Education for Sustainability and the Australian Curriculum

Education for sustainability develops the knowledge, skills, values and world views necessary for people to act in ways that contribute to more sustainable patterns of living. It enables individuals and communities to reflect on ways of interpreting and engaging with the world. Sustainability education is futures-oriented, focusing on protecting environments and creating a more ecologically and socially just world through informed action. Actions that support more sustainable patterns of living require consideration of environmental, social, cultural and economic systems and their interdependence.

Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2015

The Education for Sustainability (EfS) approach and the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative-South Australia (AuSSI-SA) are underpinned by principles, practices and learning intentions outlined in the learning areas of the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Curriculum also encompasses knowledge, skills and behaviour to develop the capability of students to explore and engage in sustainability. The ways in which EfS relates to various areas of the curriculum and pedagogy are outlined below.

Cross Curriculum Priority: Sustainability – Sustainability addresses the ongoing capacity of the earth to maintain all life. Participation in EfS provides authentic contexts to develop “sustainable patterns of living that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Actions to improve sustainability are both individual and collective endeavours shared across local and global communities. They necessitate a renewed and balanced approach to the way humans interact with each other and the environment”. Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2015

General Capabilities - Participation in EfS gives educators the opportunity to develop the goals set out in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008) – supporting them “to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens...individuals who can manage their own wellbeing, relate well to others, make informed decisions about their lives, become citizens who behave with ethical integrity, relate to and communicate across cultures, work for the common good and act with responsibility at local, regional and global levels”. Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2015

EfS supports teachers to develop their practice in the three domains of the South Australian Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) Framework: create safe conditions for rigorous learning, develop expert learners, and personalise and connect learning.

Teaching for Effective Learning Framework – The TfEL key messages help leaders and teachers focus on what characterises effective teaching. Focusing on the pedagogy of educators can ensure that their teaching maximises students’ engagement and achievement. Educators enable students to find their own strengths, challenge their habits and perceptions, provide dialogue and collaboration for co-construction, become multiliterate, carry out challenging but achievable tasks, have control over their own learning, and undertake varied assessment. Government of South Australia, Department of Education and Children’s Services, 2010
NRM Education resources

NRM Education has developed a suite of resources linked to the Australian Curriculum including teacher information packs, units of work, identification charts, fact sheets and more. These resources will be of particular interest to educators who want to integrate learning across subjects, learning areas and year levels.

NRM Education encourages AuSSI-SA sites to use NRM Education resources and learning experience ideas that incorporate the EFS approach so that students are not only engaged in gaining an understanding of content, but also internalise and practice the values, skills, and behaviours involved in living sustainably. NRM Education resources are designed to provide ideas for teachers to ‘adopt or adapt’ to the needs and interests of their students. Our links to the Australian Curriculum are intended as a starting point, from which teachers are encouraged to explore the potential of our resources for rich, integrated teaching across many areas of learning.

NRM Education resources encourage students to...

Think like a geographer:
• explore the connections between the environment and people
• notice the differences in local environments
• pose questions, investigate and plan an inquiry
• collect data from primary and secondary sources
• record, represent and interpret data including maps
• draw conclusions based on evidence, information and data
• explore options of what we (individually and collectively) could do to improve and protect our local environments
• take action in response to what students learn.

Think like a scientist:
• develop an understand of how living things, including plants and animals, depend on each other and the environment to survive
• develop a deeper understanding of living things; their life cycles, structured features and adaptations, and requirements for survival
• pose questions that can be tested scientifically
• predict what the results might be
• suggest how to improve the method to get more accurate results
• safely use tools and equipment to take measurements
• represent data in many ways
• identify patterns and trends.

Think like a mathematician:
• take measurements
• make calculations using common metric units
• interpret information in maps
• collect data and construct suitable data displays
• understand how different data methods can more clearly show patterns or trends more than others.

Further information
For more information about how NRM Education can support your AuSSI-SA site visit: http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/adelaidemtloftyranges/education/for-educators/