

# Indicators

As you progress with taking action and putting designs and plans into practice, you also need some way of telling whether or not you're actually succeeding with your efforts. Is less waste being produced, are people participating in EnviroSchools projects, is the school becoming more sustainable?

One way to find out is to use indicators that show the big picture by looking at small pieces of it. You can measure some things directly, like how much water is used in the school, how many students are involved in the organic garden or how much money has been saved through energy conservation. Other things, such as whether or not the school has become more harmonious, involve people's feelings and observations. These can be a little harder to measure but are just as important.

Indicators are like the dials on an instrument panel. By looking at them we can see what's going on and find out if we're moving in the right direction and how successful we've been. They also give us clues about what we'll need to do in the future to make things even better.

## Choosing indicators

Choosing good indicators needs a bit of thought, so here are a few helpful hints:

Think about what would be good indicators of success (or otherwise) in relation to your action statements, desired changes and/or the overall sustainability of the school. Ask these questions about your suggested indicators and discuss:

- Is the indicator measurable? Will it actually show you if you've improved or deteriorated? Will the changes it shows be useful when you come to revise your plan?
- Is the indicator easy/ affordable to collect?
- Is the indicator user-friendly? Will people understand it or will it cause confusion?
- Is the indicator constant over time? Will you be able to use the same methods to measure the indicator each time to get true comparisons?
- Can the indicator be influenced by your actions? Is it possible to do things that will move the indicator forwards?

Check out [www.measuringchange.org.nz](http://www.measuringchange.org.nz) for more information and all of the resources to get started in your school.



## Using indicators

Once you've chosen your indicators, it's a good idea to put together a simple monitoring plan. This plan will help you to record data consistently and can form the basis of a progress report to the whole school. Here's an example of how the plan might look:

Theme	Indicator	Units	How was the data collected?	Who collected the data and when?	Source of data	Are we improving?
Energy	Total amount of energy used per month	KWh	Subtracting end of month meter reading from start of month reading	Class 4B (Lisa, Roimata and Ruth) 23/10/2009	School electric meter – behind main hall	

You can present your indicators in other ways, such as a graph showing trends, or taking before and after photos.

As the data for your indicators is gathered, you can use it to reflect on change and review your plans.

