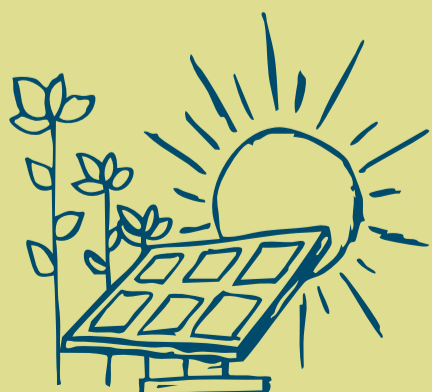
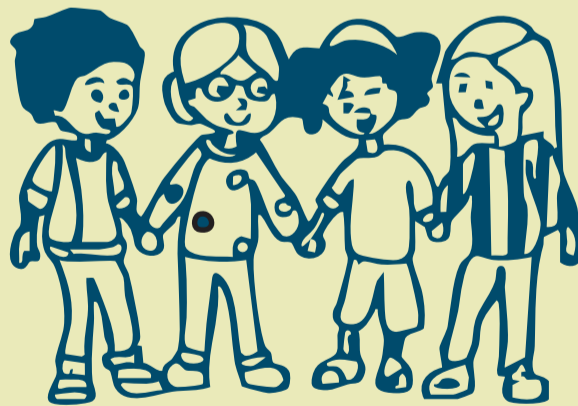




Student Toolkit

to promote Early Childhood
Education for Sustainability
(ECEfS) during placement



References

Davis, J. (2014). Examining early childhood education through the lens of education for sustainability: Revisioning rights. In J. Davis & S. Elliott (Eds.) *Research in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability: International Perspectives and Provocations* (pp. 21-37). London: Routledge.

Davis, J. & Elliott, S. (2024). *Young children and the environment* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2023). *Aistear (Updated Draft Framework): The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Dublin: NCCA. Available at: https://ncca.ie/media/6362/draftupdatedaistear_for-consultation.pdf

Warwick, P., Warwick, A., & Nash, K. (2017). Towards a pedagogy of hope: Sustainability education in the early years. In *Early Childhood Care and Education for Sustainability: International Perspectives* (Vol. 0, pp. 28-39) <https://doi.org/10.434/9781315295855>



Resources

Environmental Sustainability in Early Childhood Education and Care

Barnardos, (2023). *Childlinks Issue 1: Environmental Sustainability in Early Childhood Education and Care*. <https://knowledge.barnardos.ie/handle/20.500.13085/1235>

Children Nature Network

<https://www.childrenandnature.org/resources/research-digest-early-childhood-education-for-sustainability-ecefs/>

Education for Sustainability

<https://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/education-for-sustainability/>

Free online course: “Sustainability from the Start”

<https://omeworld.org/new-free-online-course-sustainability-from-the-start/>

The European Sustainability Competence Framework

GreenComp: The European sustainability competence framework is a reference framework for sustainability competencies. It provides a common ground to learners and guidance to educators, advancing a consensual definition of what sustainability as a competence entails.

https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/greencomp-european-sustainability-competence-framework_en

National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/02952d-national-strategy-on-education-for-sustainable-development-in-irelan/>
<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/latest-news/blog/sustainability-childrens-education-and-care>

TU Dublin Climate Action Project

<https://www.tudublin.ie/explore/about-the-university/sustainability/vision--progress/sustainability-strategy/climate-action-roadmap/>

<https://www.tudublin.ie/explore/about-the-university/sustainability/>

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Key Terms

Sustainability is the ability to maintain or support a process over time, taking care of the planet for future generations.

Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (ECEfS)

Early childhood education for sustainability is a transformative and empowering process actively engaged in by children, families and educators who share an ecocentric worldview.

Agentic Child

Refers to babies, toddlers and young children having a voice and influence over their own learning.

Agentic Educator

Aistear (NCCA 2023) presents a view of the 'educator' as competent, confident, agentic and reflective. An agentic educator is presented as one who can act independently to make professional and informed decisions in response to children's learning needs.

Sustainability Education in Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Sustainability education in ECE reflects the consideration that children and their families can act in ways that reflect a commitment to social justice and to protect planetary biodiversity at their local levels, as well as advocate for political changes in service of local and global well-being.

Ecocentrism

Ecocentrism refers to a planet- and nature-centred as opposed to the human-centered (anthropocentric) system of values. Ecocentric education focuses on the intrinsic values of the ecosystem, environment, and individual living beings and habitats in environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD).

Life Centred

Considering the well-being of all living things, that is what we aim for.

Planet-centred

Thinking about how our work affects the planet

Glossary

Anthropocene

The era we are living in right now, where humans have a big impact on the Earth's ecosystems and climate.

Biosphere

Is all the places on Earth where living things, like plants and animals can be found – from the air that we breathe to the oceans and the land.

Carbon

Is an element found in living things and fossil fuels. When we burn fossil fuels, it releases carbon dioxide, which affects the climate.

