

RCEs of the Americas Meeting Commitment Statement on ESD

Autlan, Western Jalisco

July 30, 2014

The RCEs of the Americas network of Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (RCEs), having met in Western Jalisco, hereby state our commitment to implementing strategic actions that build a continental learning space on ESD to contribute to our global and regional learning spaces, as we move beyond the *Decade on ESD* and into the new era of the *Global Action Programme on ESD*.

As a transformative tool for change, the RCEs of the Americas commit to the following strategies within the ESD priorities of the *Global Action Programme*:

- **Advancing Policy**
 - Increasing the visibility of RCEs within the UNU-IAS, municipal, state, and federal governments, and UN agencies in our regions.
 - Developing strategies to work with senior policy ministers beyond education, such as ministries of the environment, health, etc. and at all levels of government.
 - Shaping ESD policies that allow for flexibility and shared accountability.
 - Linking research to policy needs and advising, with vetting and publishing support from the Eco-Journal
- **Integrating sustainable practices into education and training, using a whole-systems approach.**
 - Moving beyond projects and focusing only on what is taught in classrooms to emphasizing institutional ESD practices in hiring, purchasing, investing, building, and training students and staff.
 - Developing evaluation tools, such as models of assessment for formal, informal, and nonformal education including the Sustainability Literacy Test.
- **Increasing capacity**
 - Identifying funding strategies and sources within our communities, including non-financial resources and collaborative partnerships.
 - Developing training programs, including establishing exchange programs between RCEs for faculty, students, and community leaders.
 - Setting up mentoring relationships for new RCEs from within and outside the country, providing support during the application process, as well as after recognition and through maturity.
- **Empowering and mobilizing youth**
 - Supporting successful programs such as the Virtual Youth Conference
 - Developing relationships between youth via social media and one-to-one engagement (such as “pen pal programs”) and participation in youth conferences in our regions

- Encouraging local communities to develop community-based ESD programs
 - Working with indigenous people, recognizing traditional knowledge, best practices, and cultural diversity, and identifying their importance and challenges.
 - Facilitating community and citizen engagement and service projects.

In an effort to continually improve our contributions and collective impact, the RCEs of the Americas will reflect upon our progress and provide constructive critique to revise efforts and develop policies and practices which improve our ability to implement our ESD objectives required for a sustainable future and for positive social transformation. We commit to ensuring our strategic engagement **does not**:

- lead to fragmentation and separation from our communities and disciplines thereby impeding our ability for strategic collaboration and multi-stakeholder networking
- overlook work with specific sectors (for example, artists and faith organizations), specific areas of education (for example, corporate education and training), and specific types of policy (for example, non-governmental and business policies)
- fail to build on the earlier successful work on ESD completed during the Decade on ESD

Collectively, we are committed to advancing ESD, mindful of the broader global sustainable development agenda including the Sustainable Development Goals. As the world looks to 2015 and beyond, our RCEs recognize our scale of expertise and the need to respond to our global systems in crisis. It is our moral responsibility to contribute to both the cultural and institutional changes necessary to address the sustainability challenges of our regions and our world.

Strategic Directions for the RCEs of the Americas: Creating “An RCE of RCEs”

Tuesday, July 29, 2014

3rd RCE Conference of the Americas

Autlan de Nevarro, Jalisco, Mexico

Question for Discussion: What are common project areas for RCEs in the Americas to work on?

Reviewed sample areas previously discussed: exchanges, youth projects, culture, living laboratories, communication and outreach, resourcing/financing/legal incorporation, “wicked problem” exchange, best practice documentation, Americas conferences, curriculum development/diplomas, teacher training, RCE mentoring, revitalization, and development (Americas and elsewhere?), participation in UN events, vocational education ESD, and popular education.

Existing Projects/Commitments

Biodiversity and Livelihoods Project (RCE Lima-Callao, RCE Bogota, RCE Guatemala)

- Using traditional knowledge to advance livelihood options. Lima has a diploma program on biodiversity
- Biodiversity and livelihoods project proposal developed and submitted. Awaiting results of funding application.

