U1L1A2 | Defining Sustainability

overview

In this activity you will explore a variety of materials that explain the concept of sustainability. You will compare definitions from different organizations, then evaluate three models of sustainability. Lastly, you will learn about taking action for sustainability by watching 'The Story of Solutions' and use the Sustainability Checklist to evaluate citizen action on an issue. After, you can evaluate a sustainability initiative in your local community (Activity 5).

learning goal

• To understand and participate in the inquiry process.
• To understand and apply the concept of sustainability.

success criteria

• I will complete a series of activities on sustainability
• I will evaluate a local sustainable solution and share it with the class

Inquiry Question

• What is sustainability?

Task 1: Comparing Sustainability Definitions

When examining the issue of sustainable management of national and global resources, one must first consider the definition of sustainable development.

According to 'Our Common Future,' or the Brundtland report (1987), one must always consider the environment when evaluating development:

"…the "environment" is where we all live; and "development" is what we all do in attempting to improve our lot within that abode. The two are inseparable." (Foreword, page 3, paragraph 2).

1. Watch the video "The Natural Step and Sustainability explained in 2 minutes" at the following link to understand the concept of sustainable development: www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNhDNjdgQE4

a. What are the four 'care instructions' for the earth, according to this video?

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

iv. _____

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2. Read the following definition of sustainable development from the Brundtland Commission (1987), of the United Nations.

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

   a. The concept of 'needs,' in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
   b. The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs."

3. How does the Brundtland definition compare with the 'care instructions' from the video? What are the similarities, and what are the differences?
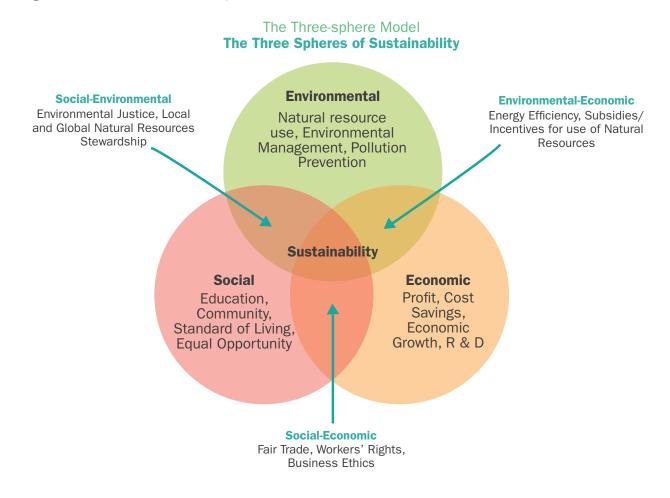
Similarities

- _____

- _____

Differences

- _____

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Task 2: Comparing Sustainability Models
Using the models below, answer the questions that follow.

The Three-sphere Model
The Three Spheres of Sustainability

Social-Environmental
Environmental Justice, Local and Global Natural Resources Stewardship

Environmental
Natural resource use, Environmental Management, Pollution Prevention

Environmental-Economic
Energy Efficiency, Subsidies/Incentives for use of Natural Resources

Sustainability

Social
Education, Community, Standard of Living, Equal Opportunity

Economic
Profit, Cost Savings, Economic Growth, R & D

Social-Economic
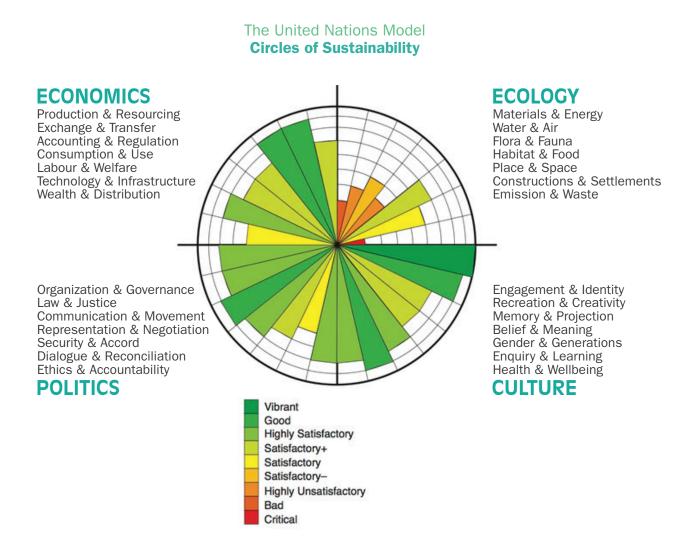Fair Trade, Workers' Rights, Business Ethics

1. What are the three factors that define sustainability according to this model? It may be helpful as you move forward to remember these factors as People, Profit, and Planet.

    _____

    _____

    _____

2. Using one example from the model, explain the meaning of the area between the spheres.

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

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The United Nations Model
Circles of Sustainability

ECONOMICS
Production & Resourcing
Exchange & Transfer
Accounting & Regulation
Consumption & Use
Labour & Welfare
Technology & Infrastructure
Wealth & Distribution

ECOLOGY
Materials & Energy
Water & Air
Flora & Fauna
Habitat & Food
Place & Space
Constructions & Settlements
Emission & Waste

POLITICS
Organization & Governance
Law & Justice
Communication & Movement
Representation & Negotiation
Security & Accord
Dialogue & Reconciliation
Ethics & Accountability

CULTURE
Engagement & Identity
Recreation & Creativity
Memory & Projection
Belief & Meaning
Gender & Generations
Enquiry & Learning
Health & Wellbeing

Legend:
- Vibrant
- Good
- Highly Satisfactory
- Satisfactory+
- Satisfactory
- Satisfactory–
- Highly Unsatisfactory
- Bad
- Critical

3. What are the factors that define sustainability according to the United Nations?

_____

_____

4. Using one example from the model, explain the coloured regions inside the circle.

_____

_____

_____

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5. Which model is more effective at describing the concept of sustainability? Explain your answer using evidence from the models.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Task 3: Changing the Game

Watch the video at the following link and answer the questions that follow. If you have never seen 'The Story of Stuff,' it may be beneficial to watch that first, but it is not necessary.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpkRvc-sOKk

1. What is the difference between the old goal (MORE) and the new goal (BETTER)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What symbols are shown on each of the goals to help the viewer understand these differences?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. What does GOAL stand for?

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

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4. What are some of the solutions the narrator describes that demonstrate the game changing? Provide three.

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Describe how the Ban the Bag campaign was a game changer. Apply the Sustainability Checklist and use it to support your answer.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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sustainability checklist

Environmental Sustainability needs: Planet

- ❑ Healthy and intact ecosystems
- ❑ Government policy that puts the environment first
- ❑ Educated citizens who put the environment first
- ❑ Responsible business that puts the environment first
- ❑ A forward-thinking, long-term vision

Economic Sustainability needs: Profit

- ❑ A healthy environment
- ❑ Partnership between government, industry and communities
- ❑ Sustainable communities with a high level of social capital to attract and retain strong businesses
- ❑ A wide variety of meaningful employment for people
- ❑ Responsible, efficient use of natural resources
- ❑ A forward-thinking, long-term vision

Social Sustainability needs: People

- ❑ A healthy environment
- ❑ Communities with secure and high-quality housing, education, health care, food systems to encourage people to invest and engage in the social fabric of their communities
- ❑ Communities with a high level of social capital that allows people to fully participate in the following activities:
  - Cultural—arts, heritage, active citizenship, embrace diversity
  - Political—good governance, democratic engagement, social development
  - Economic—employment, economic development, tourism, infrastructure, agriculture
  - Environmental—protection, conservation, experiences, governance
- ❑ A forward-thinking, long-term vision