

TITLE:

Sustainability: From Strategy to Practice - A Whole School Approach

DATE:

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SUMMARY

Lancaster and Morecambe College wanted to embed sustainability across all areas of college life and to involve all staff and students.

The journey began in 2006 led by the principal and with the active involvement of staff at every level within the organisation. The approach was initially based on the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) document 'From Here to Sustainability'.

INSTITUTION PROFILE

General FE College
1800 F/T Students
4000 P/T Students

EAUC COMMENT

This is an excellent example of how a college can introduce sustainability into college life through the use of existing initiatives, and the engagement and buy-in of both staff and students.

THE PROBLEM

Lancaster and Morecambe College wanted to address the issue of sustainability but was wary of imposing such a major change on its staff and students. The management team decided staff needed to be engaged in the process in order to help develop, drive and, ultimately, own it.

The college also wanted to take a college-wide strategic approach to addressing sustainability, instead of introducing ad hoc initiatives which would leave some areas of the institution untouched.

THE APPROACH

All staff were invited to a meeting of the newly-created Sustainability Forum as a way of identifying people with an interest in sustainability. The forum was led by the principal with an input by one of the governors who is passionate about the issue.

The forum adopted the LSC Framework set out in its 'From Here to Sustainability' document: Capacity Building, Buildings and Estates, Curriculum and Community. This framework provided a starting point and the necessary structure for a college-wide approach. A policy and strategy were drawn up with an associated action plan in order that tasks were clearly identified and tied to timescales. Actions included increasing the amount of paper recycled and reducing energy consumption.

GOALS

- To be recognised as a sector-leading college by 2008 – high aspirations were important
- To raise the profile of sustainability across the college and to get 'buy in' from all staff across the organisation – establishing values and winning hearts and minds was essential
- To work with staff to model their behaviour as an example to students
- To identify and promote good practice to demonstrate the benefits of sustainable practice
- To achieve Fair Trade status

OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

Obstacles

- How to engage interested staff
- Writing a policy and strategy with little previous experience
- Engaging the whole college – staff and students
- How to know when you have made progress

Solutions

- Developing a Sustainability Forum and running a series of events across the college to raise awareness
- Engage a consultant with substantial experience as they can provide the specialist support to help you create a successful policy and strategy first time round
- Leadership by the Principal and commitment from a number of staff to make things happen
Use staff as an example to students
- Regularly updating a realistic action plan

PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

The college achieved Fair Trade status in July 2007 and the principal was a keynote speaker at a sustainability seminar at the 2007 Association of Colleges (A.O.C) Conference.

Waste paper recycling management initiative results indicate savings of £35,287. Electrical and water consumption is on target for a 2.5% reduction in annual consumption.

Increasing numbers of staff are incorporating sustainability into their work via lectures to students or through the day-to-day management of the campus and grounds.

Sustainability is included in all job descriptions and on targets in the annual individual appraisal process. There is significant student involvement via their course programmes, Fair Trade Fortnight, a volunteer fair and sustainable enterprise day. A People and Planet Group has been set up, which has an elected officer on the student union.

LESSONS LEARNT

- Strategic leadership is important with opportunities for motivated people, at whatever level, to lead on initiatives
- Encourage leadership at every level throughout the organisation so the change is properly embedded and is seen to be important
- Identify and support champions throughout the organisation who can advocate for the cause and help create a culture change
- Involve staff in the creation and leadership of the initiative – Lancaster and Morecambe College firmly believe this was more successful than a management-led approach
- Start with the development of staff understanding and skills before more detailed student engagement
- It's about values, not skills
- Continually communicate successes and activities
- Spend time educating staff about sustainability – very few know what it really means!
- Provide structure, be aspirational but realistic



The Environmental and Sustainability Champion within Further and Higher Education in the United Kingdom.

The EAUC provides training, advice and support to our members as well as providing a forum for best practice in the sector.

To join phone 01242 714321

FURTHER INFORMATION

David Wood, Principal, Lancaster and Morecambe College,
tel: 01524 521289,
email: d.wood@lmc.ac.uk

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www.eauc.org.uk
info@eauc.org.uk