

Evaluation Report

Speaking 4 the Planet



2017

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submit with pleasure my
evaluation report of the 2017
Speaking 4 the Planet
competition and the pilot Kids 4
Planet competition.

This report collates and analyses the separate evaluations of each
competition. The individual evaluations gathered data from surveys and
interviews of participating teachers, students and sponsors/ supporters/
community members.

The responses show that the 2017 Speaking 4 the Planet events and the
inaugural Kids 4 the Planet competition were highly successful. The
feedback also provides advice for enhancing the quality and usefulness of
future events.

If necessary, I would be happy to discuss these findings.

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Syd Smith is a private education consultant who has taught in primary
and secondary schools. In the 70s and 80s, he served as a curriculum
consultant with the NSW Department of Education and in 1990 was
appointed to a director's position on the NSW Central Coast. For a dozen
years, Syd was the CEO of the department's Environmental Education

Unit. He now specializes in the design and evaluation of Environmental and Sustainability Education programs.

Speaking 4 the Planet 2017

This year, Speaking 4 the Planet (S4P) was held in five local government areas. Speaking 4 the Planet is a public speaking, drama and art competition for high school students. The focus of the competition is the UN's World Environment Day theme. For 2017, the theme was Connecting People to Nature.

On 19 May, students came together at Chevalier College to speak and perform on the importance of connecting with nature. Good for individuals, good for communities, good for the planet.

On World Environment Day, 5 June, students from 7 high schools competed in the council chambers at The Hills Shire Council. Students enjoy speaking and performing in a space that is so important for local decision making. The quality of the speeches and performances would easily convince an audience that, one day, some of them may be councilors.

For five years, S4P has been held in the Sutherland Shire. This year, it was at Kirrawee High School and impromptu art was an extra component of the competition.

In the middle of June, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre was the venue for the Liverpool Speaking 4 the Planet competition. This event had music, poetry, drama, art, public speaking and a video made by a student on the local environment.

For the first time, a primary school event, Kids 4 the Planet, was held at Lakemba Public School.

Each event was evaluated and separate reports are available. This report draws out the key findings and messages from across all events. It identifies the major benefits to participants and identifies areas for program improvement.

General evaluation comments

Without doubt, 2017 was a most successful year for Speaking 4 the Planet. The operational principles endorsed by S4P include an incisive and comprehensive evaluation of each local event. The results of the evaluation will be provided to the schools, councils, communities and sponsors involved in the program. This ensures the program has continuous improvement and guarantees to meet the needs of each group. Moreover, it is essential that the activities relating to the program are in line with the Australian Curriculum developed by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). In this way, S4P provides opportunities that

enhance what is currently taught in Australian schools. It also provides teachers with meaningful opportunities to address the Cross Curriculum Priority of Sustainability.

This year, 151 individuals were surveyed: 122 students, 19 teachers, 10 sponsors.

In order to obtain relevant data, a series of questions was put to each group of participants. **Students** were asked:

1. What did you learn from being involved in the Speaking 4 the Planet competition?
2. Did the program help you with your normal school subjects? If yes, how and in which subject?
3. How did the program benefit you in other ways?
4. What was the best part of the day?
5. Would you be interested in participating again next year?
6. How could we improve the program next time?
7. Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Teachers were asked a similar set of questions:

1. Which areas of the curriculum do you think S4P supported and how well did it assist in doing so?
2. What were the best benefits for the students and for your school?
3. Comment on the general organisation of the event both in advance of the day and on the day itself.
4. Can you suggest how the program could be improved for next year?
5. Do you see any opportunity to undertake any follow up activities? What might this be?

Sponsors and community members/business representatives were asked:

1. What was your general impression of the day?
2. Did you learn anything new about teaching and learning in schools and, if so, please tell me what it was?
3. Do you think the students learned anything valuable and, if so, do you think it helped with their general education?

4. If you were a sponsor were you satisfied that your brand was given sufficient promotion and would you consider supporting the event next year? If not, what would you like to see changed in this regard?
5. Anything else you would like to say?

Benefits for Schools and Councils

Teachers noted that the program admirably supported a number of curriculum areas developed by ACARA for the Australian Curriculum. Overall they supported a range of subjects including **Drama, Science, Geography, History, Agriculture, Human Society and its Environment and Multi Media**. Reports confirm that the teacher/student package and the opportunity to research on the UN's World Environment Day theme gave students a different perspective on what they were taught in the classroom, resulting in their becoming more active and motivated in their learning. In addition, the program was seen to enhance a number of competencies nominated by ACARA including **collaboration, writing, speaking, cooperation and critical thinking**. By taking action in a setting where more than one school was involved students were able to learn from each other and appreciate the differences and similarities on how people perceive issues.

It filled a gap not covered by school. Student from the Southern Highlands

The program's major contribution to school curriculum was in the **Cross Curriculum Area of Sustainability**. This is still an area where many teachers say they still need support. Integrating sustainability concepts across curriculum areas is covered effectively at these competitions through **drama, debating** and **art** activities. Because students are asked to deliver speeches, drama or art on the World Environment Day theme, students draw on a range of curriculum areas and make connections at local, regional and global levels.

I learned how we connect with nature and other things. Student from Liverpool.

I learned how we can destroy our world and how we can protect it. Student from Sutherland Shire.

Abnormal consumption has an impact on the environment. Student from the Sutherland Shire.

It changed my perspective on littering. Student from The Hills Shire.

S4P had other unintended positive consequences for students as well. Many students claimed the program gave them tremendous confidence to write, speak and perform publicly; it also encouraged them to take action for the environment. One student she

felt encouraged “to be able to do almost anything” to improve the quality of the environment.