Circular Economy

Keeps products and materials in circulation through repair, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling and composting.

Climate Change

Is the result of factors like pollution and deforestation to the Earth's climate, it stands for occurrences such as extreme weather conditions which we are now experiencing.

Climate Justice

Is about making sure that everyone is treated fairly when it comes to dealing with climate change, especially those who are most affected by it.

Eco-centric Design

Is about designing things with nature in mind, so we are not just thinking about what is best for humans, but we also think about what is good for the planet.

Ecocene

Is an idea for the future where the Earth's ecosystems are doing really well because we have learned to take care of them better.

Ecology

Is the study of how living things interact with each other and their environment.



Hi, welcome to our student toolkit which we have put together as part of our Early Childhood Education and Care Year 4 Creative Interventions module. The purpose of the toolkit is to support you in promoting sustainability in early childhood education and to think about what changes we can make to the environment in early childhood settings through sustainable practice.

Introduction

Early childhood education for sustainability (ECEfS) is about transformative change. It is about our pedagogical practice and how we explore and engage with children in thinking about ways they can support their planet (Elliott, 2019). It is about change, change in the ways all species cohabit with the Earth. As early years educators we have an exciting opportunity to nurture and help children to be agentic in the creation of more sustainable futures in their daily lives. Doing this requires a pedagogy that is positive and hopeful. Warwick, Warwick & Nash (2017) highlight the need for education for sustainability to be centred on an active concern

for well-being and extended across three dimensions:

The biosphere dimension: Appreciative care for people and planet.

The spatial dimension: Appreciative care for the local and global.

The temporal dimension: Appreciative care for the present and future.

Warwick et al., (2017) apply this relational and compassionate value-based lens to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework which enables the translation for early years settings:

The Love Living Goals



<p>GOAL 1</p> <p>We're taking care of each other's needs</p>	<p>GOAL 2</p> <p>We're checking we have all got enough to eat today</p>	<p>GOAL 3</p> <p>We're looking after our head, heart and hands</p>	<p>GOAL 4</p> <p>We all love learning here</p>	<p>GOAL 5</p> <p>We're treating boys and girls as equally precious</p>
<p>GOAL 6</p> <p>We treasure water that keeps us well and clean</p>	<p>GOAL 7</p> <p>We use wind and sun energy for having fun</p>	<p>GOAL 8</p> <p>We're making a safe space to learn and grow</p>	<p>GOAL 9</p> <p>We're creatively imagining new and kinder futures</p>	<p>GOAL 10</p> <p>We're playing fair</p>
<p>GOAL 11</p> <p>We're guardians of where we live</p>	<p>GOAL 12</p> <p>We refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle and rot</p>	<p>GOAL 13</p> <p>We're sky minders</p>	<p>GOAL 15</p> <p>We're land keepers</p>	<p>GOAL 17</p> <p>We're making friends around the world</p>
		<p>GOAL 14</p> <p>We're sea carers</p>	<p>GOAL 16</p> <p>We're peacemakers</p>	

Warwick, Warwick & Nash (2017)

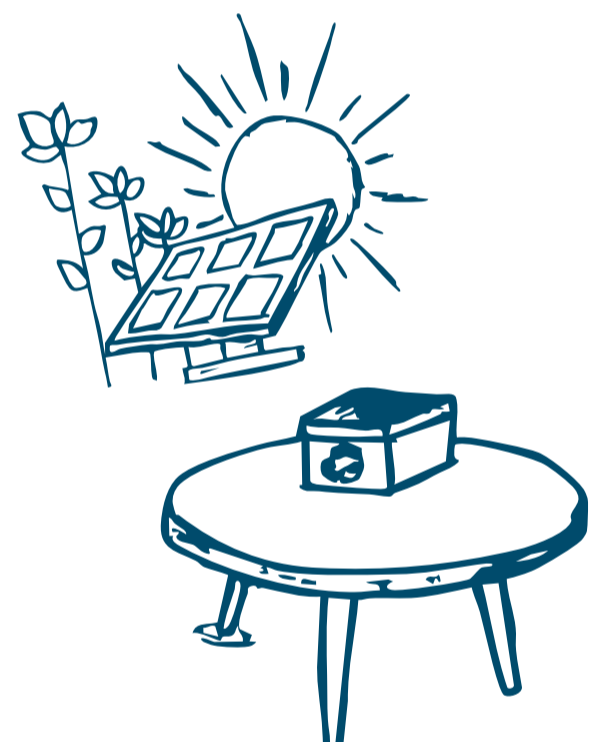
Change can be difficult, as educators we need to understand why change is urgently needed and how we can advocate and act for sustainable futures for all Elliott (2024). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989) is recognised and implemented across the early childhood education field. However, Davis (2014) has proposed a revisioning of children’s rights that includes foundational rights such as protection, agentic participation, collective, intergenerational and ecocentric rights. As educators we must broaden and facilitate children’s rights and capabilities to participate in working towards their sustainable futures— intergenerational equities are at stake (Elliott, 2019).

