**Education for Sustainability**

Education for sustainability is about learning to think and act in ways that safeguard the well-being of people and the planet through exploring the relationship between people and the environment.

The four aspects of sustainability we study are **environmental, social, cultural**, and **economic** aspects of sustainability. No single area has a monopoly on solutions to the complex issues sustainability raises, but there is a power in partnerships, in working together.

Mō tātou te Taiao ko te Atawhai

Mō tātou te Taiao ko te Oranga

It is for us to care for the environment to ensure its well-being

In doing so we ensure our own well-being and that of future generations

Handout; People can have very different views on sustainability. Here are three:

A United Nations perspective

The United Nations Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future (1987), describes a sustainable future as one where people are able to meet their needs environmentally, socially, culturally, politically, and economically without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs and aspirations

A Māori perspective

From a Māori perspective, everything is connected: land, sea, and air. Relationships among

people and relationships between people and the environment are all part of this larger whole.

People have a kaitiaki/guardian responsibility for the natural environment. ‘Māori and Sustainable Development’, Landcare Research (2008).

Ko te oranga taiao, he oranga tangata.

A healthy environment is a healthy people.

A Business perspective

Businesses often see sustainability in terms of being able to survive and grow. But their products and services depend ultimately on social and environmental resources. Increasingly, businesses are responding to customer demands that they be environmentally responsible and that they commit themselves to sustainable practices.

All perspectives on sustainability are responses to complex issues and reflect the values and knowledge of the people who hold them. We all have responsibility for creating our future. It is only by sharing our knowledge skills, and viewpoints that we are able to refine goals – personal, school, and community – and generate the fresh thinking needed to solve problems.

**Why study education for sustainability?**

**We depend on the environment for everything.**

One way or another, the opportunities that we have – or will ever have – come back to the environment. So how we treat our environment is of great importance. EfS challenges us to develop the kinds of thinking and behaviours that will secure the future.

**As New Zealanders, we are proud of our natural heritage.**

We like to think of our country as ‘clean and green’. But many of our practices put the environment and all its inhabitants at risk. In EfS, we learn to investigate such practices and to advocate for change.

**What we do today has consequences for future generations.**

Our everyday actions help shape the kind of earth that we hand on to our children. By

investigating how people’s actions have created the sustainability issues that confront us now, we learn to make informed decisions about how to live our own lives.

**EfS opens up pathways to a variety of careers with a sustainability focus.**

Sustainability means enough for all, forever.

**Key Ideas of Sustainability**

Sustainability is about individuals, groups, and societies adopting ways of thinking and behaving that allow them to meet their needs and aspirations without preventing future generations from meeting theirs. Sustainability needs to be considered from four aspects.

**Environmental sustainability** is about maintaining the integrity of life support systems. This aspect incorporates the important notions of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Environmental sustainability is fundamental to a sustainable future.

**Social sustainability** is about equity within and between generations and within and between ethnic and social groups. It is inclusive of people’s mental and physical well-being and the cohesion of their communities based on a fair distribution of natural resources.

**Cultural sustainability** refers to the nourishment and sharing of attitudes and values that represent diverse ways of viewing the world. Cultural sustainability is inclusive of political sustainability, which is about all citizens having the opportunity to express their views freely and participate in decision making.

**Economic sustainability** means using resources to provide necessary and desirable products and services for the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same.

**Sustainability involves equity** which is about fairness. It includes:

Respect for all life

We have a responsibility to all living things because our lives are intertwined with theirs. All organisms have a right to life and to an environment that will sustain them.

Social justice

Individuals and groups should have equal opportunity in relation to rights, resources, and services.

Intergenerational equity

Each successive generation should have the opportunity to determine its own future and provide for it.

Finite resources

Earth’s resources need to be used wisely, re-used or recycled and, if necessary, disposed of in ways that minimise impact on the environment.

**Sustainability includes interdependence** which is about the interconnectedness of people and environments. It includes:

Biodiversity (environmental)

Biodiversity is the totality of living things, often taken as a measure of the health of biological systems and, therefore, of environmental sustainability.

Community (social)

A community is a group of people who interact with one another and develop partnerships that contribute to collective well-being.

Cultural diversity

Cultural diversity encompasses the diverse world views that inform different ways of thinking and knowing.

Democracy (political)

Democracy refers to political systems where power is vested in the people.

Globalisation (economic)

Globalisation refers to the complexity of transnational interactions, communications, and exchanges of resources that constitute a global economy.

**Sustainability includes responsibility for action** which is about getting involved in shaping the future. This includes:

Action orientation

To have an action orientation means having the skills and motivation to take action to address sustainability issues.

Informed decision making

Informed decision making means seeking knowledge and using it ethically to make decisions that contribute to a sustainable future.

Citizenship

Citizens who are active and informed are in the best position to create a sustainable future.

Guardianship/kaitiakitanga

Guardianship is about diverse communities working together to care for and use resources in ways that ensure that future generations can also meet their needs and aspirations.

Consumerism

In this context, consumerism refers to knowledge, attitudes, and values that lead to the sustainable use of resources.

Enterprise and entrepreneurship

This is about ensuring that innovation and creativity lead to solutions for a sustainable future.

Resilience and regeneration

Humankind’s ability to adapt will prove vital when regenerating our world in a way that is sustainable in the long term.