

Durham Catholic District School Board Sustainability Action Plan



**DURHAM CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**
Learning and Living in Faith

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Sustainability Action Plan

Overview

As the issue of climate change continues to worsen, measures of mitigation must be implemented globally. In 2021, Canada reaffirmed its commitment to the Paris agreement of 2015. As a country, Canada aims to deliver on the promised goals and outlined actions to strengthen our nations efforts in fighting against climate change over the coming decade. Based on Canada's commitment to the Paris agreement, the Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB) is using applicable United Nations (UN) sustainable development goals as our foundational guideline as we work towards becoming a more sustainable school board. In 2020, the DCDSB established a Stewards of Sustainability Committee as part of the Board's Strategic Plan. As part of our Strategic Plan priorities for 2021-2022, the Sustainability committee have been tasked with developing a 3-year sustainability plan to review resource consumption and environmental stewardship.

Stewards of Sustainability Committee

The Durham Catholic District School Board's Stewards of Sustainability Committee was established in 2020 and is comprised of two secondary students; elementary and secondary Principals and Vice-Principals; board-level staff from Student Services, Academic Services, Faith Affirmation, Communications, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Human Resources and Facilities Services; a custodian; an elementary teacher, and a university cooperative education student. The purpose of the stewards of sustainability committee is to develop a three-year sustainability action plan that can aid in the process of setting and achieving priorities and goals, creating sustainability initiatives, and in monitoring progress in the areas of sustainability.

Stewards of Sustainability Committee Vision

The Durham Catholic District School Board strives to create opportunities for both staff and students to fulfill their roles as stewards of sustainability. Through both independent and collaborative efforts, the members of the DCDSB plan to use this sustainability action plan and the applicable United Nations sustainable development goals as a guide for working towards a more sustainable future for both our schools and surrounding communities. This will be done by allocation of required resources, maintaining sustainable centred goals and inclusive decision making, the DCDSB is educating the youth of tomorrow to live more environmentally conscious lives.

Catholic Community

As a Catholic school community we are called to live out our Christian responsibility for the environment by cultivating and caring for the goodness of all God's creation. In Pope Francis's *Laudato Si*, he stated:

“I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.”

The DCDSB Catholic Community has a long history of ecological stewardship, and a strong participation in the EcoSchools program, which promoted environmental learning and best practices. This sustainability plan will help to commit the board towards meeting the Pope’s challenge and embracing the true Catholic calling of being environmental stewards.

Indigenous Acknowledgment

The DCDSB, using the UN goals for sustainable development, will act upon each pillar within the sustainability action plan in a way that educates, acknowledges and respects Indigenous lands, treaties, traditions and heritage. DCDSB acknowledges that we are on the traditional lands of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island, and we will walk with them in the stewardship of the precious resources and environment that these lands represent.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The UN sustainable development goals at their core are centred around Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. At the DCDSB, we have made the commitment to use the UN sustainable development goals as a guideline, as such, we too will keep Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the core of delivering on our three-year action plan.

Main Pillars of the Sustainability Action Plan

The Committee has divided the sustainability action plan into four areas of focus. These areas are outlined below:

1. Promotion of Outdoor Learning

Outdoor learning can provide both students and staff a better understanding of the importance of sustainability and leadership as they work towards developing a more sustainable future. The development of this pillar is integral to meeting a number of the United Nation goals for sustainable development.

The Stewards of Sustainability Committee has identified student involvement as a key action in the decision making and planning process for utilization of outdoor learning spaces. Through this lens we are developing our action plan goals.

2. Eco-Schools

The Ontario Eco-Schools provide environmental education and certification programs for students in Kindergarten to Grade 12. The DCDSB continues to improve and develop opportunities for stewardship and sustainability.

3. Waste and Recycling

The DCDSB continues to work towards implementing more sustainable disposal methods of waste and recycling processes.

4. Energy

The DCDSB continues to work towards reducing annual energy usage and carbon footprint as well as implement more sustainable energy methods/initiatives where feasible.

