Sustainability - 'Thinking about Forever'

Below is the text of a letter sent to all heads of school recently as part of the TSHS Full School Sustainability Program. It is adapted from the UNESCO Teaching and Learning for a sustainable Future Program.

What is Sustainability?

Sustainability means 'thinking about forever'. It means that in order to have a sustainable future, we must use our resources wisely to ensure that we do not end up with less in the future!

A Process of learning

Educating for a sustainable future is not so much about a destination as about the process of learning to make decisions that consider the long-term economy, ecology and equity of all communities. Its goal is to build an enduring society. This involves learning how to anticipate the consequences of our actions, envision a sustainable future and create the steps needed to achieve the vision. This essentially requires society to meet 'the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.'

In keeping with the emerging global ethic of 'interrelatedness and sanctity of life', the learning activities should reflect a dynamic balance among four dimensions and principles that underlie a sustainable future:

Dimension of Sustainability		Value Principle
Social Sustainability	⟷	Peace and Equity
Ecological Sustainability	⟷	Conservation
Economic Sustainability	⟷	Appropriate Development
Political Sustainability	⟷	Democracy

These principles mean that a sustainable future would be one in which people:
- Care for each other and value social justice and peace
- Protect natural systems and use resources wisely
- Value appropriate development and satisfying livelihoods for all
- Make decisions through fair and democratic means

Developing the capacity and commitment to apply these principles at the level of personal and family actions, and in decisions for local, national and global communities, is the task of educating for a sustainable future.

Taken from "*Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future*" CD United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Examples of
Learning for a Sustainable Future
in Existing Subjects

Agricultural Studies
Agricultural education provides an excellent opportunity to teach about a number of very serious sustainability issues and problems, including food safety, nutrition and health, as well as groundwater contamination from agricultural chemicals, accelerated soil erosion, threatened and endangered plant and wildlife species, energy shortages, and soil and water conservation. Many opportunities are available for students to have direct experiences in dealing with these problems.

Sample Learning Experiences: