

Stepping Up in Sustainability 2011-12

Stockton Riverside College case study



Title of project	Learner Led Sustainability Enrichment Programme	
Lead partner organisation name and address	Stockton Riverside College Harvard Avenue Thornaby Stockton on Tees TS17 6FB	
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1. Aims of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The production of a new Sustainability Enrichment Programme developed through involving learners, to ensure that it is engaging and appealing. • Raise the group's awareness and understanding of sustainable development approaches through promoting understanding about the economic, social and environmental impacts of sustainable development. • Engage learners in sustainable development through developing an enrichment programme that actively encourages learners to research and develop small sustainable development projects. • Identify sustainability champions from learners to be ambassadors for sustainability. • Host a Sustainability Showcase Dissemination Event to act as ambassadors for sustainability activities. • Develop an Enrichment Programme Toolkit Pack that is a transferable resource that can be used in other training and educational organisations across the sector. • Increased partnership working between the college and organisations involved in sustainable development to share expertise and knowledge relating to sustainable development, and specifically for Sustainable Education Visits as part of the new Enrichment Programme. 	

<p>2. Situation: Identify the situation or issue that faced you</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The college Learner Surveys identified comments that some students felt that we were not a very sustainable organisation. We wished to address this issue by offering learners the opportunity to become actively involved in the college sustainable activities through identifying sustainability champions and developing a Sustainability Student Group. The new enrichment programme and Sustainability Showcase Dissemination Event will also promote greater understanding of the sustainability activities the college is undertaking and how more people can become involved. • Stockton Riverside College participated in the piloting of the Reaching Forward Index, the report identified that there are still areas for development and the project will help to address these by developing new approaches to engaging our learners in sustainable development activities. • Internally the college has analysed reports relating to assessment of the building and green issues, which identify potential areas for reducing energy consumption and research from these reports demonstrated the need to encourage people to make an effort to save energy, and the project will continue to innovatively address this need. • Locally, regionally and the importance of involving young people and increasing their awareness and attitudes to helping the environment has been highlighted. The project will engage young people in sustainable development through a variety of methods, including the enrichment programme, sustainability student group and sustainability champions.
<p>3. Task: Define the outcomes you needed to achieve</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The enrichment programme and curriculum to be enhanced and supported by the provision of a new programme and tool that would provide new engaging methods of involving students in sustainable development. • The established resource to be available for delivery in future years. • Greater awareness through increased information about why sustainable development is needed, including increased understanding about the economic, social and environmental impacts and considerations. • Increased partnership working between the college and organisations involved in sustainable development to share

	<p>expertise and knowledge relating to sustainable development, and specifically for Sustainable Education Visits as part of the new Enrichment Programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sustainability package embedded through the VLE to inform young people about sustainability concepts.
<p>4. Actions that you took in order to achieve your plan, and your approach</p>	<p>Our first action was to identify a tutor and a group of students who were keen to be involved in the project. We were delighted when a large group of Child Care students chose to be involved. This was an exciting opportunity to influence the behaviour and understanding of a large group of students who would ultimately have a key role in not only influencing similar behaviour in friends and colleagues but also in the very young children in their care, therefore providing an on-going link to behavioural change.</p> <p>The second key stage was to identify the frequency of the Enrichment class meetings. As this group concerned are following a course which already contains a heavy personal study, project based workload, we did not wish to overload them with additional work which would potentially interfere with their main course of study. To this end we agreed that we would arrange to meet approximately once per fortnight for up to a two hour period on each occasion and a timetable of classes were agreed.</p> <p>Having identified the ‘Enrichment Class’ we set out in the first meeting with the students to determine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the students already understood about ‘sustainability’ and what if anything they do to support sustainability at home, college, work etc.? • How active they perceive the college to be in this field. • Outlined what the college actually does to meet the sustainability agenda and why. • What SRC would like to do but is struggling to achieve and why. • There was an in-depth discussion about what the consequences of ‘doing nothing’ could be and ‘whose responsibility is it anyway?’.

