



3-Step Guide Toward Educating Students for a Sustainable Future



Are you educating your students for a sustainable future? How do you know?

The unique challenges that define our era **require fundamentally new ways of thinking and acting.** This begs the question: *What is education for?* If humanity is to successfully transition from an unsustainable way of life to a regenerative one, the field of **Education for Sustainability (EfS)** has a central role to play.

Through the core curriculum, EfS equips students and teachers with the knowledge, skills and dispositions that society needs to achieve economic prosperity and responsible citizenship while restoring the health of the living systems upon which our lives depend.

3 Steps Toward Educating Students for a Sustainable Future

1 Teachers' Observations of Students' Mindsets

2 A Mini Audit

3 Begin Shifting Toward Educating for a Sustainable Future

STEP 1

Teachers' Observations of Students' Mindsets

Have a conversation in the next week with 3-5 teachers. Ask them which of the following mindsets they see in their students:

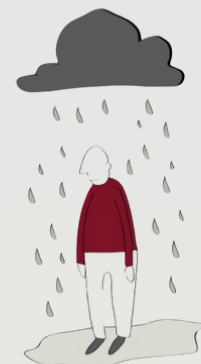
Sustainable Mindsets



A healthy and sustainable future is possible. We are all in this together and we are all responsible for the difference we make.

Students might say, “We can do it”
“We need each other and we can count on each other”. “I have rights and they come with responsibilities.”

Un-Sustainable Mindsets



It can't be done, it's too late, game over. Someone [else] will find a way. They aren't doing anything, so why should I?

Students might say, “Things are the way they are. There is nothing I can do about it”; “I wish someone would do something.” “If no one else is doing anything, why should I?” “I will enjoy life while I can.”

STEP 2

A Mini Audit

Take 45 minutes to audit 2-3 unit plans from different disciplines and grade levels. This simple mini audit helps you identify the hidden levers in the curriculum that unintentionally reinforce unsustainable thinking and actions.

Reflection Question: *Do you see a connection between your students' mindsets and the curriculum units?*



Education for Sustainability Mini Audit



1. Evidence of EfS Enduring Understandings, Standards, and Performance Indicators

Rate this area (1–4):

Rating	Description
4	Clear, intentional integration of EfS understandings and indicators throughout the curriculum.
3	Moderate evidence; EfS is partially aligned but inconsistently embedded.
2	Minimal evidence; EfS ideas appear incidentally or superficially.
1	No evidence of EfS language, standards, understandings, or performance indicators in the curriculum.

2. Evidence of Linear/Mechanistic Language

Rate this area (1–4):

Rating	Description
4	Consistent use of relational, reciprocal, systems-based language.
3	Mostly relational/systemic language with occasional linear/mechanistic phrasing.
2	Some linear/mechanistic language; few relational/systemic phrases.
1	Frequent linear, mechanistic, or one-way cause/effect language.

3. Evidence of Anthropocentric Language

Rate this area (1–4):

Rating	Description
4	Consistent ecological framing; humans positioned as interdependent with natural systems.
3	Frequent acknowledgment of interdependence with some inconsistencies.
2	Some recognition of interdependence but mostly human-centered language.
1	Human-centered framing dominates; nature is presented as separate or controllable.

4. Problem-Based vs. Vision-Based Framing

Rate this area (1–4):

Rating	Description
4	Consistently vision-based and asset-oriented; challenges are addressed in service of the vision and goals.
3	Challenges are still driving instruction, but goals are present.
2	Mostly problem-centered with limited vision-based or asset-based elements.
1	Curriculum units and projects are entirely problem-centered with no future-oriented goal setting.

STEP 3

Educate for Sustainability through the Core Curriculum

If the unsustainable mindsets ring true and your audit scores fall short, here are a few simple adjustments you can make to your core curriculum:

Adopt EfS Enduring Understandings, Standards, and Performance Indicators

If scores fell in the **1–2 range on question 1**, adopt the Education for Sustainability Enduring Understandings, Standards and Performance Indicators. They provide a powerful, coherent framework that helps every learner begin to see their role in creating a healthier, more just and sustainable future.

Shift to relational and reciprocal language

If scores landed in the **1–2 range on question 2 and 3**, invite faculty and curriculum leads to breathe new life into learning outcomes and inquiry questions by using relational, reciprocal language. This shift mirrors the dynamic and interconnected world our students must navigate, and unlocks systems thinking, critical thinking, creative thinking and metacognition.

Take an asset-based, vision-driven approach

For scores in the **1–2 range on question 4**, encourage faculty and curriculum leads to frame projects around what students want to build. Vision-oriented work creates the structural tension that drives authentic positive change. When students identify and protect community assets, advocate, educate, and experiment with sustainable practices, they begin to experience themselves as capable contributors to a thriving future.



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Do you struggle to integrate Education for Sustainability meaningfully into your curriculum and instruction without adding new initiatives or overwhelming staff?

Do you envision a purposeful, coherent core curriculum that empowers students across grade levels and disciplines to shape a thriving, sustainable future?

If so, the Cloud Institute may be the right partner for your journey.

Let's schedule a Zoom conversation with you and your leadership team. To support you effectively, I'll want to understand:

- Your goals
- Your timeline
- Your current reality
- Your challenges

If your school is ready to move from intention to implementation, let's begin the conversation.

Book a Discovery Call