**Education for Sustainability (EFS)**

**Our Definition**

Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations has been described as the greatest challenge of our generation. Environments are not static and education will play a vital role in helping communities adapt to change, especially climate change. Education for Sustainability arms students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to meet the mutually reinforcing goals of **sustainability** and **resilience**. Education for Sustainability is not simply the inclusion of an environmental science class into a high school curriculum but rather is **the mainstreaming of environmental consciousness across pedagogical disciplines with an emphasis on empowerment and agency**. It is the recording of traditional ecological knowledge in social studies, the writing of editorials for local newspapers in literature classes, and the use of climate data as the 'hidden curriculum' in math class.

**History**

Recognizing the role of education in environmental sustainability, the United Nations declared 2005-2014 to be the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Sustainability Education (SF) and Education for Sustainability (EFS) are often used as interchangeable terms with ESD being favored by the UN. Our project favors the term EFS.

**Key Concepts**

* **Sustainability**: meeting the needs of the present without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own needs
* **Resilience**: the capacity of communities to adapt to environmental change without undue hardship. Resilience is often realized locally but is highly dependent on larger external systems.
* **Threshold**: a point at which a small change in external conditions can create a rapid change in an ecosystem from which it may be unable to recover. Identifying thresholds is an important part of planning for resilience.

**Learning Outcomes**

While lists of specific learning outcomes vary, a few key learning outcomes (often called Sustainability-Literacy) are associated with EFS:

* **Envisioning**: what does a sustainable future for our local and global community look like?
* **Systems Thinking**: how do different systems at different levels of scale interact to create the world we see over time?
* **Futures Thinking**: how do our actions today impact the future in 5, 10, 50 or 100 years?
* **Partnership**: who is affected by our actions? Where and how can we create partnerships to achieve our goals? How can our local community contribute to sustainability and resilience?
* **Global Citizenship**: how do our actions impact global systems? Where do we see global systems at work in our lives? What responsibilities do we have to other communities?
* **Critical Thinking**: how can I use evidence to evaluate the ideas I encounter?
* **Empowerment** and **Participation in Decision-Making**: how can we create the future we envision?

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