



From the President

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Sustainability

May has finally arrived and so have the warmer months of the year. My son has been planning our garden since December. He now has tomatoes, peppers, squash, and other plants growing in our cold frame. He has begun organizing the garden spaces and ordering raspberries and grapes for planting this year. With all the plants he has planned for us to grow this year, we may be self-sustaining or at least not having to visit the grocery store for several months. But more importantly as his father and a biologist, I am very pleased that my son looks at the land we have and desires to take care of it while we strive to live off of it.

According to the Coalition on the Public Understanding of Science (COPUS) "2009 Year of Science," May is the month to focus on sustainability and the environment. Recently I was invited to participate in a panel discussion on sustainability with a previous Director of the EPA. It was an interesting discussion on policy and implementation. Many questions were directed as to the focus of the past and current administrations on environmental concerns. During the discussion, the past EPA Director used the Brundtland Commission statement to define sustainability as: "Meeting our own needs without limiting the ability of future generations to meet their needs." Often the discussion would address the interactions that occur with sustainability between the environment, economic, and social dimensions. These are often called the pillars of sustainability. Even though how these dimensions interact was debated, the importance of sustaining our environment for future generations was the overall conclusion. When given the opportunity, I asked the previous EPA Director what teachers could do to help prepare students about sustainability and its complex interactions. After he provided his response I smiled, as I was aware that many of the ideas he proposed were similar to those suggested in NABT's Position Statement on Sustainability. Visit NABT's Web site for greater detail, but let me highlight just a few of these suggestions. If you have other good examples,

send them to NABT so that they can be included as good practices in teaching on sustainability and the environment and other teachers can learn from your example.

- Expose students to the beauty and intrigue of nature.
- Foster debate of environmental and other social issues.
- Allow students to express individual leadership and civic action, which promotes long-term, visionary thinking and encourages equity, social justice, peace, health and healing.
- Introduce the topics on renewable energy, energy from the sun and wind, and other renewable resources.
- Lead by example; help your schools to make substantive and well-demonstrated efforts to recycle and conserve energy, water, and other natural resources.
- Explore how your school community works, including water and energy use, CO₂ produced per student, the amount of materials procured, the amount of materials recycled, etc.
- Follow principles and guidance set forth by organizations devoted to the teaching and practice of sustainable living.

The teaching of responsible use of our environment may be one of the most important things we do. Teaching by example may be the best way in which we can actually accomplish a sustainably-minded society.

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