such as energy usage will increase. However, the impact from non-consumable resources such as buildings and equipment will decrease as it is now spread out over more people. Rather than build another school for use at night or a new church it is more sustainable to reuse existing resources.

How do you do it?

1. For this Audit we recommend that you arrange a meeting with the principal or the administration office manager.
2. The school should have an official record of the school population including both staff and students. The number of people that live at the school should also be available. Note both these figures in your Eco'tude journal.
3. Most schools require visitors and contractors to sign a visitors book or they may keep some other type of record. Ask permission to look at the visitors book. Select a period in the book (a month is good, a term is even better) and calculate the average number of visitors per school day in this period. Note any major anomalies (public holidays, school fair days, building works). If your school does not have a visitors book you may like to undertake a survey of visitors and contractors entering the school.

4. Investigate if the school is used for evening activities and note them down for each day. Evening activities could be wide ranging and may include adult education, scouts and guides meetings, sport training, dance classes etc. Avoid including one off events. Against each activity determine the number of people attending. You might have access to actual numbers, be given another person to contact or you can make a best guess estimate based on the nature of the activity. Determine the average number of people per school day.
5. Combine the results for step 3 and 4 together and note it in your journal.
6. Investigate if the school is used on the weekends and school holidays. Typical weekend activities include sport, church services, adult education. During the school holidays the school may be used for vacation care activities. A person who works during these periods may also be able to help out with this question such as a care taker or gardener and don't forget to include these people in the answer as well! As with evening use avoid one off events as we are after a typical day. Against each activity determine the number of people attending. You might have access to actual numbers, be given another person to contact or you can make a best guess estimate based on the nature of the activity. Determine the average number of people for a typical non-school day. Note this figure in your Eco'tude journal.
7. Enter your results into the online calculator. How has the footprint changed from your best guess trial.

Taking it further

You might like to record the following statistical data: sex; Non English speaking background (NESB); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI); disabilities. Why would this information be useful in assessing the overall sustainability of your school?