



What is Sustainability?

Thinking for Sustainability includes:

- Considering needs of current and future generations
- Recognizing the inseparable interrelationship between environment, society and economy.
- Recognizing the whole system
- Identification of a visionary sustainable endpoint to guide the effort.
- Recognizing that the effort is a journey, through which mental models change.

The Need-

- We are using resources faster than Earth’s systems can replenish them.
- Many people on Earth are not able to meet their basic needs.
- More and more health problems are being linked to human-caused environmental factors.
- Since we only have one Earth, we need to learn how to change the way we do things.
- We can’t afford to spend money on un-needed resources.

Sustainable Development is development that “meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

- United Nations Brundtland Commission, 1987

“What about the seventh generation? Where are you taking them? What will they have?... We say that the faces of coming generations are looking up from the earth. So when you put your feet down, you put them down very carefully - because there are generations coming one after the other. If you think in these terms, then you'll walk a lot more carefully, be more respectful of this earth.”

- Oren Lyons, Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Chief

GREEN vs. SUSTAINABLE: They’re not the same (using example of Recycling vs. Resource Management)

	Green	Sustainable
Focus	Detail-focused (exclusive) <i>Recycling</i>	Whole Systems Focus (inclusive, visionary) <i>Resource Management</i>
Implementation	Tactical <i>Increase recycling</i>	Strategic <i>Rethink needs, reuse, recycle, while striving to eliminate all waste. Consider impacts from resource extraction through product end-of-life.</i>
Scope	Environment only	Environment, Economy, Society
Definition of Success	Subjective (success not defined) <i>More recycling</i>	Objective (success can be clearly defined) <i>Zero wasted resources or money. Closed loop system. Zero negative social impacts.</i>

Guiding the Journey

Zero Waste: Following Nature's Model

In a closed-loop system there is *zero waste*, allowing the cycle to continue indefinitely. Without a closed-loop, waste seeps out of the system, eventually resulting in a system shutdown. It applies to all resources: material, energy, water, financial and human.

- It is based on Nature's 4 billion-year old, waste-free example.
- It provides a bold visionary goal that's understood by all
- It utilizes Closed Loops or "Cradle to Cradle"
- There is 100% resource efficiency, no released toxics
- It drives resource management strategies
- Optimizes the entire system
- The concept acknowledges that our "Take-Make-Waste" society is compromising nature's ability to provide for us and future generations

The Natural Step Framework for Sustainability

Developed in 1989 by Swedish oncologist Karl-Henrik Robert, the Natural Step is a framework that guides decision-making. Robert, through a peer-reviewed process, determined four guiding principles that define sustainability in scientific terms: that is helping many organizations as a guide

In a sustainable global society, the ecosphere is not subject to systematically increasing...

1. Concentrations of substances extracted from the earth's crust

Examples: Fossil fuels, metals, and minerals

2. Concentrations of substances produced by society (synthetics)

Examples: Persistent substances (DDT, PCB's...), plastics, Freon

3. Degradation by physical means

Examples: Over-harvesting (forests, oceans...), eliminating biodiversity

and in that society,

4. People are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their basic needs

Examples: Overpopulation, unlivable wages, environmental and social inequity

To learn more about the Natural Step visit: www.ortns.org.

*For more information about sustainability, the Sustainable Oregon Schools Initiative or to sign up for the free electronic newsletter visit: www.sustainableschools.org,
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