- Finally we discussed how everyone's actions would fit together in order to achieve a significant result:

Small Steps + **Giant Strides = Success**
(individuals & small businesses) (Major corporations)

In **the second** meeting with students we developed the 'sustainability theme and looked at different areas where we need to think about sustainability;

- At home/ Individuals
- As a college / local businesses
- Socially/within the community/Regions
- Globally

This generated a lot of discussion and ultimately led on to the students splitting into four groups so that they could begin to think about an area of interest that they would like to research and develop into a presentation for their dissemination event in May. A variety of themes were offered as suggestions both by the students and by the staff, but throughout, the students were encouraged to make their own choices and focus on areas that would interest them. There was considerable emphasis put onto the importance of the projects being 'student led'.

The four themes that were chosen by the students covered a wide range of areas:

1. Investigate a local supermarket to identify whether it is possible to purchase a range of locally sourced groceries.
2. Recycling – what can be recycled locally, and why some areas of the Borough appear to have different recycling opportunities to others.
3. What obstacles are experienced by a local farm shop when selling to the local community (competition from supermarkets on pricing etc.)?
4. Global warming and its affects locally in Teesside.

Following this session I received a visit from my 'Critical Friend' and I

suggested that he might like to meet the students and have an opportunity to chat to them. I am delighted to say that he accepted this invitation because he was able to chat to the students about his own experiences around the 'sustainability' theme and the feedback from the students after his visit was extremely positive, which gave the whole group a boost.

During the **third** session the groups were provided with recycled folders and key fobs to store information that they would collect for their presentations.

The session was then used for the individual groups to spend time thinking about their chosen topic in relation to:

- Considering who is in the group and what skills they have?
- How can those skills be best used to help research their chosen topic?
- What steps do the groups need to take to move forward with their research, i.e. do they need to write letters prepare questionnaires, carry out visits etc?

In session **four** we hoped to broaden the thinking of the students by further discussing the effect that humans are having on the planet and how we can work to reduce these effects. The students were shown video clips to demonstrate these effects (including 300 years of fossil fuels in 300 seconds). We also carried out a review of the 'action plans' that the students had prepared and discussed the possibility of a visit to recycling plant for the whole group.

In subsequent meetings with the groups, we have spent time working with the students in the LRC Group Work area (where they also had an opportunity to work with IT technicians to improve their IT skills) researching their chosen topics, **compiling questionnaires, writing letters to supermarkets and a local recycling plant etc.**

The group focusing on recycling have also compiled and carried out a **questionnaire** into the recycling habits of staff and students and have used this information to compile a graph as part of their presentation.

In addition the whole group carried out a **site visit** to J&B recycling in Hartlepool on Wednesday 21st March. The visit was broken down into two small group sessions in order to comply with health and safety requirements. The trip was a success as it provided the 'Recycling' group with an opportunity to ask questions specific to

their research but also enabled all of the students to understand what happens to the items that they recycle and appreciate the true value of the 'rubbish' that is frequently thrown away.

During the Easter break two of the groups will carry out **visits** to back up their research.

- The local farming group, plan to **visit a small local farm shop** and have prepared a **questionnaire** to take on the visit.
- The supermarket group will carry out a **visit to ASDA** with a **check list** to identify what (and how many) everyday **locally produced grocery products** (particularly fresh produce) can be purchased. In particular as we have a tomato farm within a local town they are interested to see if it is possible to purchase fresh locally produced tomatoes at the store. The group also hope to be able to meet the store manager and carry out a **brief questionnaire**.

In addition to the above I have spent time researching the internet to collect sustainability related information to add to the teaching 'Enrichment Pack' for use in future years, I have also approached a number of people and organisations for additional materials to be added to the pack as they are received.