We learned a lot and it changed our thinking. Student from the Southern Highlands.

It gave me new ideas and how I can make a difference. Student from Liverpool event.

There was overwhelming enthusiasm from teachers and students to participate again in 2018. Teachers saw benefits in the opportunities for their own students to socialise with students from other schools; they also recognised the advantage of learning from their own peers.

The program gives confidence to students and I will be back next year. Teacher from Liverpool event.

Speaking 4 the Planet is an inspired concept; it is an authentic and relevant place in which passionate students find their creative voice. Surely, no greater value can be found for any learning activity than sparking a genuine personal drive to apply deep knowledge and skill to solve compelling real-world problems. Speaking 4 the Planet is undoubtedly such a learning experience! Paul Owens, Principal, Kirrawee High School

Benefits for Councils

Councils are the critical arm of government responsible for the local environment. They are at the forefront of taking action for the environment and – of all levels of government – are the closest to the community. Schools are part of this community along with local industry and business. Educating the community on issues relating to sustainability is seen as a major responsibility of local government and most councils take this responsibility seriously. S4P serves as a catalyst for bringing together councils, schools, businesses and community groups in a partnership with clear goals and activities. Throughout the planning, conduct and evaluation phases, S4P brings educational skills and knowledge to assist councils; S4P facilitates contact with schools for a mutual and relevant purpose. Councils with their expert knowledge in sustainability issues can use schools for two purposes: first to communicate their sustainability messages to them and, secondly to see how their own council priorities align with the Australian Curriculum and what is taught in schools.

Speaking 4 the Planet inspires thoughtful, well-researched and forward-looking ideas that are presented in speech or performance by young people. Sarah Creer, The Hills Shire Council

In essence, councils benefit from their association with a program that is growing in support and popularity and is set to become larger every year with more schools participating. The bonding between schools, the community and councils is not only

facilitated by S4P but is a positive communication channel with a mutual benefit to all parties involved.

Speaking 4 the Planet supports Council's aim for Liverpool to be a 'Natural Sustainable City'. The initiative helps us build good relations with our local high schools and demonstrate our commitment to supporting the important messages of World Environment Day. Liverpool City Council

Benefits for Community and Business

The 2017 Speaking 4 the Planet events involved community arts and speaking bodies, outdoor organisations, environmental education centres, and a range of businesses. All indicated they enjoyed and benefited from their participation.

S4P has engineered the links between all parties and each one has benefited. Business can see a positive benefit by being an active community member in supporting local schools, the local council and the community in general. It can also gain more insight into current educational practices and perhaps interpreting sustainability in a more holistic and integrated light.

Similar benefits can also accrue to community members in general. A broad educational program gives an advantage for all community members and a clearer understanding of how environmental issues can be resolved for society's survival. Their association with S4P through their links with councils and schools will assist this educational component immensely and assist in a united understanding of how problems can be managed.

Participants expressed the following opinions:

The program is well run, conducted in a friendly environment. I was impressed to see how the "next generation" were able to demonstrate their vision, wealth of knowledge and their accessing of key resources. Bunnings (sponsor)

I have judged a few Speaking 4 the Planet competitions, and my local Toastmasters group has invited the winners to deliver their speeches at our meetings. I am very impressed with the high standard of speaking skills and the understanding of important environmental issues. Carole Sharp, Miranda Toastmasters

I was inspired to see so many young people display such passion for a subject that affects us all. Without such a forum, their voices, ideas and momentum would be lost. Speaking 4 the Planet creates opportunities for young people to ask difficult questions and offer potential solutions which may benefit the planet and all of us now and in the future. Paul Tiffin, Miranda Paddy Pallin

This program would empower students to safeguard our future and influence politicians to make good decisions for our society. A parent at the Sutherland Shire event

All sponsors were happy with how they were portrayed and expressed the desire to continue again in 2018. They also stated that they were pleased to see students embarking on lateral thinking techniques.

The program is fantastic. Well organised. Sponsor, Sutherland Shire event.

An innovation for 2017

In 2017, the idea of Speaking 4 the Planet was adapted for primary school students and a pilot was held at Lakemba Public School in mid-June. Three local schools participated. Evaluation responses from the students included:

I learned nature is very powerful in its own way and you can never doubt it.

It helped my research skills in English.

It benefits me by being more confident.

I can use this in the future.

Now I can tell stories through art.

The teachers involved on the day noted that the event encouraged students to communicate their ideas in different ways and to think critically and creatively through drama, art and public speaking:

Students understood issues facing our environment and thought about different ways to protect it. They had to do research and think carefully about different solutions.

Please be sure to invite our school next year!

Teachers also appreciated the opportunity to be involved with their peers in such an event. One said, *We were able to share teaching ideas with each other.*

Given the positive response to this trial it is anticipated that primary school events will be expanded in 2018.

Summing Up

These key messages emerge from the evaluation of the 2017 Speaking 4 the Planet events:

1. Stakeholders say the program is useful for educational, personal, community and environmental reasons.
2. Teachers welcome the links to curriculum and appreciate the support (e.g. resource package); they are keen to participate in future events.
3. Schools see Speaking 4 the Planet as valuable in building student understanding of the world and their confidence to speak about things that concern them.
4. Local sponsors appreciate the opportunity to provide support for such a worthwhile initiative.
5. The event builds connections between schools and community.

Looking ahead to 2018

The evaluation conducted in 2017 revealed a number of areas for improvement, including timing, communication and sequencing of activities. Teachers offered suggestions for how other areas of the curriculum could be introduced and how the number of participating schools could be increased. All of these comments will be considered in the planning for 2018. It is clear, however, that there is an overall endorsement for S4P and a commitment by schools and councils to be involved next year and beyond.