



Zero Waste Alliance

STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE:

THE JOURNEY TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY

COSA Conference

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Question:

What are the features of a sustainable
School or District?



Defining School Sustainability

Start with the SOSI Topic Table



Ecological Footprint*

Today humanity uses the equivalent of 1.3 planets to provide the resources we use and to then absorb our waste.

A result: Others in the world are subjected to debt, poverty, famine and war.

We would need 5 Earths if everyone in the world lived an average American lifestyle over time.

* Ecological Footprint: a resource accounting tool



Ecological Footprint

Does our education system today help to increase or decrease our footprint?



The most common definition...

The Brundtland Commission Report,
The United Nations, 1987

"Sustainable development...meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."



Green vs. Sustainable

Looking at example of Recycling vs. Resource Management

Green

- Detail Focused
(RECYCLING)
- Ecological only
- Tactical
(increase recycling)
- Subjective -Success not defined

Sustainable

- Whole Systems Focus
(RESOURCE MANAGEMENT)
- Triple Bottom Line -Social Equity, Environment, Economics
- Strategic *(only buy what's needed, no resources wasted, no negative social impacts to extract or manage the resources)*
- Objective -Success clearly defined
(Zero waste. All resources stay in the system.)



Defining School Sustainability

Start with the SOSI Topic Table

Eventually it becomes a lens through which all activities and decisions are viewed.

- Optimize community, economic and environmental factors
- Consider the entire system; what the decision causes to happen before and after your use or involvement.



U.N. Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005–2014

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD):

- Key and vital element in moving toward sustainability.
- It will help people to:
 - Pursue sustainable livelihoods
 - Continue to learn after they leave school
 - Participate in community life
 - Live in a sustainable manner



Note the Difference -

- Education **about** sustainable development is - an awareness lesson.
- Education **for** sustainable development is – the use of education as a tool to transform our societies to achieve sustainability.

More than an awareness lesson is needed to move countries toward a more sustainable future.



United Nation's Four Elements of ESD

1. Improving access to quality basic education
2. **Reorienting existing education***
3. Improving public understanding and awareness
4. Providing training

**Most relevant for the U.S. K-12 system*



Reorienting Education

- Select **knowledge** that supports sustainability goals, from all disciplines; Identify what's no longer relevant, to eliminate.
- Focus on major **issues** that threaten sustainability of the planet
- Provide practical **skills** that enable lifelong learning, and sustainable jobs and lives
- Understand multiple **perspectives**, including in time, context, place, impact
- Teach and model **values** needed to achieve sustainability goals
 - *Education for Sustainable Development Toolkit, by Rosalyn McKeown*



ESD Involves All Disciplines

- **Mathematics** helps understand very small numbers (e.g., parts per million), needed to interpret pollution data.
- **Language Arts**, especially media literacy, creates consumers who can analyze corporate advertising messages and see beyond “green wash.”
- **History** teaches the concept of global change, while helping students to recognize that change has occurred for centuries.
- **Reading** develops the ability to distinguish between fact and opinion, useful for example with political campaign literature.
- **Social Studies** helps students to understand ethnocentrism, racism, and gender inequity, and to recognize how these are expressed in the surrounding community and worldwide.
- **The Arts** provide the creativity to think out of the box.



How should students get this education?

1. Teacher in the classroom??
2. Involving educators from outside the school??
3. Interactions with the school facility and operations??



Plus...

- The School District itself must be a Model to experience and learn from.
(facility, systems and services)
- Just as kids' reading success increases with parent modeling-
If schools don't model sustainable practices, kids will "learn" that such practices are only theoretical concepts.



What's a “Green Job”?

What types of future jobs will not require an understanding of sustainability?



The K-12 School System is critical to achieving sustainability goals

It manages an infrastructure huge enough to serve

20% of our population,

with corresponding impacts that cannot be ignored.

energy use, solid waste volume, bus and car miles, food miles, occupant health, community role

It reaches EVERY citizen,
and must provide them with an education
that supports sustainability.



The Sustainable Oregon Schools Initiative “SOSI”



- The only entity working comprehensively on K-12 sustainability.
- Helping Oregon’s interested K-12 schools and districts integrate sustainability into their operations, teaching and culture.
- A Project of the Zero Waste Alliance, a non-profit that helps organizations move toward sustainability.



