



College Guideline

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Environmentally Sustainable Practices

Purpose

This policy is designed to help Mount St Bernard College (MSBC) to act on climate change by reducing the environmental impact of their operations and providing resources and guidance for teaching environmental sustainability, and engaging school communities.

The school plans, implements and monitors actions across the following 6 priority areas as part of a whole school approach to environmental sustainability:

1. School leadership
2. Facilities and operations
3. Teaching and learning
4. Community partnerships
5. First nations perspectives
6. Student-led action.

Definitions

Climate change adaptation

Any process of adjusting to actual or expected climate and its effects that:

- a. in human systems, seek to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities
- b. in natural systems, may be facilitated by human interventions.

Climate change mitigation

Mitigation is about limiting the amount of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions (for example, from burning fossil fuels) or enhancing the 'sinks' that accumulate and store greenhouse gases (such as increasing carbon sequestration in forests, mangroves and soil).

Climate change

A change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere, and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.

Eco-anxiety

Mental distress or anxiety associated with perceptions of the negative impacts of climate change and worsening environmental conditions.

Environmental sustainability

Addresses the ongoing capacity of the earth or Earth to maintain all life.

Greenhouse gas emissions

Emissions of:

- carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide or sulphur hexafluoride
- a hydrofluorocarbon or perfluorocarbon that is specified in regulations made under the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007 (Cth).

Policy

This policy supports schools to plan, implement, and monitor actions across 6 priority areas:

- school leadership
- teaching and learning
- facilities and operations
- community partnerships
- First nations perspectives
- student-led action.



School Leadership

This domain of environmental sustainability action focuses on actions that may be undertaken by MSBC leadership. MSBC leaders may choose to embed environmental sustainability in their operations by following these steps (none of these are mandatory):

- Establish an environmental sustainability committee or 'Green group' with teacher and student representatives. The inclusion of parents or community members may bring additional expertise, capacity and capability.
- Create an Environmental Sustainability Plan and actively involve students, staff, families and the wider community to complete it. It is recommended that the plan address all 6 priority areas of the Environmental Sustainability in Schools policy and specifies school actions under each priority area.
- Communicate the school's environmental sustainability plan with staff, students and the broader community. Schools can regularly report on school sustainability initiatives in the school newsletter.
- Embed environmental sustainability where relevant across school strategic plans, annual implementation plans, maintenance plans and workforce planning processes. Environmental sustainability can be embedded into improvement plans as well as 'business as usual' for integrated and longer-term action.
- Develop and implement a whole-school teaching and learning program and approach to enacting the Australian Curriculum Foundation – 10 (Australian Curriculum F–10) Sustainability cross-curriculum priority (SCCP). This includes ensuring the SCCP is visible in documents that describe classroom programs, and there is a documented whole school approach to teaching and assessing the priority. The VCAA document Learning about sustainability (DOCX) summarises the organising concepts of the sustainability priority and outlines all sustainability-related content descriptions Foundation – Level 9 and 10 across all curriculum areas.
- Integrate climate risks and hazards including extreme weather events into school risk management. The Emergency Management Planning Portal provides guidance on preparing for extreme weather events.

Facilities and Operations

MSBC will not provide any banned single-use plastic items as part of their school operations and will not be able to purchase any new banned single-use plastic items.

Environmental sustainability and climate goals can also be achieved through a focus on facilities and operations, including increased energy efficiency and water savings, behaviour change activities and activities that students can lead.

- Identify and implement actions to reduce school energy use which produces greenhouse gases.
- Install renewable energy systems, such as solar panels and wind turbines, in line with the guidelines provided in the Sustainable Facilities policy. Tracking energy use is an effective way to build business cases for solar power systems. Once installed, report to the school community on emissions and cost savings.
- Buy recycled and environmentally friendly products. Considering the 'whole of life' environmental impact of goods and services when making purchasing decisions has a real impact on the amount of waste generated by a school.

Teaching and Learning

Schools may choose to undertake one or more of the following activities:

- Support the implementation of the Sustainability Cross Curriculum Priority (SCCP) into classroom teaching from F – 10. Ensure that classroom programs are clearly and comprehensively aligned to the SCCP and ensure that coverage is visible in documents that describe classroom programs by year level or learning area/capability, and by unit/lessons. The SCCP provides students with the opportunity to learn about environmental sustainability including climate change adaptation and mitigation. Rather than take the place of other learning content, the SCCP is designed to connect to other core learning areas.
- Foster a connection to place. Connecting teaching and learning to local places and local people can strengthen responses to environmental sustainability issues. This could include varying the location of some teaching activities, including excursions (for example, to local government, along a nearby creek bank) or incursions (for example, Traditional Owners visiting the school).
- Incorporate environmental and climate justice within the SCCP, including in the value and integration of First Nations perspectives. This includes the recognition that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are climate leaders. Climatic changes impact Caring for Country responsibilities and health and wellbeing.
- Address evidence of feelings of anxiety and grief in students about climate change and give students opportunities to engage in action to combat these feelings. Your Climate Superpowers, Headspace and the Australian Psychological Society has information for young people, parents and other adults about eco-anxiety.
- Provide teaching and learning opportunities that allow students to explore and develop understandings based on real world contexts that are relevant and tangible. This approach also supports students' feelings of connectedness and empowerment. Students experience less eco-anxiety when they can make a difference and affect change to improve environmental sustainability in their local environment.
- Include vocational education and training (VET) options linked to renewable energy and a clean economy in your senior secondary program. VET enables students to gain practical skills and develop industry-specific knowledge to take climate action in their future careers.

Community Partnerships

This priority area of environmental sustainability action includes ways for schools to partner with others in the broader community to support their efforts in environmental sustainability. Each organisation will have its own way to connect and its own priorities, so schools should first ensure that they have clear priorities set out in their Environmental Sustainability Plan before reaching out to different organisations. Schools are not obliged to engage with their broader community in relation to improving environmental sustainability.

MSBC will consider the following:

- improve natural habitats and create gardens. Community organisations support school gardening or tree planting opportunities for students.
- create and promote active transport to and from school.
- seek support to assist with climate-related natural hazards.

First Nations Perspectives

This priority area of environmental sustainability action includes activities that can be undertaken to consider First Nations perspectives on environmental sustainability.

MSBC will consider the following:

- get support from First Nations Education Coordinators.
- support First Nations families in your schools by engaging with First Nations Engagement Support Officers.
- integrate First Nations perspectives when teaching sustainability and other subjects across the curriculum
- apply First Nations perspectives when improving the environment in and around your school by planting an Indigenous Garden.
- use reputable sources to give you confidence in the teaching of First Nations perspectives. Teachers who are not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander can confidently teach others about First Nations perspectives by relying on appropriate resources.
- engage with local Traditional Owners. Traditional Owners hold unique and special knowledge, rights and connection to their traditional Country, including deep knowledge of how to care for country, and land-based learning.

Student-led Action

This priority area of environmental sustainability action includes activities that schools may choose to do To foster and support student-led action. MSBC will consider the following:

- support student-led environmental sustainability initiatives. Students are showing leadership in environmental sustainability action locally and globally and want to see their schools supporting their action as well as taking initiative. Schools should support students where it is appropriate to do so. Students feel reassured and validated by visible and tangible climate change action when schools support them.
- work with students to establish a student-led sustainability action group to foster student-led action on sustainability and create an environmental leadership position within a student representative council. Schools can also include student members on the school council sustainability sub-committee or providing a student-led action group with a regular speaking spot at school council, subcommittee or staff management meetings.

Reflection

Let us take one day only in hands at a time. Resolve to do good today and better tomorrow.”
(Catherine McAuley)