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**Inspiring leaders;
improving children's lives**

Leading Sustainable Schools

Setting your vision



What's our vision?

Research suggests sustainability is developed most effectively when it is put at the heart of the school's improvement plan and is reflected in the school's vision. The purpose of this booklet is to help you think about how sustainability could be incorporated into your vision statement. The visioning and mind-mapping exercises included in this booklet are one way of collectively setting a vision. If you're not yet ready to revise your vision statement, try borrowing one of the vision statements below. You can revisit setting or revising your own statement later.

What does sustainability mean to our school?

"We will work to transform our own sites, practices, resourcing, teaching and learning in conjunction with as broad a spectrum of our community as possible, both locally and abroad, recording, analysing and publishing what we do as we go along. We will invite a wide range of experts and outside agencies to participate in our transformation and be honest about our failures as well as our successes".

"We believe that the school landscape should be steering everyone towards identifying the virtues and benefits of green living. Our plan is to make our grounds a haven for children and a support for trees, plants and other living things. Growing up in and knowing the natural environment is a first step towards understanding and valuing it. What they sow this year they reap next year and by drawing on other people's personal endeavours and adding to them, they are developing a collaborative way of thinking for life".

"We believe sustainability is all about giving children the opportunities, skills and support they need to take control of their school environment and the wider world beyond. We want to empower them to make their contribution in the widest sense by taking responsibility for their own school community, the wider community and indeed the global community".

Vision – what is the purpose of our school?

Introduction

Education is about change. Through learning, people gain new knowledge and understanding which enables them to build new skills and behaviours. All schools have a vision of what they hope to achieve in educating their students. When schools start out on their sustainability journey they need to develop a clear vision of where they are hoping to go, at least the direction of the changes they want to make. Setting a final goal is difficult when working in sustainability and not necessarily desirable, as the context within which the school operates is continually changing and the vision needs to accommodate this.

When thinking about education for sustainable development (ESD) it may be useful to consider this as having two sides, both important and complementary to each other:

- ESD 1 uses learning as a tool to promote informed behaviours and ways of thinking which facilitate desirable changes ie towards sustainability.
- ESD 2 sees learning as sustainable development as it builds capacity to think critically and to test new ideas and practices, exploring the contradictions inherent in sustainable development.

On the ground, ESD 1 concerns the practical responses schools can make through following the doorways approach of the sustainable schools framework and the reasoning behind these, showing clear, measurable short and medium term benefits to the school and beyond. ESD 2 is about the teaching and learning in schools which enables students to become life-long learners and critical thinkers. This is essential if they are to actively participate in the reflective social learning needed to live in our complex and uncertain world and to consider how we might live in the future (Vare and Scott, 2007). Both sides should be incorporated into the school's vision.

Creating a vision

Each school will have a different vision determined by its physical and social context. However, the most successful sustainable schools place sustainability at the heart of their vision and this describes the changes they wish to bring about and the processes they plan to use. These visions are created by the broad school community and are understood and supported across the school. Student participation plays a very important role in creating the vision.

In the overall process of developing your school's approach to sustainability, you may choose to develop a vision at the start or after auditing the school's current practice or at any other point that seems appropriate. Once developed it should be seen as a dynamic statement of intent which will be revisited repeatedly as the school monitors its progress and as circumstances change.

Activity

For many schools developing a shared understanding of sustainability is a necessary first step before they can apply this concept to draw up a vision for their own school. This activity has two phases: developing a shared understanding and applying this to your school.

Objectives

- To explore and understand sustainability in the context of the local community.
- To build a working definition of a sustainable school.
- To build a whole school vision.

Outputs

- Your school's working definition of sustainability.
- Your school's vision.

Participants

Who you choose to develop the vision with will depend on your school's leadership structure and decision making processes. The more inclusive the group – teaching and support staff, governors, students – the greater the support will be for the vision. However, it may well not be feasible to include all these groups from the start of this process. There will be subsequent opportunities, linked with evaluative reflection and revision, at which the wider school community can contribute.

Materials

- Local postcards or photos which reflect your school and community.
- Large sheets of paper and flip charts.
- Post-it notes of at least four different colours.
- Coloured marker pens.
- Blu-tack.

Time

- Approximately 90 mins.

Process

- 1) Before running this activity you will need to assemble a collection of images of your school and community. Try to get a good mix of pictures that show landscapes, buildings, cultural history, activity and people.
- 2) Display the pictures so they are easy for participants to see. Ask them to take one each that interests them. If there are more than 20 participants ask them to work in groups around the picture of their choice.
- 3) Give each participant (or group) four different coloured post-it notes and a marker pen. Allocate each colour to: social, environmental, economic, citizenship/governance. Ask the participants to identify: a social factor; an environmental factor; an economic factor; a citizenship/governance factor in their picture and to record these on the appropriate coloured post-it.
- 4) Label a large sheet of paper 'Our community' and display this at the front of the room. Ask the participants for one social factor post-it. Stick it onto the sheet. Do not evaluate or judge the factor given. Ask for another factor (from any of the four areas) that relates to the first. Place this post-it next to the first and draw a line linking them. Continue to request and link factors until the group has no more related post-its and no new lines can be drawn.

If there are still more factors to be shared ask for a new starting point and continue as before until all the factors have been shared. If you have created two or more webs can the groups see any factors which could link these webs? Draw these lines in.

- 5) Ask participants to look at this interconnected web of factors and to think about how they influence or are influenced by factors outside the community – regional or global. Record these ideas on open areas on the large sheet, around the web.
- 6) Ask participants to arrange themselves in small groups of three to six members. Hand out the resource sheet 'Building a definition – individual response' to each participant and ask them to spend about 10mins completing the task outlined on the sheet. Emphasise that these four factors are taken as the cornerstones of sustainability and it is the interconnectedness of these four which makes for complexity in managing our lives sustainably.

- 7) Now distribute the resource sheet 'Building a definition – group discussion'. Ask the individual group members to share their ideas and work through the task to build an agreed definition. The group needs to appoint a recorder and the activity should take about 20mins.
- 8) Bring the whole group back together and ask each small group recorder to share their group's definition of sustainability. Record these on large sheets of paper and display. As a whole group consider the key words and phrases:
 - Do they share common ideas?
 - Are they jargon free? Would parents and governors understand them?
 - What phrases or ideas could be incorporated into an agreed definition of sustainability?

Give out three sticky dots per participant and ask them to weight the phrases by placing one dot by the three keywords or phrases that best describe sustainability.

- 9) Now ask each group recorder to share their vision of the future, record on large sheets and display. As a whole group consider the key words and phrases:
 - Do they share common ideas?
 - Are they jargon free? Would parents and governors understand them?
 - What phrases or ideas could be incorporated into an agreed vision for the school?

Give out three sticky dots per participant and ask them to weight the phrases by placing one dot by the three key words or phrases that best describe the school's vision.

- 10) Identify a small group of participants to incorporate the most popular words and phrases to produce a working definition of sustainability and vision statement the whole group can endorse.

Resource Sheet: Building a definition – individual response

Take 10 minutes on your own to think about and record your responses to the following tasks.

- Refer to the webbing poster completed earlier. Think about each of the sustainability factors. What do they look like in practice in your community today?
- Think about what you would like your community to be like in 2020? How would you like the factors to change?
- Use plain English keywords and phrases to describe what the factors mean to your community and how they affect its well-being – now and in the future.

Participants

What does social justice look like in your community now?	
What would you like it to look like in 2020?	
Keywords or phrases	

Environmental

<p>What does environmental stewardship look like in your community now?</p>	
<p>What would you like it to look like in 2020?</p>	
<p>Keywords or phrases</p>	

Economic

<p>What does economic security look like in your community now?</p>	
<p>What would you like it to look like in 2020?</p>	
<p>Keywords or phrases</p>	

Citizenship/governance

<p>What do the decision making processes in your community look like now?</p>	
<p>What would you like them to look like in 2020?</p>	
<p>Keywords or phrases</p>	

Resource Sheet: Building a definition – group discussion

Take 20 minutes working as a group to complete the following task.

