Education for sustainability

Education for Sustainability is an approach to learning that recognises the critical role of education in achieving a just, democratic and environmentally sustainable world.

Education for Sustainability is recognised globally as ‘quality education’, because it:

- develops the potential of the whole child by being presented in an integrated way that develop a student’s knowledge, skills and values
- encourages critical thinking and problem solving
- uses multiple ways of learning (e.g. visual, verbal, oral, written, art, experience)
- encourages participation and expects learners to be part of all decision-making
- is applicable and relevant to the learner and their lives, includes their everyday experiences and values their culture and language.

Adapted from the DESD Implementation Strategy, 2005

Schools and education for sustainability

Schools provide an ideal environment where people can learn together and practice real ways of being more sustainable. The Australian Curriculum requires the inclusion of learning for sustainability; the school and community provide a real context for that learning. One simple example is students using measurement, graphing and report writing to give an account of the amount of rainwater collected from the roof.

Social, environmental and economic benefits are achieved for the school and community through an ongoing focus on education for sustainability.

The AuSSI-SA Guide

*Education for Sustainability: a guide to becoming a sustainable school* was published in 2007. The Guide includes the AuSSI-SA model’s five developmental rubrics (sets of criteria used to assess a particular type of work or performance).

Schools have used the rubrics to support their discussions and decisions about where they are on their journey towards sustainability. As with any journey, signposts are helpful. Indicators have been developed to provide signposts for celebration of the school’s current position and indications of the part of the journey still to be undertaken.

Structure of the Rubrics and Indicators

The rubrics in the Guide are organised into columns to show development towards sustainability from left to right. They are organised as:

- *starting* - a school realises the need for a change in focus, questions current practices and identifies possible directions and priorities
- *challenging* - a school is actively involved in challenging practices, establishing processes for change and developing new systems
- *committing* - education for sustainability is being embedded into the life of the school and its broader community
- *transforming* - the school, with its communities, is continuously learning for and living more sustainable lifestyles.

Using this document

You are a valued participant in our focus to become more sustainable. We are collecting your opinion of our current position in education for sustainability and priorities. Please tick the Indicators you believe the school has addressed and draw a star next to the Indicators you think should be worked on next. The responses will be collated to give the school an idea of where we are now and future priorities. Thank you for your time.
The school has:

- asked parents about including education for sustainability in the school’s vision and values.
- invited parents and community members to contribute to education for sustainability.
- provided learning sessions about living sustainably for parents.
- mentioned the need for social, environmental and economic sustainability.
- celebrated environmental events and days (e.g. World Environment Day, Earth Hour).
- included environmental learning for students in the classroom or in the grounds and community.
- encouraged students to be leaders in projects and activities.
- sent students to Youth Environment Forums and/or formed a youth action group in the school.
- provided information about groups they work with (e.g. Landcare, KESAB).
- used the website and newsletters to discuss and seek support for a sustainability focus.

Comments:

The school has:

- included us in developing a vision that includes education for sustainability.
- informed us that education for sustainability is part of the Site Learning Plan.
- mentioned a School Environment Management Plan.
- invited parents to support the school in education for sustainability.
- participated in local and global initiatives (e.g. Earth Hour, support for people in other countries).
- taken students to outdoor places to learn for sustainability (e.g. camps, recycling centres).
- developed the school grounds for sustainability learning (e.g. vegetable gardens, solar panels).
- encouraged students to take charge of the school environment (e.g. managing recycling systems).
- used students’ interests to plan learning and actions.
- made learning links with Aboriginal people and other cultures.

Comments:
**Committing**
The school has:

- included sustainability learning and achievements in student reports.
- provided learning experiences about social sustainability (e.g. peace, justice and human rights).
- shared educational and sustainability outcomes with parents.
- made global links and connections to education for sustainability.
- included Aboriginal people in planning and learning for sustainability.
- committed to sustainability learning and behaves in more sustainable ways.
- encouraged parents to lead sustainability initiatives.
- influenced the behaviours of families and community through their sustainability initiatives.
- managed school events in sustainable ways (e.g. Sports Day, Year 7 Graduation).
- told new parents about education for sustainability and encouraged their participation.

**Comments:**

**Transforming**
The school with the community is:

- continuously reducing its use of resources.
- investigating what being part of a sustainable community means.
- taking local actions that help to address global concerns (e.g. Climate Change).
- providing real sustainability experiences based on the Australian Curriculum.
- exploring and developing creative sustainability options (e.g. local food, Fair Trade/ Transition Towns).
- learning to live more sustainably.
- linking and partnering with other local and global communities.
- moving towards sustainability with multiple leaders.

**Comments:**