

2015

10 Ways to Integrate Sustainability into Your Curriculum

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Adapted and revised by Angela Halfacre from a presentation by Peggy Barlett at the AASHE sponsored *Sustainability and Curriculum: A Workshop for Campus Leaders*, June 2009.

Recommended Citation

Shi Center for Sustainability, "10 Ways to Integrate Sustainability into Your Curriculum". *Additional Materials*. Full Cost Analysis Learning Module (2015). <http://scholarexchange.furman.edu/fca-add/7>

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Ten Ways to Integrate Sustainability into the Curriculum at Furman University

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Furman Faculty Workshop Working Definition of Sustainability: **Sustainability explores the dynamic relationships among social, economic, and environmental systems in order to enhance the long-term quality of life.**

1. Embedded curriculum – manipulating course content to include sustainability without changing course goals
 - Marketing course: targets sustainability information to particular audience of interest (and might create product).
 - Language course: translates text with environmental content.
 - Religion course: compares texts from various religions to determine messages about social justice.
2. Additional or alternative readings – adding or changing reading list to incorporate sustainability without altering course goals
 - Philosophy: grapple with the moral and ethical implications of food choices.
 - Psychology: add research article about cognitive benefits of interacting with natural environment (could apply to comparing underserved and affluent communities)
3. Altered or new assignment – adding or changing assignment to incorporate sustainability without altering course goals
 - English: writing assignment related to the relationship between nature and society in various genres
 - Communications: Examine the methods of communicating sustainability messages and determine the most effective. Look at ways of communicating sustainability information (language, etc) and determine how these have changed over time
 - Computer Science: develop a program to log energy use of laptops over time and modulate energy use depending on computer application; cost analysis
 - Music/Psychology: examine the effect of noise pollution on citizens of urban environments
4. Altered or new unit or module – add themes related to environmental, social, or economic sustainability.
 - Sociology, History, or Policy course: Examination of Sustainability's meaning over time by different socio-economic groups in a society.
 - Religion: Examine messages of environmental stewardship in religious texts and how religious traditions view human interaction with nature; consider moral, ethical, societal dimensions
 - Biology: include discussion of economic and social aspects of conservation in broader discussion of conservation biology
5. Applied research project
 - Education: develop elementary curriculum about sustainable food choices
 - Business: Examine economic risk and reward of switching to a different energy source.
 - Business: Social justice analysis of government, nonprofit, or corporate employee policies.

- Health Sciences: Examine how behaviors change in dining hall when healthy foods are introduced
 - Music: Analyze the musical styles of composers from different socio-economic backgrounds
 - Music: Create a percussion composition to reflect the cacophony of noise pollution
 - Psychology/Art: map perceptions of places on campus and then make it into an art project with photos of the spaces and the map
 - Spanish: Compare newspaper coverage of a sustainability-related issue in two Latin American countries
6. Guest speaker – Local Community member discussing local issue, business practice, or process, etc.
- Chemistry: What kind of chemicals are used by a local agency for mosquito control and what are the risks and benefits? Are there safer alternatives?
 - Earth and Environmental Science: What are metrics for water quality monitoring?
 - Political Science: How are communities planning for a likely increase in population?
7. Team teaching – invite colleagues to guest lecture or develop new course to be taught individually or as a team. May X is an opportunity to pilot ideas.
- Various Disciplines: Water, Energy, Conservation, Climate Change, etc. seen through the lens of sustainability: What “ecosystem services” are provided by local ecosystems and how are we doing in protecting or restoring them?
 - Psychology/Sociology: Perceptions of Sustainability and the Environment: How do individuals and groups perceive sustainability and the environmental over time and place? How do we study individual and group perceptions?
8. New course
- Various Disciplines: Community and Gardening
 - Art: Design with nature – (e.g., constructing a shelter from local forest/field species).
 - Education: Teaching Sustainability: Examine environmental education and teaching methods for sustainability and environmental citizenship
9. Teacher-Scholar Application – use your research in your courses.
- Biology, Chemistry, Earth and Environmental Sciences: Water Quality and Urbanization Research
 - Psychology: Consumer attitudes about environmentally friendly products or student awareness of ingredients in their personal care products.
 - Biology, Earth and Environmental Science: Analyze runoff from synthetic turf field for compounds that are a threat to human health or aquatic life.
10. Perspective shift: Student learning goals altered to reflect sustainability learning goals.
- Environmental Policy: Movement from ‘doing no harm’, ‘standards and enforcement’ or ‘pollution control’ to focusing on ‘ecological restoration’, ‘pollution prevention’, ‘market-based solutions’ and ‘social justice’.