

Eco-Schools Regional Meeting
05 April 2006 at the EWE Centre

Present

Rich Hurst, Mike Tones, Clare Ross, Debbie Scott, Steve Ashton, Claire Fairclough, Julie Fulton, Paula Jamieson, Gloria Pearson, Keeley Metcalfe, Andrea Bishop, Steve Bhowmick and Yvonne Conchie

Apologies

Lorna Blenkinsopp, Kay Mills and Jason Martin

- RH opened the meeting.
- The Sustainable Schools framework is still not launched, RH had some information for everyone to look at but this was re-collected at the end of the meeting.
- DFES - Sustainable Development action plan - "Learning for the future" builds on the 2003 action plan, but this is better. A couple of points that should be noted
 1. Page 8 - DFES think they'll get the best progress from schools (school based)
 2. Page 11 - Actions Table. They are talking about other school related initiatives and showing their inter-connective ness
 3. Page 19 - Broad mix of other organizations in the 3rd sector. Reference to funding review (link from the EWE Centre website- latest news)

Report will get an overview from ministers and hoping that Tony Blair/Gordon Brown will launch both the Manifesto for Outdoor Learning and the Sustainable schools framework. A team of key people are being set up to monitor information. Please pass this document onto anyone who could be interested! Gloria Pearson thought that this is a fantastic opportunity for Healthy schools and to work alongside DFES. Gloria will come back and discuss this at a later meeting.

- WWF - Anna Birney, National Learning Coordinator is keen for WWF to act & support this Sustainable schools framework. Anna is offering to work with us over the next couple of years (over 3-5 days) on an action research project (free) and hopes to do some case studies from this work. A meeting is arranged for Wed 24th May 11-4pm for people doing direct delivery and for others interested. (RH has emailed a reminder regarding this meeting.) Will be held at the EWE Centre.
- SB - another launch on Friday 26th May "Counting Consumption" keen to get eco footprint as a tool for schools, so SB keen to get involved on 24th. SB had a footprint meeting later that day.
- KM - very interested, working with 2 schools - Flagship which could link with this new WWF project
- WWF National Conference - Teachers on Friday 9th June at Westminster. Free Conference, leaflets available on www.wwflearning.org.uk
- Sustainable Schools power-point shown
- Unesco.org.uk website. Newsletter available

- Sustainable Schools Consultation to launch in May. RH handed out copies of the framework and the group split into pairs to discuss and give feedback.
- Group Feedback -
 1. People felt that it's very similar to Eco schools and we could link the current initiatives together, which could mean that more schools deliver Eco Schools.
 2. Our job is to promote the benefits and highlight the improvements. This is not awards based and will be monitored through existing initiatives/OFSTED self-evaluation etc
- Pair/Individual feedback -
 1. I thought the document was quite vague. Head Teachers would need a lot more guidance to implement the ideals. In general I was disappointed that there was not a specific gateway on biodiversity or that this was not more explicit in the document. The concept of the 'local environment' seemed fairly limited just referring to parks rather than Local Nature Reserves or the wider countryside? (CR)
 2. Focused on Food & Drink Doorway.
Important to cross refer to procurement process as a crucial factor. As well as case study, some form of action points would be helpful so schools can appreciate different stages of delivery e.g. seek to require healthy food provision for all schools.

General observations.

There is a tendency to regard the Doorway topics in silos which therefore fails to allow inter-relationships of each to be recognize e.g. Waste management has clear link to building/ construction impacts. Some cross-cutting dimension is therefore needed.

The delivery programme is conspicuous by its absence. For example, need to recognise and build upon clusters of skills/ knowledge regionally & nationally, and sign-post to these.

We also felt that the summary issues should include 'governance' as a basic requirement. This would assist in building leadership and engagement of governors/ key decision-makers in taking forward SSF principles.

Finally, need to include Biodiversity as an additional Doorway. (SB)

3. Afraid we didn't make to many notes - we discussed the lack of biodiversity - the fact that it wasn't compulsory and would schools rally do it - its effect on eco-schools - is it something extra we are asking schools to do- if all schools do decide to do it we won't have enough capacity to support - we need paying to do the support hope this is useful (SA)
4. I had 3 main comments:
 - i) The 'care' statements were easy for teachers to understand and sign up to, but were lost before the doorways which were more complicated and also more exclusive (no environment/biodiversity for example)

ii) needed to say that this didn't all need inventing by each school, but that there were already organisations providing large amounts of help & resources to achieve these aims & objectives

iii) no mention of school improvement, and how giving a real world context for learning delivered through participative methodologies often gives 'low achievers' great opportunities for succeeding in ways more suited to their learning styles. This is one of the most important reasons why schools should be delivering on this agenda.

(YC)

5. 1. There is no mention of biodiversity - this should ideally be a gateway subject so as not to be submerged as an underlying 'theme'.
2. Perhaps there could be bullet points under the Curriculum, Campus and Community headings rather than relying on the case studies to explain what can be done. The complete case study can be a bit daunting as something to start with rather than bite size suggestions as to what schools can do.
3. Why should schools get involved - could we have some local incentives to encourage take up?

(JF)

- Eco schools currently precarious regarding funding. Regionally we can prioritise and make decisions on delivery so we could run a North East Eco-Schools ourselves if necessary.

Next Meeting

- Thursday 15th June at 10am at the EWE Centre