



SUMMARY OF EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

The purpose of the Sustainable DC initiative is to create a strategic framework and vision to make the District the greenest, healthiest, and most livable city in the United States. Throughout the planning process, several “crosscutting” topic areas emerged: health, environmental education, jobs and job preparation, and social equity.

The following summary of a conversation about environmental education held on June 5, 2012, represents the ideas of more than 40 individuals who participated in person or provided feedback online about how education cuts across issues of sustainability. This information will be used in the development of the Sustainable DC Implementation Plan related to education.

“Formal” education

1. **In addition to the topics covered in the Environmental Literacy Plan, are there other topics a “sustainability literate” person should know?**
 - Life cycle thinking:
 - True costs of things
 - Law of cause and effect/systems thinking
 - Critical thinking about key areas:
 - “How to find out”
 - Understanding the individual in context: how the world around me impacts me, and how I impact the world
 - Understanding current challenges in the context of history
 - Differentiating how DC is different from other parts of the U.S., how the U.S. is different from other parts of the world
 - Knowledge of how populations, religion, politics, law and other economic and social factors impact sustainability
 - Understanding of the role of the rest of the world and the global economy
 - Ability to assess their own environmental impacts
 - How to apply sustainability to daily lives
 - Role of civic engagement, activism, and service-learning in affecting change
2. **What are the desired outcomes of formal sustainability education in terms of knowledge and behavior change?**
 - Ability to think critically, problem solve constructively, and change behavior; students will have the tools to be creative, solve problems, and affect change
 - Stewardship – beyond nature or doing so because it’s a good idea, but being good stewards because it’s smart
 - Lasting lifetime change/paradigm shift

- Leadership development; desire on the part of students to teach others
- Preparation for green careers
- Sustainability education will be integrated into overall education (eg. 3 Rs) and not separate

3. Are you aware of any particularly effective programs or activities for sustainability education taking place at formal education institutions at any level (K-12, higher education)?

- Capital City Public Charter School: exhibition learning at every level
- Stokes Public Charter School has a head chef, salad bar, on-site food prep, and contract for organic milk
- Mundo Verde Public Charter Schools – bilingual Spanish school with environment education focus
- Urban gardening/schoolyard greening school programs (day and aftercare programs)
- Living Classrooms DC – nature walks and environmental programs for K-12
- Solar Gadgets Kit (DDOE)
- Healthy Schools Act: food, exercise, Environmental Literacy Plan (ELP)
- Trash Free Schools – Alice Ferguson Foundation
- Programs with local chefs to talk to school kids about healthy eating
- Green features/facilities within schools
- LEED Platinum-certified schools: integrate buildings into learning; renovate schools to LEED Platinum standard
- Bike to School Day
- Tying all 9 areas to curriculum “Landmark Forum” model
- Environment As An Integrating Context curriculum at charter schools (one trying to start in Frederick, MD, others in existence)
- IB (International Baccalaureate) program – Sharing the Planet (K-12)
- Earth Echo International has a water curriculum
- Washington State has good examples of K-12 and beyond programs
- Maryland Green Schools – buildings, curriculum integration, outdoor learning (NGO driven)
- UDC College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability (CAUSES)
- CCDC has a green construction program with workforce development
- CUA Architecture program has some focus on sustainability
- UMD Architecture program participates in Solar Decathlon
- Advocacy education in addition to stewardship (ex. College-level programs to holistically think about business and institutions)
- Earth Force
- Be Water Wise DC

4. **How can the non-profit and private sectors complement work being done by formal education institutions in schools and in the community?**

- Career development
 - Provide green jobs, service-learning opportunities, internships, and other opportunities for real world experiences
 - Share expertise in classroom settings
 - Provide workshops on real skills (e.g. making rain barrels, LID, etc.) – teaching to fish vs. giving a fish
 - Service providers at schools can provide learning experiences, ex. – Woodson H.S. contractor shared how the work was being done on the school as part of a lesson
 - Formulate entrepreneurship training partnerships, particularly with sustainable businesses (model/resource: National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship)
- Tie curriculum to other community environmental education events
- Better funding and organization on the nonprofit/private sector side so that all players know what work is being done and that volunteers are not all going to the same schools
- Help schools assess needs/fill in gaps, both in terms of curriculum but also on operations side to make sure they are demonstrating best practices
- Government support needed:
 - Support B Corps that embrace sustainability → pipelines of those learning → jobs/businesses
 - Schools need a structure to allow interaction
 - Schools must show how different subjects are connected and interrelated in real life
- Suggested partners: Greater DC Cares Impact Days; DCEEC (support for ELP, in-school programs); City Year; Single Volunteers of DC; Washington Gas (corporate sustainability offices); Bethesda Green; Corning (examples of IT integration into learning programs); USGBC education programs; AIA; Chamber of Commerce (and other business organizations).

Community education

1. **What are the desired outcomes of a community sustainability education in terms of knowledge and behavior change?**

- Outcomes are the same/similar as formal education
- Resource stewardship
 - Creation of/participation in a sharing economy
 - Equipment swaps
 - Education about reusing things, combat stigma
 - Education on the true cost of throwing things away vs. recycling or reusing
- Understanding of the power of consumer choice
- General knowledge and clear understanding of community food systems, utility systems, recycling processes

- Understanding the “why” of positive and negative outcomes
- Framing: who does the framing matters, engagement needed with the community, strategic presentations by location and audience

2. How will we know if community education and outreach is working and if we are successful?

What should we use for specific goals or targets?

- Data
 - # of solar projects installed, etc.
 - Quantitative and qualitative performance metrics for sustainability
 - Bag use
 - Consumer purchases
 - How many bags/how much other trash ends up in city, water
 - Recycling rates, trash reduction (# tons of garbage vs. # tons of recycling)
- Surveys
 - Collect baseline data to measure achievement of community actions
 - Multi-agency/nonprofit surveying of knowledge, practices at home, work (done pre/post where possible)
 - Before/after community attitude survey
- Physical evidence: What can you see has changed?
- Quality of life: Is there a general feeling that life is better, people want to be here, and people are enjoying what’s around them?

3. What community education and outreach programs or activities are already working well in the District or elsewhere?

- Incubators/citizen circles, like HUB DC
- DC SUN provides education and hosts events
- Green Living DC (hosts yearly expo, wants to do more)
- Think Local First (good at rallying community around spending at local businesses)
- Net Impact
- Schoolyard gardens & community gardening programs
- Farmers markets (ex. – the Mt Pleasant market has educational programming)
- Casey Trees
- Anacostia Watershed Society
- Alice Ferguson Foundation
- Bethesda Green
- DC Environmental Education Consortium (DCEEC)
- Green building/business challenge