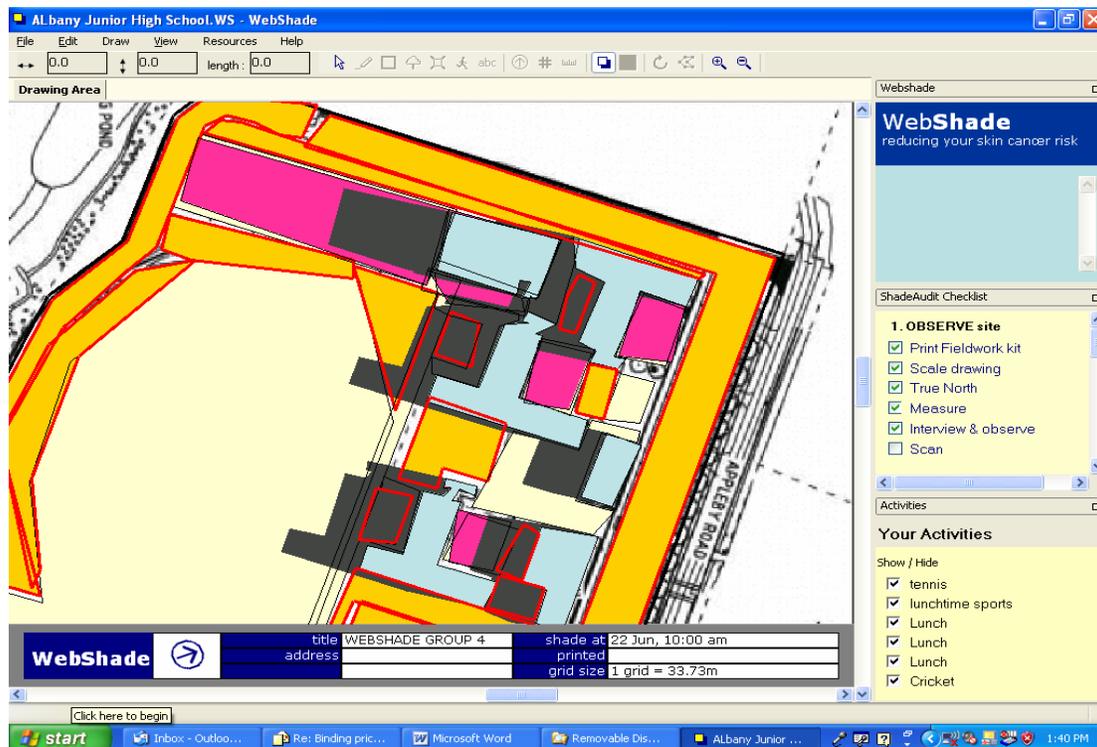


New Zealand WebShade Trial Evaluation

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Executive Summary

WebShade is an inter-active software programme that provides users with knowledge about how to prevent skin cancer and gives ordinary people the capacity to make their outdoor spaces safer by reducing exposure to harmful UV radiation.

This report presents the findings of a New Zealand trial of the WebShade software within five schools and three Local Councils, over a four week period during May 2006.

Principal Aims

The principal aims of the trial were to determine

1. The effectiveness of the software in determining shade outcomes.
2. The usability of the software within schools and local councils.

Key Outcomes

The results of the trial have overwhelmingly demonstrated that WebShade is a useful tool for assisting schools and councils in achieving effective shade outcomes.

The tool within the school environment was reportedly an enjoyable experience and easy to use - there were no significant issues identified with the software usability and software support was timely and effective.

Health promotion staff involved found the experience positive and were unanimous about the benefits to councils and schools.

Schools

Children enjoyed using the software and found it easy to use. Schools consistently identified WebShade as a very effective curriculum tool providing authentic learning opportunities.

WebShade encouraged thinking about sun protection and shade in the widest sense, by rescheduling or moving activities, making shady areas usable and using natural shade. Where there was a decision to build a shade structure, the software was seen as a useful tool to get the design correct.

Teachers involved in the trial commented:

It is exciting. This is really what we should be doing a lot more of, so children take some ownership and learn about their environment and how they can improve it.

We wanted to make use of this process to see – well is this going to have an impact on how we develop these next classrooms? It has made a difference already we are already starting to re-look at how we are planning the new classroom block.

We have clued up children and I see really exciting learning opportunities that come out of a project like this because this is authentic learning. It's solving real life problems and using smart technology. I'm very excited by it.

I think the appeal of this is that it is authentic and I use that word in the strongest terms. So many educational experiences have the tendency to be classroom based. This is something that has been set up to get people out of the classroom and looking at the big picture – that is where the impact on the learning will happen – rather than being just another classroom activity.

Children commented:

It was enjoyable every Friday sometimes we'd look forward to coming just to play with the software.

It was cool.

Councils

WebShade was identified as helpful for determining effective shade outcomes in many different ways by the three councils involved. There was a strong emphasis on its use to generate solutions to known problems and also to plan proactively in a strategic way.

Participants in the council trial indicated on many occasions that using WebShade had given them a better understanding of the shade issues and risks at particular sites. It was seen as far more than a tool for designing effective shade, with uses identified by councils included crime prevention and encouraging physical activity.

Council comments included:

For me it would be, firstly the development of new reserves we are getting sub divisions and new parks coming all the time, so to have this in at the design stage somewhere it's going to save a lot of grief down the track, it is going to save a lot of people getting skin cancer probably, especially kids.

If we know we are putting a playground in two, three or four years time it is so simple in terms of management to be planning ahead and putting trees in four or five years before the playground, so we've got shade – saving you \$25000 to shade it later You're providing us with tools, which can help us to do that, but more than that you're providing us with the awareness to think about it.

Health

Health promotion staff were unanimous about the benefits of WebShade:

I can't wait for it to be widely available. I see examples every week where I could be telling schools about the software, and situations where they are planning a significant spend on shade facilities but not really investigating whether it is the right shade in the right place.

Conclusion

The WebShade software far exceeded the expectations of all groups involved in the trial.

