

FINNISH SUSTAINABLE CRITERIA AND CERTIFICATION FOR EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS



Targets of national sustainable development strategies

In the strategies of the Finnish Commission on Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Education has been set a target according to which all Finnish schools and educational establishments should have a sustainable development action program by 2010, and 15% of them should have an external certificate on their work on sustainable development by 2014.

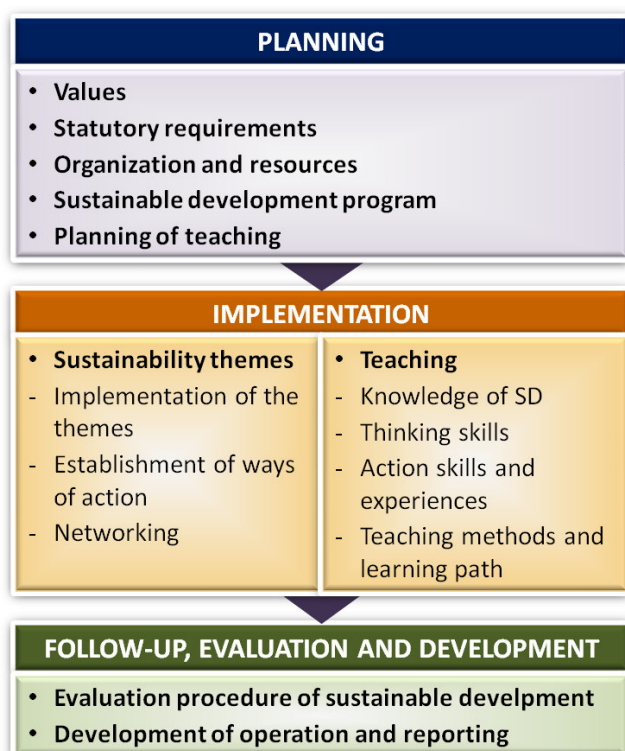
Finnish Environmental Certification of Educational Establishments

The OKKA Foundation for Teaching, Training and Personal Development is responsible for the management of the Finnish Environmental Certification of Educational Establishments which started in 2004. The certification system contains

- criteria for incorporation of environmental issues in the management, teaching and maintenance activities of educational establishments
- wide supporting material for the environmental work of educational institutions
- nation-wide auditor network which implements evaluation and development of the operation of schools and educational establishments
- teacher training courses supporting the construction of sustainable development programs
- possibility for external evaluation and certification

Teacher training is organized in cooperation between SYKLI Environmental School of Finland, the OKKA Foundation and Cooperative Eco-One. By February 2009, the environmental certificate has been awarded to the total of 24 schools or educational establishments.

The new Sustainability Criteria



The criteria for environmental certification have been updated to sustainability criteria in February 2009. The new criteria and the related self-evaluation tools assist educational establishments in the planning of teaching and constructing of sustainable development programs. Own versions of the criteria have been developed for vocational and general education.

The structure of the criteria is based on the continuous improvement model known from the quality thinking: plan, do, check, act.

Using the criteria, a school can progress stepwise in its sustainable development work towards the level of certification. One or more sustainability themes are processed annually in teaching and school culture. The themes can be implemented also, e.g., in the framework of Eco-Schools program.



The progress of school's sustainable development work

1. The school picks up one or more themes from the theme boxes (on the right).
2. An initial review is done on the state of the themes in teaching, management and school culture.
3. Based on the results are planned the targets and means of implementation for the sustainable development program.
4. The program is implemented in teaching and school culture.
5. The effective ways of action related to the themes are established as permanent part of teaching or school culture.
6. The sustainable development activities are followed up and evaluated, and new themes are selected for the program.

ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

- Responsible procurements and sustainable consumption (also social and cultural sustainability)
- Recycling and prevention of waste
- Energy and water
- Transports and traffic
- Management and maintenance of the school premises and surroundings
- Nutrition and health (also social and cultural sustainability)
- Own theme (ecological/economic sustainability)

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Safety at school and on the way to school
- Wellbeing of the staff and the students
- Prevention of bullying and exclusion
- Organization of students' support services
- Cultural environment and traditions
- Cultural diversity and internationality
- Own theme (social/cultural sustainability)

Sustainability Criteria and evaluation tools

Following tools will be developed to support the use of the Sustainability Criteria:

Sustainability Criteria presented in a short table form give a quick overview to the structure and content of the criteria.

Four-step descriptions of performance level for each criterion (scale: lacking – starting – developed – established) provide a basis for school's self-evaluation and the award of the certificate.

Self-evaluation questionnaire is a tool that assists collecting information from the different school functions for evaluation. The questionnaire gives also the basis for the external evaluation when school applies for the certificate.

Background material provides justifications and examples of implementation for the criteria.

Instructions for self-evaluation and applying for the certificate support the use of the criteria.

Instructions for auditors guide the auditors in the planning and implementation of external evaluation. Material will be developed and published during the spring 2009 on the website of the certification system (www.koulujaymparisto.fi).

The sustainability criteria for educational establishments have been elaborated by the OKKA Foundation, SYKLI Environmental School of Finland and Cooperative Eco-One with the assist of pedagogical experts and pilot educational institutions. The work has been supported by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of the Environment, National Board of Education, the Finnish Work Environment Fund and Ålandsbanken.



Environmental Certification of Educational Establishments

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