5. Results that you obtained

The most satisfying 'result' is a feeling that with this group of students we have brought about a **cultural change**. In the first session many of the students involved had no interest in sustainability and felt that even basic everyday actions, such as recycling, were a waste of time and reducing energy consumption by switching off lights was pointless. The phrase that 'it is already too late' was used by a number of students. However, over the course of 3 or 4 sessions the change in attitude was extremely rewarding and a significant **qualitative change** appears to have occurred. Students who said that they had never recycled at home (because they couldn't see the point or they couldn't remember ever being provided with appropriate bins) began to ask why they didn't have recycling bins at home and how they could obtain them.

In addition students began to question what items we recycle at the college (something we hadn't previously publicised) and this caused me to put together a table of what we do recycle (with approximate **percentages**) and this is now displayed on the Green Issues boards at both sites. It has also promoted **organisational change** as I will now meet on a termly basis with each Head of Faculty and the Health and Safety Manager to discuss a variety of items but a set agenda item will be 'sustainability' when we will discuss the results of power

surveys and how their Faculty has contributed/can contribute to savings as well as potential new areas for recycling etc. The first of these sessions identified a number of items that were being recycled but which hadn't previously been recorded, for example plastic shampoo bottles and batteries.

The students became motivated to research and produce their presentations in preparation for the college displays in May. Many of the students in the group may not have had opportunities in the past to display their work for the benefit of others and are not always confident in their own abilities. However, by working in groups and choosing their own subjects for research they have had an opportunity not only to develop a greater understanding about 'sustainability' but also to **increase existing and develop new transferrable skills** in a wide range of areas:

- IT skills – producing graphs and PowerPoint presentations
- Presenting information for public consumption (this will be a valuable tool when working in child care)
- Team working
- Compiling questionnaires (identifying what they need to know and how to ask appropriate questions to obtain clear measurable answers)
- Confidence to write to local organisations such as the Manager at a local branch of ASDA
- Growing confidence in meeting new people and being prepared to ask appropriate questions
- All students in the group are now confident enough to be sustainability ambassadors for the college and will offer support at college events (e.g. publicising the Cycling event to be held in April)
- Pride in their work and their own ability by hosting their own display of work in the reception area at the main college site to be viewed by all staff, students and visitors.
- An on-going understanding of sustainability that can be transferred to their working environment and which will empower the students to influence cultural change not only within their own working environments but also in the parents and children that they come to work with.

<p>6. What made the project a success? What were the key ingredients?</p>	<p>Although the project is on-going (the students will continue with this project until their dissemination event in the college reception area in May) I believe that it has been a success for a variety of reasons.</p> <p>The contents of the 'Enrichment Pack' will be used as an on-going resource, were/are being collected from a variety of sources to try to offer as broad a spectrum of environmental/sustainability information as possible, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Managers at the Borough Council • Sustrans Active Travel • Teachers of related subjects • Tutors • Internet sites • Local environmental organisations e.g. recycling plants <p>One of the key successes was that the students themselves took the lead, in that the groups selected their own topic of study and with guidance from the class tutor and myself then made group decisions regarding;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulating a research plan of action • Setting time frames for the work they needed to do • Designing questionnaires, writing letters to organisations etc. • Using the LRC to carry out group research tasks on the Internet • Choosing a format for their groups presentation for their dissemination event (May 2012) • Compiling power point presentations, graphs, etc. • Designing posters
<p>7. Any resources or tools produced by the project</p>	<p>An enrichment 'pack' is gradually being produced and will be completed by the end of the academic year. The 'pack' will include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested research themes for student groups • Planning guidelines for projects • On-line resources – and where to find them • Information and hand-outs from external sources (e.g. recycling organisations, Stockton Borough Council) • Teaching resources obtained from subject teachers in linked areas (e.g. Geography and business) • Ideas for an end of project Dissemination Event <p>The students concerned are also currently preparing presentations for their dissemination event and examples of their work to date are attached.</p>

8. Total costs of the project	LSIS funding	Match funding	Total funding
	£5,000	£4,020	£9,020

	<p align="center">Funded by LSIS through the Stepping Up in Sustainability Fund</p>	
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