The guide will suggest what you can do to acknowledge children as empowered citizens, capable of contributing to and creating change for sustainability. It includes key terms, a glossary and ‘think abouts’ of what sustainability looks like within early childhood, and suggestions of what you might try to facilitate or change within your placement. We have also added links to resources and further reading if you want to learn more about Early childhood education for sustainability (ECEfS).



Water

Model sustainable practices and behaviours in your room such as turning off the lights when leaving the room and making a conscious effort to recycle. This provides a living example for children. Turning off taps after washing hands and using a suitable amount while doing water activities can help reduce water usage. Support children to be mindful of water saving tips such as turning off water when brushing their teeth and filling their cups to the amount they need. You could encourage this with a poem or song that you create with the children.

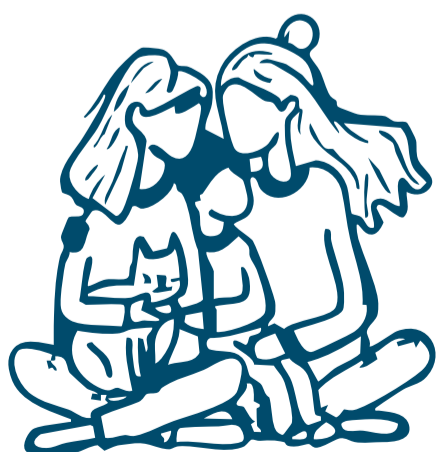


Recycle System

Food is one of the main sources to help our body function. Food often comes in packaging so, don’t forget to be aware of ‘reduce, reuse, recycle’! Simple things like having a small bin at each table at snack time can help promote a recycling system. When the children are finished their snack, they can bring the small bin to an area where there is a recycling system set up and could maybe reuse some of the materials for art.

Options to manage food waste can be fun for children while acknowledging children as capable active citizens. Actions such as leaving out left over breads etc., to wildlife such as birds or introducing composting to children are great activities to promote sustainability.

Using open-ended materials, by recycling and reusing materials like plastic bottles, yogurt cartons, cards and snack packaging, you can facilitate children to explore and create change for sustainability.



Energy

Just a light-bulb moment... Think about the impact of your energy usage. The earlier children learn about energy, the more we support good sustainable practices for their future. Introducing small changes can help protect the environment. Here are some tips on conserving energy:

- Turning off lights when leaving the room.
- Use natural daylight on bright days.
- Unplug devices when not in use and explain the purpose of this to the children.



Talk to the children about recycling and get them excited about helping their planet. Planning activities while on placement can be overwhelming. Check out what is already in the setting before you buy unnecessary materials resulting in unnecessary waste.



It is important to think about materials that are sustainable and environmentally friendly. It's also important that we support children to be agentic in deciding what ways they would like to support their environment.

Try and plan activities that positively benefit the environment such as bird feeders or planting flowers for the pollinators. This helps the children understand how they are helping the environment as they can see the outcomes of the activities.

Even though you may want your floor book to look colourful and fun, try to make sustainable choices in the materials you use. Avoid using glitter, feathers and foam shapes.



In colder weather make sure to close doors after entering the room to conserve heat.

Children are competent, confident, and agentic global citizens with emerging responsibilities to live sustainably. 'Provide opportunities for me to care for myself, others and for the environment' (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2023). Encouraging children to take part in conserving energy can help children understand how they are creating a more sustainable world.



5 GENDER EQUALITY



Think about why the materials should be neutral based in the room. Think about the room layout and materials.

The importance of your reactions due to your values and beliefs.

Be mindful of language in terms of stereotyping gender. Do not assume that every family structure looks the same.

Never label children's behaviours.

Interactions and relationships with parents/carers are key to children's holistic development.

Adapt concepts of sustainability to the age and developmental stage of the children you are working with. Be mindful of the language used and ensure activities and conversations are engaging and understandable.

Ask open-ended questions, promoting critical and reflective thinking about sustainability. This can aid children in thinking about how their choices affect their environment.

Incorporate outdoor learning into the service by regularly taking the children outside to explore nature. This can be done by going on nature walks, gardening, and scavenger hunts fostering a connection with the environment.

Choose language and engage in play that fosters a sense of responsibility for the planet in young children.

Foster children's understanding of sustainable and healthier eating options through discussion on the benefits of healthy snack options and aid interaction in activities that allow them to express their likes and dislikes. Role model good hygiene practices.



Some ways in which you can promote inclusivity during your placement and support quality education are:

Being mindful of abilities: do not plan activities that only suit the abilities of majority of the children, be flexible in your plans and adapt where needed to suit all abilities.

Strengths-based: make sure all your activities focus on what the children **can do** rather than what they can't do.

Helping children understand differences: look in your local libraries for books about diversity that you could read during story time to help the children with their understanding of diversity.

Think about why inclusive practice is fundamental for each individual to reach their full potential.



Promote visual displays in a room instead of written ones to support children using different means of communication.

