

Key Elements for Sustainability

Key Element	Why this element is important	Consequence if missing
Introduction to sustainability	Provides a vision, unity and understanding of the issues and a broad plan for the future. Without this introduction, there will be no common purpose or vision	Lack of common purpose
Collect baseline data	Provides key information against which future change can be measured. Without this data there is no reference point	Inability to track progress
Make a whole school commitment	A commitment from all sectors of the school to become more sustainable is crucial for whole school cultural change. Without this commitment, change will occur in only isolated pockets in the school	Inertia and resistance
Form a committee	A committee, with representatives drawn from teachers, parents, students and specialist advisors, will give ownership to all sectors in the school and a structure to ensure that the workload is spread over the group. Without a committee, dedicated teachers will burn out and there will be a lack of ownership by the rest of the school	Passionate teachers burn out
Conduct an assessment/audit	Assessments and audits give a reasonably accurate picture of just how resources are being used in a school and how waste and litter is being generated. Without this information, a school will not be able to plan and act with any certainty	Poor planning
Set goals and targets	By setting goals and targets, a school will focus on achieving measurable outcomes. Without these goals and targets, there is a lack of clear direction	Lack of direction
Develop a policy	A policy embeds a program in a school. Endorsement of a policy by the school council gives the program long term approval. Without a policy, there is no guarantee of this approval	Change is shortlived
Develop action plans	Action plans are a structured way to achieve outcomes within a given time frame. Without action plans, there is little order	Disorganisation
Develop curriculum plans	Curriculum plans identify where sustainability is being covered in the school's curriculum. Curriculum plans also give relevance to the operational activities of a school. Without a curriculum plan, there is not a coordinated approach to learning for sustainability	Irrelevance to school's mission
Implement actions and curriculum plans	Implementation is an essential step, without which nothing can be achieved. Lack of action can be very discouraging to staff and students	Failure
Monitor and evaluate the program	Monitoring and evaluation assists a school to measure their progress and continuously improve their program. Without this step, a program may not improve	Stagnation
Build community links	Community links enrich a school's program bringing valuable resources, expertise and support; and linking the program to other community initiatives. Without these links, a school will operate in a vacuum	Isolation

(from Gould League and CERES Nov-04)