



# Think globally, act locally: Promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through community-centered learning

## What Is The Issue?

To promote global well-being and to prepare students and communities for future success in a global economy, we should provide them with opportunities to study local issues and understand how these issues fit into the fabric of global sustainability—[practices that support ecological, human, and economic health](#). The United Nations' [17 Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs](#), describe current global goals, such as ending poverty, good health, clean water, clean energy, and equity. They offer educators practical ways to focus instruction on meaningful local and global phenomena that connect to students' lives. They also highlight key intersections between STEM, economics, social behavior, and politics.

## WHY IT MATTERS TO YOU

- **Teachers should** engage students in [community-centered learning](#) and help them connect this learning to global issues, civic engagement, and solutions.
- **District Staff & PD Providers should** provide teachers with opportunities to learn about the SDGs and incorporate them into their curriculum in locally relevant ways.
- **School Leaders should** support teachers as they implement SDG-based lessons by connecting teachers to community members working in sustainability and by providing time for them to collaborate with colleagues on enacting interdisciplinary instruction.

## Things To Consider

- Both [global](#) and [U.S. workforce](#) reports show shifts in the types of careers that will be in demand in the future. Students are increasingly likely to work on issues connected to local and global sustainability, including in economic, social, ecological, and technological fields.
- In 2020, [Education for sustainable development: A roadmap](#) linked the SDGs to [needed educational efforts in schools around the world](#). UNESCO has created a [learning objective guidance document for the SDGs](#). These reports provide a background for sustainability education.
- As youth engage globally through social media, they are gaining a broader awareness and concern around sustainability issues around the globe. This [increased awareness means they are often ready to take up learning that involves community action](#). The SDGs are a useful frame to connect local phenomena and action to the wider global problems youth are seeing online, helping young people make sense of these issues and situate themselves within larger movements and historical forces.
- Student engagement in learning about the SDGs requires them to use a range of science practices, content knowledge, and [cross-cutting conceptual lenses](#)—which aligns learning about the SDGs with [three-dimensional science education](#). Fully engaging with the SDGs pushes young people and educators to be interdisciplinary, creating meaningful, real-world learning and action opportunities.

## Recommended Actions You Can Take

- Learn more about how to connect [local](#) and [place-based](#) phenomena with SDG learning goals. Use these [goal-based educational resources from UNESCO and others](#) to design [phenomena-based learning](#).
- Explore [teacher-focused learning strategies and lesson resources](#) that are used internationally to promote SDG integration in STEM learning produced by [UNESCO](#), the [Center for Global Education](#), the [Smithsonian](#), the [Manitoba Council for International Cooperation](#), and [World's Largest Lesson](#). Explore curriculum that makes local-to-global connections, such as ones on [global food challenges](#) or [energy sources](#). [Design lessons that engage students in civic, solutions-oriented learning](#) connected to global issues, such as on the [SDGs and Project Drawdown](#).
- Examine how SDGs can be [connected to science concepts](#) or [sustainability learning standards](#). Connect with educators in your school to design an interdisciplinary lessons around one or several of the SDGs.
- Sustainability education can occur in many locations, from the outdoors to laboratories. Connect to youth organizations to support student learning in diverse contexts around actions that students can take, such as [SDG Student Resources](#), [4H](#), [Scouts](#), [Rotary](#), etc.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What issues are my students, their families, and their communities most concerned about? How do these connect to the SDGs?
- What actions are organizations or governments in your community developing to address these issues? How can you help your students imagine and propose other possible actions to be taken?
- How are you designing learning focused on real-world challenges that will help students develop interdisciplinary knowledge and practices needed for future careers and civic participation?

## Attending to Equity

- The SDGs are deeply grounded in social and multispecies justice. Teaching about them promotes global equity.
- All cultures have [histories of sustainability practices that can be showcased](#). Teachers should encourage students to bring their [own cultural practices into learning contexts](#).
- All students can connect the SDGs to [their own interests](#) and [needs in their communities](#), making learning more engaging and meaningful.
- [Preparing all youth for the modern workforce](#) requires learning experiences that are [sustainability-focused](#) and [interdisciplinary](#).

### ALSO SEE STEM TEACHING TOOLS:

- #57 [Place-Based Education](#)
- #67 [Justice-Centered Phenomena](#)
- #74 [Community Science](#)