The United Nations 17 Goals for Sustainable Development

The United Nations have developed 17 goals that work towards sustainable development. The DCDSB Sustainability Action Plan aims to use these goals as a guideline as we attempt to create a more sustainable future amongst our schools. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are listed below;

- **Goal #1: No poverty** - End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- **Goal #2: Zero hunger** – End hunger, achieve food and security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- **Goal #3: Good health and well-being** – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- **Goal #4: Quality education** – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- **Goal #5: Gender equality** – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- **Goal #6: Clean water and sanitation** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- **Goal #7: Affordable and clean energy** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- **Goal #8: Decent work and economic growth** – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- **Goal #9: Industry, innovation, and infrastructure** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
- **Goal #10: Reduced inequalities** – Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- **Goal #11: Sustainable cities and communities** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
- **Goal #12: Responsible consumption and production** – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- **Goal #13: Climate action** – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- **Goal #14: Life below water** – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development
- **Goal #15: Life on land** – Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
- **Goal #16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions** – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- **Goal #17: Partnerships for the goals** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Promotion of Outdoor Learning

Goal: Further develop and improve the outdoor learning opportunities in all schools to ensure that both staff and students are engaged and provided with experiential learning opportunities that promote sustainability. This may include the increase of student and staff environmental awareness and knowledge, field trips, and outdoor learning components.

United Nations Goal association – The Promotion of outdoor learning action strategies and initiatives below help work towards the UN Goals 2, 3, 4, 11, 12, and 15.

System Level Action Items

Action Strategy 1.1: Increase professional development and outdoor learning opportunities for educators and students.

Increased professional development and outdoor learning opportunities can be achieved through the following actions:

- Invest further in outdoor classroom facilities
- Bring in additional partnerships to develop relations further
 - One additional board level partnership per year over the next three years
- Generate funding for additional outdoor classroom spaces
 - Community call to action once per year. Set a goal per school.
- Encourage both students and staff to be involved in the planning and designing of outdoor spaces and learning opportunities.

Refer to the Appendix for specific examples.

EcoSchools

Goal: Ensure that 100% of the schools within the DCDSB are eco-certified and participating in EcoSchool initiatives. To become EcoSchool certified, each school must demonstrate achievement in at least four key areas: teamwork and leadership, energy conservation, ecological literacy, waste reduction, environmental stewardship, and school ground greening.

UN Goal Association- The EcoSchool action strategies and related initiatives below help work towards UN goals 4, 11, 12, and 13.

System Level Action Items

Action Strategy 2.1: Create a framework for each school to properly assemble an Eco Team.

This strategy will be achieved by the committee developing a process while engaging staff and students with DCDSB representatives and Eco Schools support to help them through the process.

Refer to the Appendix for detailed steps as to how to make this action strategy possible.

Action Strategy 2.2: Create more awareness that would motivate both staff and students to become EcoSchool certified

This strategy will be achieved by utilising the resources and budget available to the committee to communicate initiatives through existing or new channels. This can be achieved through the following actions:

- Create time for EcoSchool messages and awareness during board/staff meetings;
- Add a section for Ecoschools within the newsletters ;
- Promote / Create new or join existing events to increase participation.

Refer to Appendix for example event ideas.

Action Strategy 2.3: Develop initiatives for students to become more involved within EcoSchools

Initiatives that promote student involvement can encourage more students to participate in EcoSchool events/programs. Possible ways to create more student involvement within EcoSchools can be achieved through the following actions:

- Create more student led Eco-teams;
- Encourage students to work on and be involved in the three-month reports and related projects;
- Create opportunities for students to develop initiatives that work towards the four key areas require for eco-certification;
- Develop initiatives that would focus on the main areas required to become eco-certified.

Refer to the Appendix for possible initiatives.

Action Strategy 2.4: Create trackable and noticeable progress (Celebrate success)

Tracking and noticing progress is beneficial as it will promote and encourage both staff and students to continue their efforts of making their schools more sustainable.

Refer to the Appendix for a list of possible ways to track and notice progress.

Action Strategy 2.5: Develop partnerships to aid in EcoSchool initiatives

- Green Learning
- Communities in bloom
- Durham College
- Ontario Tech

Waste and Recycling

Goal: Create more sustainable and efficient disposal and recycling methods, as well as minimizing waste amongst the schools.

UN Goal Association- The waste and recycling action strategies and initiatives below help work towards UN Goals 3, 6, 11, 12, and 13.

System Level Action Items

Action Strategy 3.1: Implement more efficient disposal methods for organic materials.

Schools can implement efficient disposal methods for organic materials through both small- and large-scale composting initiatives. This action strategy can be achieved by implementing the following initiatives;

- Small scale composting initiatives. Please refer to the Appendix for more detailed examples of small-scale composting initiatives
- Large scale composting initiatives. Please refer to the Appendix for examples of large-scale composting initiatives

Action Strategy 3.2: Create awareness of the importance of proper organic disposal methods

Creating awareness of the importance of composting can motivate both staff and students to participate and work towards adopting more sustainable habits.

