

What our rivers are saying to us



Primary school students during a Central Otago and Queenstown Lakes Enviroschools hui, working out how to use the "Mauri Meter".

Many schools across Otago are learning how to assess water quality and taking action to look after their local waterways. Students are passionate about water.

They like to swim, fish, and go boating on their local waterways. Many Enviroschools students live on farms or orchards and understand how important healthy waterways are to their families.

At the end of 2020, we held an Enviroschools hui for Central Otago and Queenstown Lakes primary students where we asked students to explore the question: "If the river had its own voice, what would it be saying to us?"

To get them thinking about what our rivers might be saying to us, we got students to identify their favourite river place in Otago.

We did an activity that shows that only 0.0003% of the water in the world (including ice, snow and sea water) is available for us to drink. We did a big brainstorm of all of the ways we had used water that morning.

Then the students were introduced to the concept of mauri, which describes the essential quality and vitality of a being or entity. Kepa Morgan has developed a "Mauri Meter" – a continuum from where the mauri is exhausted (mauri moe, mauri noho) to where the mauri is vibrant and at its fullest potential to support life (mauri tu, mauri ora).

We explored the old part of Cromwell and looked at how the river has changed over time. The students brought their Mauri Metres and discussed how our actions have affected the mauri of this water body.

Back at the hall, students listed all the things that happened to their river from the source to the sea and wrote the story they thought their river might tell us.



Students writing stories about what they think their river might say to us.