

Yorkshire & Humber ESD Teacher Training Network

The sustainable schools agenda is becoming more prominent. It is influencing the curriculum especially in primary schools and the new Key Stage 3. It is highly relevant to the campus especially with the Building Schools for the Future programme. And sustainability is beginning to inform the way that schools relate to the local community. New teachers need to be empowered to rise to these opportunities; education for sustainability needs to be built into initial teacher training.

With this aim the Yorkshire & Humber ESD Forum has formed a working partnership with the Department of Educational Studies at the University of York, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and TDA consultants in the region. Called the Y&H ESD Teacher Training Network the purpose is to establish links between teacher-trainers to develop and share good practice.

The network was launched in March 2005 at a one-day 'think tank' at Burnholme Community College, a specialist business and enterprise secondary school in York. This brought together some sixty people from schools, teacher training universities, industry in the region, the TDA and the DfES. The network now has over forty teacher trainers with representatives from all the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the region that train teachers, training schools, TDA consultants and the regional co-ordinators of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT).

Initial Teacher Training Activities

Following the launch in 2005 we have held two follow-up meetings to share ideas and information. We produced an executive summary for heads of teacher training courses on how ESD and sustainable schools might link with the TDA criteria for awarding qualified teacher status. One major activity was preparing a joint submission to the DfES Sustainable Schools Consultation in which we emphasised the need to include ESD into teacher training. We were happy to see that in its Action Plan the DfES/DCSF gave weight to the need for training:

"Many teachers do not really understand the concept of sustainability, and if they do are unsure how to implement it beyond recycling bins. They need further professional development in ways in which to integrate ESD into the whole school ethos and across the curriculum. New teachers at training need to be sold the scheme's merits, so that they want to become sustainable schools 'champions', and lead by example. Sustainable development must be integral to the revised Teacher Standards, Initial Teacher Training courses and schemes of work to support all subject teachers. It must also form part of Teaching Assistant induction and ongoing CPD."

A discrete module or embedded in every subject?

Some teacher training universities such as Leeds have a taught session on sustainability for the whole PGCE cohort. Sarah Whitelaw, who leads the course at Leeds, explains: "In this way we know that every person leaving Leeds with QTS has had a chance to think about this. Some will pick it up, others will not. But they all know what the issues are." Other universities build it into the subject knowledge sessions. In York for example it is embedded in the science and history courses. The advantage of this is that the new teachers can see how it links to their chosen subject; the disadvantage is that it does not reach everyone. The University of Hull is adopting a more radical approach with a CPD away-day focussing on sustainability for the whole staff of the Institute for Learning (over 100 people). This includes people engaged with early years, schools, interprofessional children's services, FE, adult and community learning and HE. The aim is for ESD to inform training in all these areas. The University of Sheffield has a two-pronged approach. As well as seeing how to build ESD into the PGCE curriculum they are also looking at how to create a more sustainable building and trying to challenge working practices, such as by phasing out disposable cups, recycling more and fitting low-energy bulbs.

In-service training – CPD

In conjunction with the SSAT we have established an MA in Education by Research with and ESD Focus at the University of York see <http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/educ/gsp/MAesd.htm>. This course is part-time and aimed at busy, practising teachers who are committed to ESD and who want to deepen their understanding. Bursaries are available to help with the fees. At present there are over 20 teachers and educational administrators on the course, researching a wide range of topics such as:

- What is the effect of Eco-schools on pupils' knowledge and attitudes?
- How is the global dimension of the DCSF Sustainable Schools' strategy working out in practice?
- What is the effect of an anti-litter drive on pupils' wider attitudes, values and behaviour?
- How can school buildings be used as a resource in education for sustainable development?
- What helps and what hinders movement towards becoming a sustainable school? Case study of a large comprehensive.
- How can sustainability be developed as a 'frame of mind' among young children?
- How does the DCSF sustainable schools agenda link with CAFOD's Live Simply campaign?
- How does the inclusion and participation 'doorway' relate to other areas of being a sustainable school?

Dr Jake Reynolds, Senior Adviser -Sustainable Development, DCSF says of the York course: "As we push forward with sustainable schools it is essential that emerging practice is informed by good quality research from the people closest to the action: this course provides an ideal vehicle for this."

We have also given inputs to senior management of specialist schools (engineering, technology, science, business and enterprise and training schools).

Industrial Visits – Linking to Learning Outside the Classroom

The network is currently arranging a series of industrial visits for teacher trainers, starting with a visit to Yorkshire's ABLE fish farm Project (sometimes called the 'Cardboard to Caviar Project') in Spring 2008. Each visit will be to a business that practises sustainable development or closed-loop thinking, and will provide opportunities to develop regional resources that can be used in individual subjects or across the school.

Contact

There is a mailing each term to members of the network informing them of current events and relevant publications. For more information contact James Pitt, Co-ordinator of Y&H ESD Teacher Training Network on email jp24@york.ac.uk or phone 07961 830 944.