



Dear readers,
 Welcome to the second post on topics related to "**educating for sustainability**". I would like to thank you for your responses and feedback. It is encouraging to know that these articles are relevant and meaningful to you.

My aspiration is to initiate a dialogue with YOU - the readers of these articles. Please email me with your questions, suggestions and responses to mona@greenschool.org

Response from one of the parents of GS: "Hi Mona, thank you for the article, I enjoyed reading it, can you please address 'sustainability' at some point". Thank you and here it is:

SUSTAINABILITY

Consider this: *Quite simply, we have invented a new ecology, one in which, to an ever-increasing extent, all the resources of the world that previously nurtured many millions of species, are channelled toward just one. - Colin Tudge*

The word sustainability is derived from the Latin *sustinere* (sus, up; tenere, to hold). Some meanings from the dictionaries for sustain are "maintain", "support", or "endure". We can consider sustainability at a number of different levels, including the individual, a community, an organization, or a planet. It reminds us of our responsibility to pass on to our children and grandchildren a world with as many opportunities as the ones we inherited. The most popular definition of sustainability can be traced to a 1987 UN conference. It defined sustainability as:

"Meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs". (WECD, 1987).

We have lived by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. While it has been commercially profitable for enterprises to use more natural resources and employing fewer people, in the 21st century we'll have to use fewer natural resources while employing more people. 21st century well-being will require the nurturing and valuing of: Natural, Cultural, and Human capital. Isn't it true that all wealth is ultimately, a product of a healthy environment!

As Fritjof Capra states, *"Living sustainably means recognizing that we are inseparable part of the entire web of life, of nonhuman and human communities, and that enhancing the dignity and sustainability of any one community will enhance all the others"* (Bioneers Conference workshop, 2003)

I found this animated video on sustainability relevant to the topic of discussion:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5NiTN0chj0>

Now try this fun and educational activity with a group of friends or with your children to learn how to evaluate a product and see to what extent it is sustainable:

Materials needed: paper, coloured pencils, a collection of small products (e.g. a plastic cup, kettle, bottle, milk carton, fast-food product, shirt)

Background to the task

Everything that is made has an impact on the environment. When evaluating a product, think and talk about the many different stages of its life.

Consider these:

- How the raw materials are produced?
- How the product is manufactured?
- How it is promoted?
- How it is transported to the shops?

Carrying out the task

- In your group or with your child, look at the product on the table:
- Try to work out what materials have been used to make it.
- Try to work out what manufacturing methods

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How it is packaged? • How it is used? • How it is reused, or disposed of after its first use? • How any packaging is reused or disposed of? 	<p>have been used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about how the product is used. • Look at the packaging and try to identify materials and manufacturing methods. • Think about the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are the raw materials renewable? - how much energy is used at different stages of the product's life cycle? - what pollution is caused by extraction, processing, manufacturing, use and disposal of the product? - what other effects does it have on the environment?
<p>Recording your results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a simple sketch of the product. Turn the paper to landscape format and draw your sketch in the middle of the sheet. • Make notes on the same sheet, identifying each material used to make the product. • Highlight the name of the material in red if it has a bad environmental impact, and in green if it causes little or no environmental damage. Say simply what is good or bad about each material. (If you don't know, put a big ? next to it.) Add any other comments related to the product's sustainability. <p>Write your name, a title and date on the sheet of paper and send to me if you would like to include it in the next post.</p>	

Teach green, act green, learn green.

References & suggested further readings:

Blackburn, W.R. (2007). *The Sustainability Handbook*. London: Earthscan.

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Capra, Fritjof. *The web of life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems*. New York: Anchor Books, 1996

Daly, H. & J. Cobb (1989). *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment and a Sustainable Future*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Orr, David W. *Ecological Literacy: Education and Transition to a Postmodern World*. Albany, NY: State. University of New York Press, 1992.

Stone, Michael K., and Center for Ecoliteracy. *Smart by Nature: Schooling for Sustainability*. Healdsburg, CA

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<http://www.stepin.org>