Awareness can be created from the following;

- Educate students on what can and cannot be composted. Refer to Appendix for more specific details.
- Educate students about the benefits of composting. Refer to Appendix for more specific details.

Action Strategy 3.3: Create more opportunities for both staff and students to become more involved with waste/recycling by implementing experiential initiatives

Staff and student involvement would increase motivation to participate in such initiatives. Possible initiatives can include;

- Implement initiatives that promote waste and recycling awareness. Refer to Appendix for a list of example initiatives.
- Make recycling more creative and entertaining. Refer to Appendix for specific examples.

Action Strategy 3.4: Continue to implement efficient methods of recycling

- Continue to follow regulations set by Ministry of Environment and the Board's waste management contractor
- Continue to promote and create awareness for recycling

Action Strategy 3.5: Reduce annual waste amongst the schools

Annual reduction of waste amongst the schools within the DCDSB can be achieved through the following actions:

- Conduct annual waste audits to see if progress is being made



- Buy/use products that are sustainably packaged
- Create initiatives that works towards reducing waste
 - Possible events can include'
 - Zero waste days
 - Clothing swap/drive to promote thrifting and sustainable fashion

Please refer to Appendix for additional resource and initiative ideas.

Energy

Goal: Increase energy efficiency amongst the schools within the DCDSB by introducing and implementing proper initiatives as well as methods of tracking progress.

Systems Level Action Items

Action Strategy 4.1: Reduce annual cost and usage of energy

Annual reduction of energy cost and usage of energy can be achieved by doing the following actions:

- Create more naturally luminated areas
- Select more energy efficient systems and products during maintenance and capital replacements.

Please refer to the Appendix for specific examples.

Action Strategy 4.2: Create awareness of the importance and impacts of energy conservation.

Awareness of the importance and impacts of energy consumption can be obtained by dedicating time in board meetings to discuss such topics.

Refer to the Appendix for more examples as to how awareness can be created.

Action Strategy 4.3: Establish renewable energy systems where feasible and possible

- The quickest way to reduce the carbon footprint of the board is to produce our own energy through the use of renewable energy sources. The board will continue to look for opportunities and partnerships that align with this action strategy.

Commitment to Future Action

The DCDSB plans to continue to work towards our efforts of becoming more sustainable as a school board. The sustainability action plan will help guide these efforts and will continuously adapt to the changing sustainability priorities that may come in the future. The well-being of our students, staff, surrounding environment and communities will always be our top priority, and will be acknowledged and considered in every planning and decision-making process.

Sustainability Action Plan Appendix

Promotion of Outdoor Learning

Action Strategy 1.1

Examples of resources that can help increase professional development and outdoor learning opportunities for educators and students include:

- [‘Take me Outside’](#) is a resource database that provides teachers with many different types of teaching resources for educating outdoors. The website provides examples that have been implemented and used within different provinces of Canada.
- The [Ontario Teachers Federation](#) provides a list of resources that can be used by teachers to increase outdoor educational opportunities
- [Learning for a sustainable future](#) is a great resource as it incorporates the United Nations sustainable development goals into lesson plan ideas for teachers

Examples of Initiatives that can help increase professional development and outdoor learning opportunities for educators and students include:

- Connecting and guiding educator and student leads through a process to enhance learning opportunities.
- Memos for call to action
- Email blasts and newsletters / director’s meetings
- Focused on educator and student led design work on school sites.
- Engaging educators and students in outdoor learning opportunities on and off school sites.



EcoSchools

Action Strategy 2.1

Examples of ways to create a framework for each school to properly assemble an Eco-Team include:

- Directly contact each principal to identify Eco Schools reps.
- Develop framework around representatives and students
- Develop 'who does what' table/divide the workload
- Develop schedules and goals around EcoSchools certification requirements.

