

I can make a difference

I am Daniel.

I am 12 years old and have been at Aparima College for a year. I have a Teacher Aide to help me with the hard stuff like school work and friends. She showed me the World Goals for #Envision2030 which say they will 'leave no one behind' and make the world better for people like me. Mum told me that I have autism and ADHD so I find it hard to concentrate and school work is hard. I am learning my three times table. I am good at spelling and reading.

I like school to be clean and tidy. Plastic bottles make it look bad. Sometimes the wind blows plastic bottles and cans around the playground and onto the beach. I am happy when all the rubbish at school is cleared up. When I leave school I want to be a rubbish truck driver.

I like to help people so I volunteer to do jobs at school. I started by emptying the paper bin in my classroom and now I do lots of jobs that help keep my school tidy. On Fridays I go to Enviro Club. We talk about how we can make our school environment better. I tell them how many bottles I have recycled that week. These are the projects that I am doing.

RECYCLING PLASTICS

Our school is very close to the beach and the sea. There is too much plastic rubbish around. It gets in the ocean and kills sea creatures and birds. It makes me feel sad.

I am in the Enviro Club at school. We want to get rid of plastic in school but it is very hard to do this because most things are made of plastic - milk bottles from the staffroom, drink bottles from the canteen, food containers, yoghurt pots, **EVERYTHING!**

We bought some green recycle bins and I empty them every week. I tell all my friends to **PUT THE BOTTLES IN THE BIN!** We don't have a wheelie bin collection at school! We tried to get one but no luck so far. So me and my Teacher Aide take all the plastics and cans to the Recycle Centre and I sort them out and put them in the right slots. I tally the numbers and make graphs for the Notice Board. We are making Recycle Stations and putting posters and information all over school to help the children and teachers to recycle. We are going to write letters to WasteNet to ask for a yellow bin.

I also empty the compost bin to recycle all the waste food from the staff room and canteen. It goes into a big Compost Bay in the garden and it turns back into soil. Sometimes the birds eat it too. The seagulls hang around at lunchtime. They are good recyclers too!

ENVIRONMENT

Our senior students join up with Sustainable Coastlines three times each year to collect rubbish from our beaches. I am definitely going to join this group next year. We also do the Big Clean-up every year. Last year we collected 40kg of rubbish. We will do another Cleanup next month.

If I see rubbish I PICK IT UP and put it in the bin.

TREE PLANTING

Tree planting is great! Last week we went out in the rain to help Environment Southland plant hundreds of native trees near the beach. We have to water them in the summer and make sure they don't get blown over in the winter. A farmer gave us bags of sheep dags to feed and protect our baby trees. When those trees grow there will be a forest out there for the birds to live in. The trees also stop the sand dunes from blowing away.

SCHOOL GARDEN

I remember last summer. I watered the tomatoes in the greenhouse every day. I also dug up 30kg of potatoes from the garden. I took them to the Environment Centre shop and learned how to weigh them and put them into bags to sell. We sold each bag for \$6. We also sold our basil. We made \$54 and I chose to buy lots of seeds with the money. In Spring I will plant them. We will have carrots, beans, pumpkin, cauliflower, cabbage and herbs. The garden needs lots of work doing to make it beautiful. I will be helping with that!

SCHOOL SOUP KITCHEN

After Lockdown the school canteen was only open for three days a week so we thought it would be good to have soup at lunchtime. Our local supermarkets give us their old vegetables for the soup. We bought bowls, spoons, knives and tea-towels from the Op-shop. We made a cafe in the hall.

Every Monday and Tuesday we make SOUP and sometimes cheese rolls as well. My favourite is pumpkin soup and fresh bread with butter! Some of the Year 8 children come to help serve and they eat all the bread. We also have friends who are learning to speak English. They are a brother and sister and they are learning the names of kitchen things and they make our menus and follow soup recipes. We have fun together.

CONCLUSION

People tell me that I make a BIG DIFFERENCE at school. Now there is NO PLASTIC blowing around the playground. Now they PUT RUBBISH IN THE BIN. People know how many plastic bottles they recycle every week. Some people bring their own drink bottles to re-use. Some people have started bringing their sandwiches in beeswax wraps. I have lots more FRIENDS now. I like school a lot but I can't wait to become a Rubbish Truck driver. Then I can help recycle even more rubbish.

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/envision2030.html>