Virtual Youth Conference (RCE Grand Rapids)

Virtual youth conference has taken place over two years focusing on issues of water and food; next year's conference is focusing on air.

RCE Grand Rapids, RCE Greater Portland, RCE Bogota, RCE Saskatchewan, RCE Western Jalisco, RCE Lima-Callao, and RCE Curitiba-Purana have participated or would like to participate.

RCE Saskatchewan (Lyle Benko) noted importance of studying climate change and suggested partnerships and exchange/engagement/mentoring between RCEs Saskatchewan, Grand Rapids and Curitiba.

Eco-Journal Project (RCE British Columbia/Northern Cascades)

- Eco-Journal being developed with submissions requested through *RCE Bulletin*
- Opportunity to take more academic papers and transform them to employ more popular language
- Link research questions and studies to policy needs and recommendations. Can be vetted and presented in Eco-Journal articles
- RCE British Columbia (David Zandvliet) and RCE Greater Portland (Kim Smith) to resend calls for papers. More details at: <http://www.eco-thinking.org/index.php/journal>

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Conference (RCE Greater Portland)

- Invitation to international community to attend the AASHE conference. Details at www.aashe.org.
- RCE Panel Presentation by RCE Greater Portland, RCE Grand Rapids, RCE Saskatchewan, U.S. Partnership for ESD, and Advisor to the RCEs of the Americas, Chuck Hopkins, on the benefits of the RCE model and cross-sector ESD networks.

New Joint Projects/Commitments:

General Comments

- Lead RCE(s) agree to construct a draft proposal to circulate among RCEs in the Americas; lead RCE(s) are in **bold**
- If possible/appropriate, proposals can be submitted as a commitment to the *UNESCO Global Action Programme* launch commitments by the **August 15, 2014**, deadline (see <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco-world-conference-on-esd-2014/>)
- Invitations to participate in projects should be submitted to *RCE E-Bulletin* and/or email of invitation to all RCEs in Americas (with assistance of UNU-IAS)
- **Jon Yee** indicated need to invite youth to participate in the global RCE youth network. Can join the Global RCE Youth Network Facebook page. Recommends using social media to invite youth to join projects

Youth Conference on Environmental Sustainability/Red Nacional de Jovenes de Ambiente (RCE Bogota)

- RCE Bogota invites youth from the RCEs of the Americas to a conference focusing on environmental sustainability in September, 2014
- Involves a large number of students; non-Spanish speakers welcome
- RCE Western Jalisco sending 2 students; RCE Curitiba interested

Teacher Education Network Meeting in Okayama, Japan, November 14-17, 2014 (Charles Hopkins)

- Charles Hopkins leading initiative that includes meetings of ministries of education, teacher education institutions, and senior education administrators
- Those attending Global RCE Conference invited to stay on; some funding for extra costs associated with accommodation available to participants
- RCE Curitiba-Parana indicated an interest; RCE Lima-Callao also is interested especially in focusing on instruction of high school teachers
- RCE Saskatchewan is actively working with Saskatchewan Ministry of Education regarding

provincial curriculum and ESD.

Project to Improve Education for Indigenous People and Marginalized Youth (Charles Hopkins)

- Working to improve the education of indigenous people and marginalized youth
- 8 RCEs currently interested, including RCE Saskatchewan, RCE Grand Rapids, RCE Lima-Callao, RCE Western Jalisco, RCE Greater Portland, and RCE Bogota
- RCE Lima-Callao working with indigenous communities and wanting to link local indigenous community and the university community; RCE Curitiba also interested
- RCE Greater Portland's partner Wisdom of the Elders is collecting stories and knowledge from Native American elders in the United States for curriculum that will be available for youth.
- Note to be sent to *RCE Bulletin* inviting further participants and outlining project

Project to Engage/Empower Citizens through ESD (RCE Western Jalisco)