Action Strategy 2.2

Example initiatives that will create awareness to motivate both staff and students to become EcoSchool certified include:

- Tree planting day
- Waste/trash pick-up day
- Earth day
- Zero waste day

Action Strategy 2.3

Example initiatives that can increase student involvement within the EcoSchools include:

- Sustainable agricultural workshops (i.e.; what's involved with crop production and maintenance)
- Small scale indoor gardening (seasonal crops)
- Composting
- Species identification (focus on ecology)
- Food systems and food-webs
- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and how they can be seen through both small- and large-scale examples
- Importance of recycling and reusing
- The causes and effects of climate change
- Renewable energy systems
- Sustainable architecture
- Water conservation
- Endangered species
- Zero waste
- Making a worm farm
- Creating gardens and even mini green houses
- Tree planting
- Composting box at home
- Playing outdoors
- Reusing items for different purposes
- Trash collection on school grounds



Action Strategy 2.4

Examples of ways to track and notice progress include:

- Ecological footprint can be used as a reference (online calculators can be used to calculate footprint)
- More awards can be given to increase motivation and improve progress (individually or collectively)
- Encourage both EcoSchool reps and participating students to ensure that reports are being done
- Encourage the use of the Durham Community energy plan as a reference
- The Durham region roundtable on climate change can be used as a guideline to monitor progress
- Waste and energy audits

Action Strategy 2.5

Possible partnerships that can aid in EcoSchool initiatives include:

- [Green Learning](#)
- [Communities in bloom](#)
- [Durham College](#)
- [Ontario Tech University](#)



Waste and Recycling

Action Strategy 3.1

Examples of efficient small-scale disposal methods for organic materials include:

- Each eco school committee to create a compost initiative.
- Each eco school committee to conduct a waste audit to determine what percent of the schools waste is compostable
- Identify funding source to provide small in-class composter to XX schools per year.
- Provide compost bins in all schools
- Compost bins would also include compostable bags to store organic waste materials

Examples of efficient large-scale disposal methods for organic materials include:

- Food-to-animal organic waste disposal programs are when organic waste materials are given to animals, mainly farmed animals, for feed.
- Regional or municipal “green” bin program for schools.

Action Strategy 3.2

Examples of topics that can help create awareness of the importance of proper organic disposal methods include:

- What can and cannot be composted:
 - o Compostable materials include anything that is not plastic, metal, or liquids, and basically anything that is derived from food. Common items that are not made from food waste, and can be composted, include paper towel, tea bags, paper- and wood-based arts/crafts materials, pencil shavings, and coffee grinds and filters
 - o Items that cannot be composted include items made of plastic, metal, liquids. Items that are commonly mistaken for organic/compostable materials include single use coffee cups, construction paper, pizza boxes, and waxed paper.
- The benefits of composting Include:
 - o Composting allows for the ‘returning’ of nutrients to the soil in order to promote and help with plant growth,
 - o It provides organic matter and nutrients which act as a fertilizer, meaning less chemically enhanced fertilizers need to be used and,
 - o It allows for organic waste to be sustainably disposed

Action Strategy 3.3

Examples of how both students and staff can become more involved with waste/recycling include:

- Implement initiatives that promote waste and recycling awareness



- Trash pickup days/designated times throughout the year around the schools
- Sorting recyclable items from waste items
- Educating on why recycling is important, where waste ends up, why overconsumption is a problem, etc.
- Create reminders to recycle within the newsletters or announcements
- Form a recycling committee
- Make recycling more creative and entertaining
 - Points systems where students with most waste pickup or sorting of recyclable items are awarded for sustainable stewardship.
 - Projects focused on recycling
 - Games revolving around the goal of recycling

Action Strategy 3.4

Examples of to promote and create awareness for recycling include:

- Recycling posters for what can and cannot be recycled
- Promote recycling in the newsletter, dedicate time to create awareness as to why recycling is important for the environment

Action Strategy 3.5

Examples as to how to reduce annual waste amongst the schools include:

- Zero plastic waste lunch days
- No single use plastic days
- Refillable and reusable Tupperware to be promoted within the schools
- Use less paper or no paper 'days'
- Clothing swap/drive to promote thrifting and sustainable fashion
- When possible, 'instead of tossing it, donate it'



Energy

Action Strategy 4.1

Examples of how schools can reduce their annual costs and usage of energy include:

- Select more energy efficient systems and products
 - o Energy efficient windows, insulation, lighting, heating, cooling, appliances and electronics, and water pump systems. Optimize the operations of the current systems that impact energy consumption
- Encourage behavioural changes in the practices of turning on and off energy consuming devices and systems.

Action Strategy 4.2

Examples of how to create awareness of the importance and impacts of energy conservation include:

- Create/dedicate a section of the newsletter to conservation measures. This can include a section on energy and ways that students and staff can help reduce energy usage within the schools and at home.
- Student led committees that focus on conservation and lowering consumption of natural resources.
- Energy savings day/week events to promote the reduction of energy usage
- Create awareness on the topic of renewable energy systems and how they work towards more sustainable practices

