



A US Roadmap for Implementing the Global Action Program (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development

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OVERVIEW

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. During the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development – UN DESD (2005-2014), a broad spectrum of stakeholders in the United States expanded sustainability efforts across schools, higher education institutions, non-profits, government agencies, industries, and faith communities. In November 2014, UNESCO launched the *Roadmap for Implementing the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (GAP)* at the World Conference on ESD in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, to extend ESD efforts beyond the UN DESD. The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the UNESCO Education 2030 Framework for Action (Education 2030) also address education for sustainable development, in addition to including targets to promote global citizenship education.

In response, the U.S. ESD delegation of American non-governmental organizations, led by the Greater Portland Sustainability Education Network (GPSEN) - a UN University Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) on ESD - the U.S. Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development, and other key stakeholders, developed a series of recommendations to increase education, public awareness, and training efforts in the United States to foster a more sustainable future. With the launch of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, countries have agreed to establish objectives to meet the 17 SDGs. Goal 4 focuses on quality education, with target 4.7 addressing education for sustainable development (ESD). ESD includes key sustainable development issues through participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behavior and take action, consequently promoting competencies like critical thinking, collaborative decision-making, and innovative problem-solving.



IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE:

The UN Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development offers a roadmap for nations and regions to identify their specific needs, resources, and strategies to utilize ESD to create a sustainable future. To guide the process, the GAP identifies five priority action areas for creating a sustainable future through ESD:

1. Advancing policy by mainstreaming ESD
2. Transforming learning and training environments through whole-institution approaches
3. Building capacities of educators and trainers
4. Empowering and mobilizing youth
5. Accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level

THE AUTHORS /DELEGATES

With these action areas as a foundation, the authors as selected members of the U.S. ESD delegation of American non-governmental organizations -- lead by the Greater Portland Sustainability Education Network (GPSEN) -- a UN University Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) on ESD, the U.S. Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development, and other stakeholders - developed a series of recommendations to increase education, public awareness, and training efforts in the United States to foster a more sustainable future. Community members and ESD leaders throughout the nation are invited to develop indicators and metrics and suggest strategies to implement these objectives that meet their own regional and institutional needs.