

Educating for Sustainability

through Community Engagement



Will of the People Workshop
by Wendy Sarkissian
Byron Bay Markets
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Sustainability *is* a process of learning

- Adaptive processes in Nature,
& in societies
- moving from a 'society of learners'
to a 'learning society'
- Reflection, critical thinking &
willingness to evaluate are essential

Not all education is 'good' education in pursuit of sustainability

- Why are formal educational institutions teaching, anyway?
- Whose knowledge does it represent?

5 things we need to *appreciate*:

1. Resilience, fragility & beauty of Nature. Interdependence & equal importance of all life forms. Dependence of human life on the resources of a finite Earth
2. Role of human ingenuity & individual creativity in finding appropriate & sustainable solutions
3. Power of humans to modify the environment
4. Challenges in defining processes needed for sustainability & implementing necessary changes
5. Importance & worth of individual responsibility & action

We need to *experience*

1. Self-worth
2. Rootedness in our own culture & community

We need to *respect*

1. other cultures
2. interdependence of human community

We need to *maintain*

1. Global perspective & loyalty to world community
2. Sense of balance in deciding among conflicting priorities
3. Realistic appreciation of:
 - urgency of challenges
 - complexities demanding long-term planning

We need to *embrace*

A sustainable lifestyle

We need to *commit to*

1. Participation in change
2. Human rights
3. Peaceful conflict resolution

We need to *foster*

A sense of:

- hope
- positive personal & social perspectives

We need to *recognise*

Disparities & injustices

Aims of Education

- 'Heal distortions in human expectations'
- Rekindle ethos of citizenship
- Educate broadly, perceive systems & patterns & live as whole persons

Environmental education is hindered by approaches that...	Environmental education is facilitated by approaches that...
Do not build & maintain trust.	Promote openness & respect to build & maintain trust.
Make people appear foolish or incompetent.	Are tailored to different backgrounds & levels of preparedness.
Stress behaviour people consider unfeasible, impractical, inconvenient or without personal benefit	Build & strengthen people's capacity to respond rather than their obligation to respond.
Emphasize disconnection between current behaviour & environmental values.	Incorporate reflective activities to restore people's embedded beliefs & values so they can transform them into action.
Lack support for feelings of anxiety, loss, despair, insecurity & vulnerability. Information overload.	Permit flexibility. Give permission to make & learn from mistakes. Acknowledge emotional & spiritual connections, & foster a sense of wonder & curiosity.
Focus exclusively on global problems.	Encourage local leadership roles.

Component	Environmental Education: What works?	Adult Education: What works?
1. Foundational assumptions	A lifelong learning ethos.	Accept life skills as prior learning. Build on earlier activities & prior learning experiences.
2. Degree of involvement	Active, rather than passive, participation.	Encourage active learner participation.
3. Reflexivity	Allowing people to see their learning can have an impact & be effective.	Allow learners to assess their own skills & develop strategies that work for them.
4. Power distribution	Opportunities to replace an external with an internal locus of control.	Collaborative modes of teaching & learning. Co-planned & shared teaching processes & activities.

Component	Environmental Education: What works?	Adult Education: What works?
5. Problem framing	Critical thinking opportunities. Competence building: knowing <i>how</i> & not simply <i>why</i> to do something.	Promote question-asking & question-answering, problem-finding & problem-solving.
6. Learning style	Creative learning approaches.	Cater for visual, auditory & kinaesthetic learning styles (VAK). Problem- & experience-centred learning. Multi-dimensional communication.
7. Feeling outcome	Enjoyable experiences.	Enhance sense of self-esteem & pleasure. A conducive learning environment: non-threatening atmosphere that supports experimentation.
8. Assessment methodology	Continual feedback.	Feedback & evaluation.

	Education can <i>do</i>	Education can <i>be</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Enliven ➤ Transform ➤ Engage ➤ Equalize 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Localized ➤ Contextual ➤ Relational ➤ Holistic ➤ Ethical ➤ Experimental ➤ Interactive ➤ Action-oriented ➤ Participatory ➤ Democratic

Community Education for Sustainability: 3 Actions

- Assess knowledge & skills a community collectively can offer
- Recognize need for outside assistance & expertise
- Take charge of outcomes

Bear in mind...

- Incorporating education about sustainability into community engagement is not simple
- No single right way to educate people about sustainability
- Need new approaches to framing engagement exercises
- Must regularly update our education models

Community Education for Sustainability (CES)

6 Ingredients

1. Understanding
2. Community capacity strengthening
3. Grounded in reality
4. New relationships with Nature
5. Justice
6. Creativity & spirituality

1. Understanding

Foster broad understanding of all dimensions of sustainability based on science, experience, ethics, values & intersection of diverse beliefs.

2. Community Capacity & Strengthening

Build stronger, more connected & skilful communities that foster learning & learning environments.

- Asset Mapping
- Citizen Science
- Promoting collaboration via mentoring & intergenerational learning

3. Grounded in Reality

Focus on practical outcomes that increase people's empowerment & participation by being grounded in physical & social realities.

4. New relationships with Nature

Develop opportunities for new relationships with Nature & actions to support Nature.

5. Justice

Protect & enhance social, environmental & economic justice for all peoples, beings & life forms.

6. Creativity & Spirituality

Employ visionary & creative approaches to community education that enable communities to imagine & communicate their own visions of a sustainable future.

Hard & Soft Skills

- *Hard skills:*
tangible 'how to' skills
- *Soft skills:*
intangible 'process' skills

Hard Skills

- Many different skills needed
- Food production, housing, transportation, energy, financial accounting, etc.
- All must be done in ways that reflect ecological & community knowledge

Hard skills must:

- Enhance social & ecoliteracy
- Highlight relevance of 'native wisdom'
- Manage information & knowledge: so it's useful & effective to the context

Soft Skills

- Accessing multiple intelligences
- Communication
- Critical & reflective thinking
- Personal development

Wendy Sarkissian



Kitchen Table Sustainability

PO Box 117

Nimbin NSW 2480

0402 966 284

wendy@sarkissian.com.au

www.kitchentablesustainability.com