



Sustainability in the Classroom

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Inquiry Question

I am curious about the integration of environmental sustainability into my teaching practice.

What can we do in our classrooms/schools/communities to positively contribute to protecting Mother Earth.



Five W's of Sustainability Integration

What

- What is sustainability?
- What is sustainability integration?

Who

- Who does it benefit?
- Who can it be done with?

Why

- Why is sustainability important?

Where & When

- When & where can you teach about sustainability? Engage in sustainability practices?

"environmental education will foster the next generation's commitment towards our planet and an awareness of the need to care for it, thereby offering the benefit of a better future for all."
(Rodríguez et al., 2022, p. 95)



Implementation

TEACHING PRACTICE

- Curriculum Integration
- Project-Based Learning
- Outdoor Education
- Guest Speakers

SCHOOL

- Green Initiatives
- School Gardens
- Environmental Clubs

CLASSROOM

- Green Classroom Practices
- Sustainable Supplies
- Waste Reduction

COMMUNITY

- Community Outreach
- Educational Campaigns

Research

Barriers of Sustainability Education

“Barriers reported most often by teachers were lack of time in teaching schedule, lack of alignment with the curriculum at a current grade level, a school-wide focus on other areas, and lack of planning time”(Merritt et al., 2018, p. 27)

Table 6

Barriers that Limit Teacher Capacity for Teaching about Sustainability

| Perceived barrier | % | n |
|---|------|----|
| Lack of time in my teaching schedule | 74.6 | 44 |
| Lack of alignment with the curriculum in my current grade level | 57.6 | 34 |
| School-wide focus in other areas | 47.5 | 28 |
| Lack of planning time | 39 | 23 |
| Lack of support from administration | 16.9 | 10 |
| Lack of support from colleagues | 15.3 | 9 |
| Lack of personal interest in sustainability | 6.8 | 4 |
| Lack of public interest in sustainability | 6.8 | 4 |
| Lack of support from parents | 5.1 | 3 |
| Discomfort teaching about controversial issues | 5.1 | 3 |
| No barriers | 5.1 | 3 |

(Merritt et al., 2018, p. 28)



Research

CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION

"Another challenge that is particularly notable for environmental and sustainability education is engaging the "whole" student" (Byrne, 2016, p. 7)

"Research has clearly shown that knowing "things" and having skills do not necessarily or directly translate into environmentally responsible attitudes and behaviors" (Byrne, 2016, p. 7)

"If a key goal of environmental and sustainability education is to prepare students to become agents of positive engagement and change, students have to be inspired to want to do this" (Byrne, 2016, p. 7)





Research

TEACHING ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

“Teachers reported modeling classroom behaviors focused on sustainability to a greater extent than explicitly teaching sustainability concepts” (Merritt et al., 2018, p. 25)

“modeling of sustainability practices can help children understand how to care for the earth and protect resources. High school students reported that role models at school influenced their behaviors.” (Merritt et al., 2018, p. 22)

Research

SUPPORTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION

Table 5

Supports for Teaching about Sustainability

| Support | % | n |
|--|----|----|
| Related school-wide initiatives (e.g. schoolyard garden, recycling) | 49 | 29 |
| Curricular resources | 31 | 18 |
| Colleagues with related interests | 29 | 17 |
| Instructional materials for students, such as trade books | 29 | 17 |
| Supportive administration | 25 | 15 |
| Community resources and supports (e.g. local agencies, guest speakers) | 9 | 15 |
| Families and parents with related interests | 9 | 15 |
| Professional development opportunities | 8 | 14 |
| No supports | 25 | 15 |

(Merritt et al., 2018, p. 27)



First Peoples Principles of Learning

01.

Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

02.

Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

03.

Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.

04.

Learning involves patience and time.

Curriculum Connections

CONTENT:

- K–3 Career Ed:
 - roles and responsibilities at home, at school, and in the local community
- 4–5 Career Ed:
 - generational roles and responsibilities
- 6–7 Career Ed:
 - local and global needs and opportunities (social justice, environmental stewardship, sustainability, effective use of resources, etc.), global citizenship

Q & A

01

Should the curriculum contain more on sustainability education?

02

Would it be beneficial for elementary teachers to receive training in sustainability education?

03

Is it more effective to teach sustainability as a standalone subject or integrate it into existing subjects like science and social studies?

04

Do you think sustainability is something you will consider in your teaching practice?

References

Byrne, L. B. (2016). *Learner-Centered Teaching Activities for Environmental and Sustainability Studies*. Springer.

Merritt, E. G., Archambault, L. & Hale, A. E. (2018). Sustainability Education in Elementary Classrooms: Reported Practices of Alumni from a Pre-Service Teacher Course. *Discourse and Communication for Sustainable Education*, 9(1), 18–35. <https://doi.org/10.2478/dcse-2018-0002>

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