- RCE Western Jalisco working with 5 municipalities and now working to engage and link citizens to the work conducted with municipality officials; university working with small groups and the authorities from these municipalities; focus on specific environmental issues (e.g. pollution)
- RCE Lima-Callao: a need to increase interaction with the city and citizens; citizens need to know rights and duties; need to address in-migration from rural areas; would like to participate in this project; possibility to give youth the technological tools to discuss important issues and create community debate (e.g. ethical debates); advantage of RCEs is in their nature and the ability to link universities and society, both locally and globally; the RCE is a platform with many objectives that can feed education but also need to be sensitive to questions of ideology and epistemology; what does it mean to be a "centre of expertise" to the extent the expertise is more often in the community itself vs. the RCE?
- RCE Saskatchewan: has connections with 2 cities (Regina and Saskatoon) and their sustainability committees and would be willing to explore possibilities
- RCE Greater Portland has projects that encourage citizen engagement, specifically the Hands on Greater Portland E4 service-learning project; could help to develop replicable projects, with a case study handout
- RCE Curitiba interested in project to empower citizens

RCE of Americas Exchange Initiative (RCE Bogota, RCE Greater Portland, RCE Western Jalisco, and RCE Saskatchewan)

- RCE Bogota, RCE Greater Portland, RCE Western Jalisco, and RCE Saskatchewan will explore how to set up processes and templates for exchanges.
- RCE Saskatchewan proposes creating regional cross-institutional and cross-sector programs, rather than the traditional individual relationships between universities, such as an RCE Youth Exchange Research Model

- Other possible examples include teacher and student exchanges, residency programs, “pen pal” programs, with match-making tools, to get to know people across ages and demographics, within RCEs, and a potential virtual exchanges, such as via webinars and Skype.
- RCE Western Jalisco indicated existence of valuable virtual and other networks in Jalisco including virtual links of University of Guadalajara 15 campuses and participation of 65 schools in Jalisco. Working on bringing multidisciplinary experiences to these communities, especially at finding resources for sustainable livelihoods of marginalized people; would like exchanges between RCEs and a masters and Ph.D. students.
- Look for Sister City relationships, e.g., Portland and Guadalajara are sister cities.

ESD Diploma/Certification (RCE Western Jalisco)

- The University of Guadalajara has a sustainability degree and would like to look at how to create a broader degree that can be offered through different RCEs
- Find ways to engage all disciplines; how include art and music, beyond science and technology?
- Need leadership development of youth

Living Laboratories Initiative (RCE Saskatchewan)

- Project to learn from other RCEs in Americas on how to create living laboratories on campuses and eco-museums; UN interested in biosphere reserves and Canada interested in global biosphere program
- RCE Western Jalisco has *Las Joyas* research station that serves as both a mountain laboratory and education centre; also has *la Casa Ayuquila*; (see JIRA website: www.jira.org.mx) these centres allow education about sustainability but also ability to take home and apply what has been learned; allows universities and communities to help create centres of experience especially for teachers and students; can help create further volunteers that turn into agents of change; employs transformative education for all sectors, not just government (e.g. parents)

RCEs of the Americas Mentoring Initiative (UNU-IAS, RCE Saskatchewan)

- Lyle Benko, with RCE Saskatchewan, has offered to help lead an effort to formalize a process for mentoring new RCEs coming on line (e.g. Cancun, Guadalajara)
- New RCEs to be assigned at least 1 mentor from another RCE in Americas (following formal acknowledgement); could include 2 mentors, both 1 inside the country and 1 outside the country; RCEs that have failed in past did not receive sufficient mentoring
- UNU-IAS to assign mentors for new RCEs in Americas

4th RCE Conference of the Americas (RCE Bogota)

- RCE Bogota (Columbia) has confirmed that it would like to host the next RCE of the Americas

Conference, to be finalized with UNU-IAS.

- RCE Western Jalisco indicated it would like to escalate the participation of youth; also need to help teach our professionals how to teach and adapt curriculum for sustainability that address important issues in our regions through hands-on projects and engagement with traditional knowledge and symbols that have appeal; is there an opportunity to include a professional development portion to the conference/youth components?