Identify a member of your group who will record your group's discussion and responses on a large sheet of paper to report back to the whole group.

Participants should refer to their earlier individual responses to initiate this discussion.

Social justice

What does this look like now in society?

What would we like to see by 2020?

What key words or phrases describe social justice?

How can our school work to promote social justice?

Environmental stewardship

What does this look like now in society?

What would we like to see by 2020?

What keywords or phrases describe environmental stewardship?

How can our school work to promote environmental stewardship?

Economic security

What does this look like now in society?

What would we like to see by 2020?

What keywords or phrases describe economic security?

How can our school work to promote economic security?

Citizenship/governance

What does this look like now in society?

What would we like to see by 2020?

What keywords or phrases describe citizenship/governance?

How can our school work to promote citizenship/governance?

Now bring it all together – Remembering ESD1 and ESD 2.

- Thinking about the initial webbing activity, how can learning contribute to understanding and addressing the issues you identified?
- Reflecting on the four elements of sustainability you have just discussed, what kinds of learning processes will prepare learners to contribute to the preferred futures you described?
- Agree five keywords or phrases your group would use to describe sustainability, thinking about the learning processes as well as the learning goals.
- Agree five keywords or phrases your group would use to describe your school's vision, thinking about how you will progress towards the preferred future.

Mind Mapping

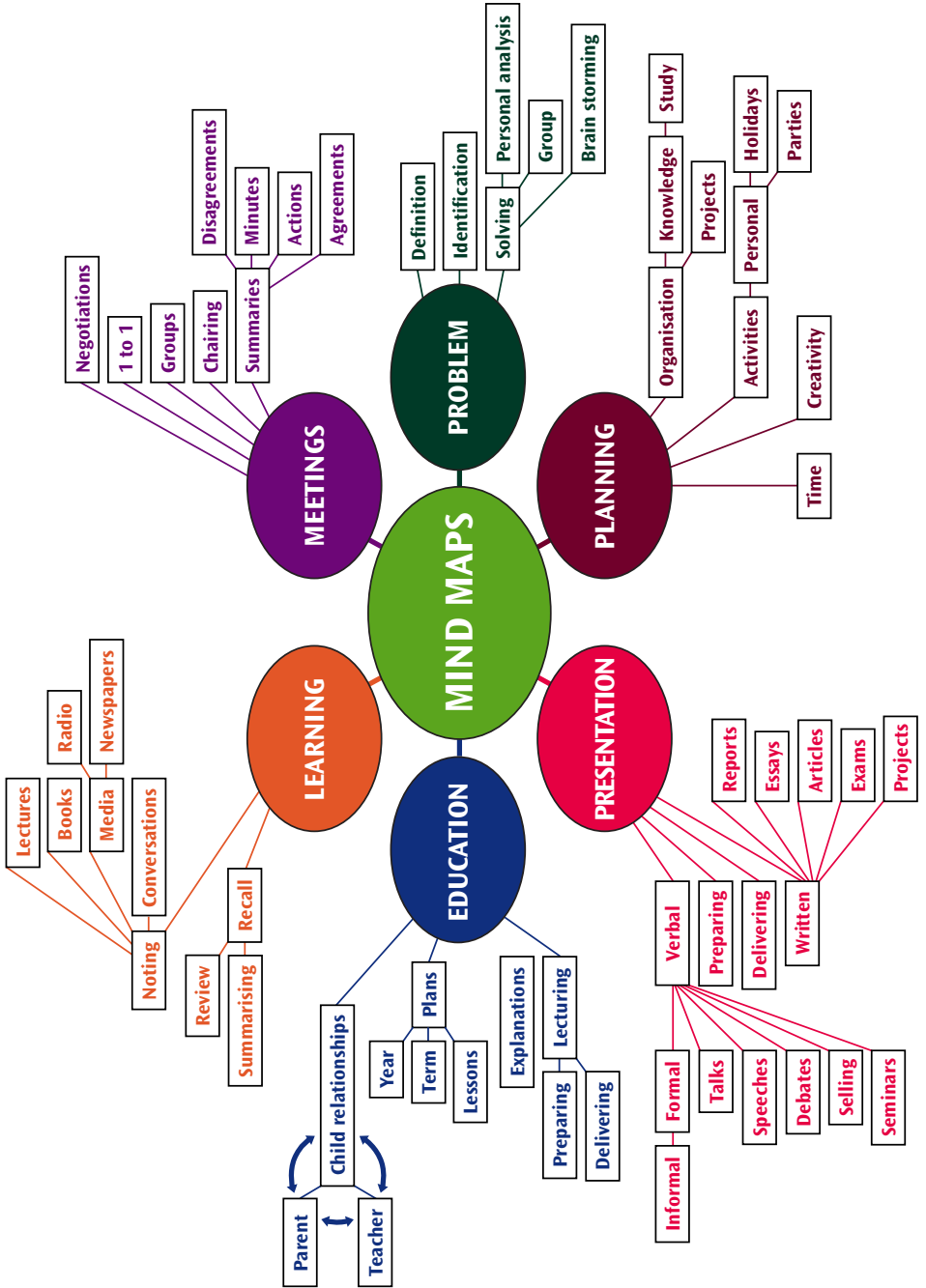
Introduction

It is evident that working with the concept of sustainability and how you apply this to your school is highly complex. As soon as you start to consider one sustainable schools 'doorway' for example you realise that it has connections to others.

