Bringing sustainability into your school

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.*  
Margaret Mead

**Culture**

Our school develops a culture of sustainability with the wider community

Starting with students can encourage staff and others to get on board when they see the enthusiasm on display. How about a student voice group? We can help get one up and running and can visit and mentor the group too.

*Student voice group at St Joseph’s Hectorville*

Some schools use staff surveys to understand the reasons for low uptake of sustainability initiatives. This can be a starting point for breaking down those barriers and initiating discussions around how to overcome them. We can provide survey examples by other schools, or help you develop your own.

Nominate yourself as a ‘go-to’ person for sustainability and be available to answer or chase up questions or concerns others may have. By encouraging these discussions you can start to break down the barriers to achieve success.

Provide incentives to get involved e.g. introduce class competitions around waste reduction or energy consumption. These won’t take long to implement and encourages student and staff awareness without too much extra effort. Five minutes at the beginning and end of every week should be enough to track usage of resources and discuss strategies to continue this. Give out awards at assemblies to acknowledge progress.

**Understanding**

Our school nurtures the understanding, skills and values required to move with our community towards sustainability

In many schools, staff are not unwilling to look into EFS initiatives, they simply do not feel they have the time. We can run PD tailored to your site to show how sustainability can be woven into the curriculum and is not just an ‘added extra’.

It can be useful to develop learning plans at the beginning of the year with sustainability in mind. Try approaching year level coordinators or key teaching staff to consider a curriculum planning session during the next school holidays. We can attend these sessions and help with planning.

Share with staff our planning tools (Site Environment Management Plan and Core Indicators) to demonstrate that introducing new sustainability initiatives are not daunting. We can attend meetings with key staff and show them how to use these.

Start small. Narrow your focus to one theme or project and make it manageable. You will have a greater chance of getting others on board if they don’t feel you’re asking too much of them.

**Case study: St Brigid’s School**

A multicultural school with several ESL families, St Brigid’s was keen to see a greater uptake of their regular nude food days but found it difficult to communicate to some families what nude food is and why it’s important. NRM Education discussed possible strategies with teaching staff, who developed brief homework tasks for their classes, to encourage a dialogue about nude food at home. The program becomes more popular all the time.
Learning

Our school’s learning processes, pedagogies and the Australian Curriculum help us achieve more sustainable lifestyles with our communities

We have resources on different themes (energy, water, biodiversity etc.) linked to units of work, general capabilities and inquiry questions. Teachers find these useful to guide their own thinking. Recommend them to others.

Focus on sustainability initiatives you already have, and how to make the most of them. A great example is if the school has a garden or other outdoor space; think about ways to expand on and use the garden more.

Demonstrate to staff where sustainability fits in curriculum. Talk to us or download some case studies on our website for ideas.

Managing

Our school’s leadership, governance and management processes foster education for sustainability

Having management on board can be a great way to gain staff support. Approach leadership (Principal, Deputy, Governing Council or School Board) with a proposed learning program or sustainability project. We can help you develop these. Be open to discuss with them and take on their feedback. Once they are happy, you can work with them to get other staff on board.

Demonstrate your vision for sustainability to others. Utilise our case studies from other schools. Show them to management and key staff; even ask for five minutes at a staff meeting to share project ideas and examples. Others can be encouraged and inspired by these stories and it can foster more detailed discussion around the barriers your site may face and possible ways around these.

Case study: Le Fevre Peninsula School

There has been a successful garden program running at LFPS for a number of years, but key staff were finding themselves stuck when it came to new ideas to link the garden to learning across the school. NRM Education attended a whole of staff meeting and presented practical ideas and shared the tools on offer to help plan classroom units. Staff left the meeting with a renewed passion for creating links to sustainability. They have been working to introduce a range of new learning activities related to the garden.

Community

Our school achieves sustainability with its communities

If the project you have in mind requires financial resources, talk to us about grant opportunities. Presenting your ideas to others and supporting this with evidence of funding, makes them more likely to get involved. We run grant writing workshops.

Fundraising is a great incentive for staff, students and families to get on board with initiatives like recycling. It involves the whole school and everyone inadvertently learns more about sustainability.

For more information

To access more resources, case studies or to contact your local NRM Education officer visit