



New Zealand

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The New Zealand education system is similar to the UK system, made up of three-tiered stages – early childhood, primary and post-primary education.

There are eight major learning areas, which are:



English



Health and PE



Arts



Languages



Math



Science



Social Science



Tecnology

In 1993 the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* was published, like the current curriculum in Northern Ireland, at the time there was no statutory requirement to include environmental education or sustainability, however there was acknowledgement that schools could adapt the curriculum to take account of local needs, including environmental ones.

In 1998, the government agencies set priorities for environmental education. In 1999, the government released *Guidelines for environmental education in New Zealand Schools* which offered guidelines for schools interested in integrating environmental education in their teaching. The guidelines sought to compliment the New Zealand Curriculum Framework and was focused on linking EE with mandated learning in the curriculum. In addition to the guideline’s publication, the Ministry of Education funded professional development programmes for teachers based on the guidelines, these ran between 1999-2002.

All New Zealanders value a connection to our environment by actively working together for a sustainable future.

Vision Statement, Mātauranga Whakauka Taiao, Environmental Education for Sustainability Strategy

Māori schools have a ninth subject, the Māori languages.

The latest National Curriculum was fully adopted in 2010, updated in 2015 and in February 2021, the Ministry of Education announced that “[t]he national curriculum will be refreshed over the next five years...”. The review is focused on embedding New Zealand’s histories and is relevant to environmental elements in the curriculum as it will include Tūrangawaewae me te kaitiakitanga (relationships of individuals and groups with the land, sea and resources).

With regard to environmental principles the New Zealand curriculum stands out as an excellent model of embedding sustainable development concepts throughout the national curriculum requirements. The stated overarching intention is to develop children and young people into individuals with “attitudes and values that lead to create a nation of innovative and motivated people who think and act sustainably,”.

In 2017 the government published *Mātauranga Whakauka Taiao – He Mahere Rautaki, Environmental Education for Sustainability Strategy* which compliments and builds on the curricular requirements for EEfS.

The priority areas identified for the strategy are to:

- 1 Enable coordination of EEfS**
- 2 Grow capability and capacity in EEfS delivery**
- 3 Strengthen pathways in sustainable practice**



The national curriculum refers to their education for sustainability as Environmental Education for Sustainability (EEfS). The national curriculum strategy focuses identified key environmental issues: challenges of climate change, water quality, biodiversity protection and waste and it seeks to recognise and grow the Māori perspectives in their environmental protection. It also views EEfS as a key initiative to assisting the government to achieve its environmental goals. The EEfS seeks to go beyond the development of practical skills and understanding, it pointedly seeks to also develop

“strong human elements” with targeted intentions towards developing children and young people in the following four ways:

- 1. Te Taha Wairua (the spiritual dimension);**
- 2. Te Taha Tinana (the physical dimension);**
- 3. Te Haha Hinengaro (the dimension of thought); and**
- 4. Te Taha Whānau (the family dimension).**

This recognition of the need for individual development, rather than simply a hard skill, is a central and crucial theme for successful EE, ESD and EfS.

Of particular note are the values within curricular requirements for EEfS, listing the following “to be encouraged, modelled and explored”:

Students will be encouraged to value:

“ecological sustainability including care for the environment”

In exploring environmental issues, people’s interests in the environment, and actions for a sustainable future, students will have many opportunities to:

- learn about their own values and those of others
- develop their ability to express their own values
- explore with empathy the values of others
- critically analyse values and the actions based on them
- discuss disagreements that arise from difference in values and negotiate solutions
- make ethical decisions and act on them

With regard to key competencies required for living and life-long learning the Ministry of Education requires:

Capabilities for living and lifelong learning: *Education for sustainability seeks to empower students of all ages to take action on issues of concern and of interest to them. It describes this process as action competence, and uses all the key competencies, combined with experiences from the learning areas, to make this goal possible. The development of action competence and the key competencies is seen as part of the process of taking action.^v*

Finally, a report published by the *Teaching and Learning Research Initiative* recognised that a whole school approach is needed to fully deliver EEfS to children and young people.

The report highlighted that action-competence was the most effective and promising methodology as it offers experiences in “the ability to act with regard to the environment”.

The argument being that **action-competence goes well beyond pro-environmental activity or behavioural modification, rather that it incorporates intentional, participatory and authentic action that requires knowledge about underlying causes of unsustainable practices and is guided by students’ experiences, attitudes, values and local contexts.**

Action-competencies can be best developed through whole-school commitment to action to support EEfS as it offers an academic environment that is living EEfS principles and offering these real-life experiences to students intentionally.

The New Zealand National Curriculum and EEfS Strategy also recognises that in order for EEfS to be successful there must be a whole school approach to sustainability and based on the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative’s work, they have identified four areas of school life needed to create a sustainable school:

People work collaboratively, are reflective of our bicultural heritage and the diversity of their community. They ensure that students are all involved in sharing decisions in order to become confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners.

Programmes focus on learning about the interaction between people and the environment and developing attitudes and behaviours for a more sustainable future. Through taking action students discover why sustainability matters and how to make sustainability a reality in their school and wider community.

Sustainable Practices are a part of school culture instigated by students and staff to make a more resilient community for the future.

A **Place** is created where students and their community work together willingly to reduce their impact on the planet for future generations to enjoy the diverse and beautiful world we live in.

'New Zealand’s continued commitment to EEfS throughout its curriculum topics is one in which Northern Ireland could learn from in the development of EfS across the new curriculum, which was scheduled for 2022.'

“Mō tatou te taiao ko te tawhai, mō tatou te taiao ko te oranga”
It is for us to care for and look after the environment to ensure its well-being, in doing so we ensure our own well-being and that of our future generations”

Reference:

- i Ministry of Education, 2004, 'Environmental Education In New Zealand Schools: Research Into Current Practice and Future Possibilities: Volume 1.' Wellington: Research Division, Wāhanga Mahi Rangahau, Ministry of Education.
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- iii Nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz. 2020, 'Education for sustainability / Curriculum resources / Kia ora - NZ Curriculum Online,' [online] Available at: <https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-resources/Education-for-sustainability>, [Accessed 6 Dec. 2022].
- iv Department of Conservation, Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Education, 2017, 'Environmental Education for Sustainability, Mātauranga Whakauka Taiao,' Wellington: New Zealand Government.
- v Ministry of Education, 2015. *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- vi Eames, C., Barker, M., Wilson-Hill, F. and Law, B., n.d., 'Investigating the relationship between whole-school approaches to education for sustainability and student learning.' Wellington: Teaching & Learning Research Initiative.

Funded by:



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