This is a key aspect of sustainability and is why systems thinking is a fundamental skill which has to be applied to dealing with any sustainability issue. The world is a complex and interconnected entity, many systems work together to enable life to live on this planet and disrupting one has knock on effects elsewhere. As we know, pumping large quantities of CO₂ into the atmosphere is not only warming the air but consequently changing weather patterns, animal and plant reproduction, sea currents and land erosion – and these are only the effects we can already see happening.

When you are looking at the eight doorways of the sustainable schools framework it is important that this interconnectedness is not overlooked. For example, if you choose to work on travel and traffic it has implications for the buildings and grounds as extra provision for bikes may need to be made which will also draw in purchasing and waste. It also links to local well-being as traffic flows around the school will change. In fact if you start to really look into the doorway you will find links to all the others.

Mind Maps (Buzan) are a useful tool which will help you capture these links so you can work on them and ensure that activities on one doorway do not negatively affect work on another, but rather that you can optimise activity across doorways.



How do they work?

Tony Buzan suggests using the following foundation structures for Mind Mapping:

- Start in the centre with an image of the topic, using at least three colours.
- Use images, symbols, codes, and dimensions throughout your Mind Map.
- Select keywords and print using upper or lower case letters.
- Each word or image must be alone and sitting on its own line.
- The lines must be connected, starting from the central image. The central lines are thicker, organic and flowing, becoming thinner as they radiate out from the centre.
- Make the lines the same length as the word or image.
- Use colours – your own code – throughout the Mind Map.
- Develop your own personal style of Mind Mapping.
- Use emphasis and show associations in your Mind Map.
- Keep the Mind Map clear by using radial hierarchy, numerical order or outlines to embrace your branches.

When working with the doorways simply place the doorway you are considering at the centre and then work through the other doorways as the radiating branches, showing links and additional branches as appropriate.

Notes/actions

**National College for
School Leadership**

Triumph Road
Nottingham NG8 1DH

T: 0845 609 0009

F: 0115 872 2001

E: enquiries@ncsl.org.uk

W: www.ncsl.org.uk