Some SOSI projects-

- SOSI Web Resource Center
- Working group for Managing Sustainability
 - Evolution of Sustainability, Sustainability Management System, Sustainability Baseline
- Policies for sustainability with OSBA
- Working with ESDs to identify opportunities for them to support the effort
- Projects with schools / districts
- Seek state recognition for K-12 role in sustainability effort.
- And more...

Sustainable
Oregon
Schools
Initiative



Discover



Take Action



Resources



About SOSI



**Welcome to the
new SOSI website!**

Sustainability includes all aspects of school operations, teaching and culture. This site offers resources to help Oregon's K-12 schools and districts on their journey toward sustainability. There are opportunities for all stakeholders to be involved.

Please take a look!

[Subscribe to the SOSI Newsletter](#)

[Donate to SOSI](#)

[Green Pages](#)



Evolution of Sustainability

- Green Initiatives
- Beginning of Sustainability Journey
- Integrating Sustainability
- Sustainability is Fully Integrated
- Sustainable
- Restorative



Making it permanent!

Do you know of a

- ◆ Recycling program
- ◆ School garden
- ◆ Etc...

That doesn't exist any more?

What happened?



The Sustainability effort should be managed in order to:

- Gain momentum by involving all stakeholders.
- Continually evaluate the WHOLE system.
- Set long-term goals and priorities.
- Have documented processes that create a permanent, integrated effort.
- Track progress across the organization.
- Eventually, achieve a sustainability culture change.



Why Sustainability?

- Engages students
- Gives students what they need for their future
- Saves money
- Reduces risk
- Protects Earth's systems that allow us to exist
(clean air, water...)
- Strengthens community



Sustainability in Schools Nationally

- Sustainability in higher education institutions is well recognized.
- Several states have sustainability education efforts underway.
- Washington State and Vermont have state standards involving sustainability.
- The US Partnership to the UN Decade is helping. (SOSI is a member)
- There are national sustainability education standards available
- Sustainability Management Systems being created.



Momentum is building in Oregon

- Some **Oregon schools and districts** surging ahead, However the state has not yet recognized the K-12 system as a critical player.
- **Educational service districts** are engaging
- **Related Legislation:** No Oregon Child Left Indoors, Integrated Pest Management, Farm to School...
- Presentations to **Oregon Board of Education**
- State of Oregon provides support to the **Oregon University System** for sustainability efforts.



Oregon's K-12 System

No one entity encompasses all aspects of Oregon K-12 sustainability

Oregon Department of Education

- Curriculum and instruction
- School improvement
- Statewide assessment testing
- Liaison and monitors implementation for a variety of state and federal programs, including the No Child Left Behind Act.

Oregon Board of Education

ESD Boards

Local School Boards

School District

School District

School District

Various services

20 Education Service Districts

197 INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Controlled by each district, and sometimes by schools within districts:

- Buildings
- Transportation
- Food
- Procurement
- Many other systems and services



Some common factors for success

- Clear support and vision demonstrated from top administrators (VERY important)
- Empower (and listen to) staff and students to contribute to sustainability efforts
- Educate staff about sustainability concepts
- Community-wide collaboration
- Leveraging opportunities (such as sending staff and students to local conferences about local sustainability-related issues)
- Inviting experts and stakeholders to join district discussions and efforts
- Data collection / measuring progress, and sharing it with everyone in and outside the district
- Whole systems approach; just looking at small pieces may miss the real leverage points



Just Start

- No “wrong place” to start
- Join SOSI working group
- SOSI will be soliciting ESD teams for workshops (*EPA grant project*)
- Subscribe to free SOSI E-newsletter
- Use SOSI website: events list, tools, resources and links, information, sharing... (www.sustainableschools.org)
- Seek staff education opportunities
- Develop the elements of a sustainability management system
- SOSI can provide various services...



Sustainability Is...

A journey

Not something new and additional to do

A systems approach to everything we already do

Where the jobs are heading

A K-12 opportunity!



Zero Waste Alliance

District Sustainability Journey

Bill Stewart

Gladstone School District



Zero Waste Alliance



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Thank you!

