

**A GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
FOR CHILDREN'S CULTURAL CENTERS**

A Guide to Sustainable Development for Children's Cultural Centers

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01

Why children's cultural centers need to educate on sustainable development



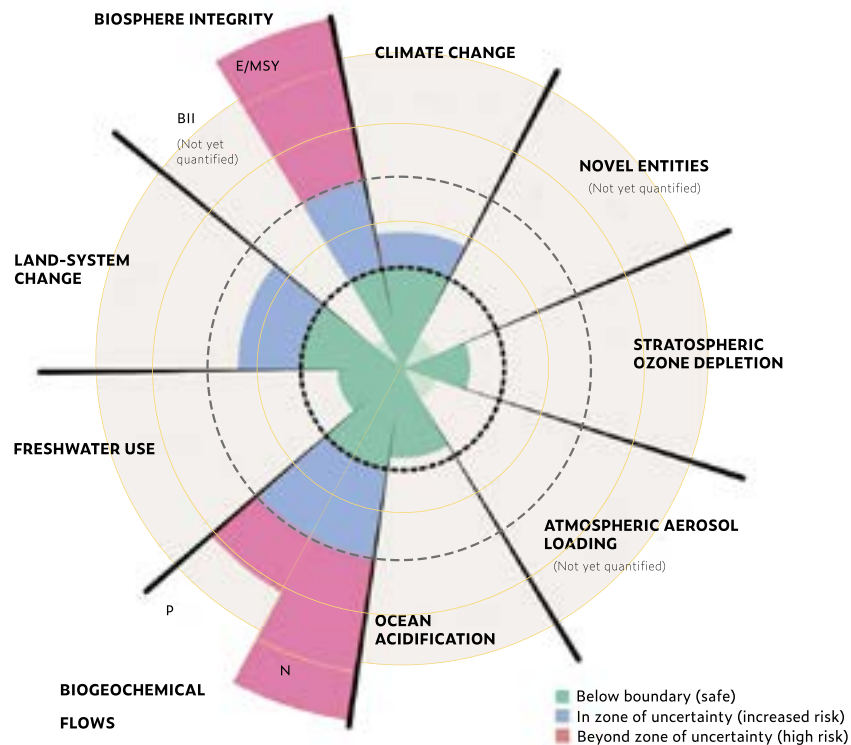
For children and young people

The activities of the Association of Finnish Children's Cultural Centers are based on the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly Article 31, which states every child is entitled to a cultural and artistic life. The Association's core values are quality, equality, child orientation, and art. The Association enables and coordinates national and global cooperation to increase and develop children's cultural activities focused on equality and promoting well-being throughout Finland. The children's cultural centers are targeted at children and young people in order to promote their rights through art and culture.

In light of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child's right to a good future is unequivocal. Of particular note in the Convention regarding children's future are Article 6, guaranteeing every child the innate right to life and full development, and Article 24, which emphasizes the right to pure drinking water and an unpolluted environment. The Finnish Constitution also highlights everyone's responsibility for nature, its diversity, the environment, and cultural heritage. Public authorities must strive to ensure everyone a right to a healthy environment, along with an opportunity to influence decisions regarding their environment.

When the future is scary

However, children's right to a good future is currently threatened. This is illustrated by, for example, the planetary boundaries concept created by the Stockholm Resilience Center, designed to show the boundaries within which humanity can continue to develop and flourish even in the future. According to the latest estimates, human activity has taken four of the nine factors to the dangerous increased risk level or the critical high risk area, where sudden and irreversible environmental changes at a large scale are very likely.



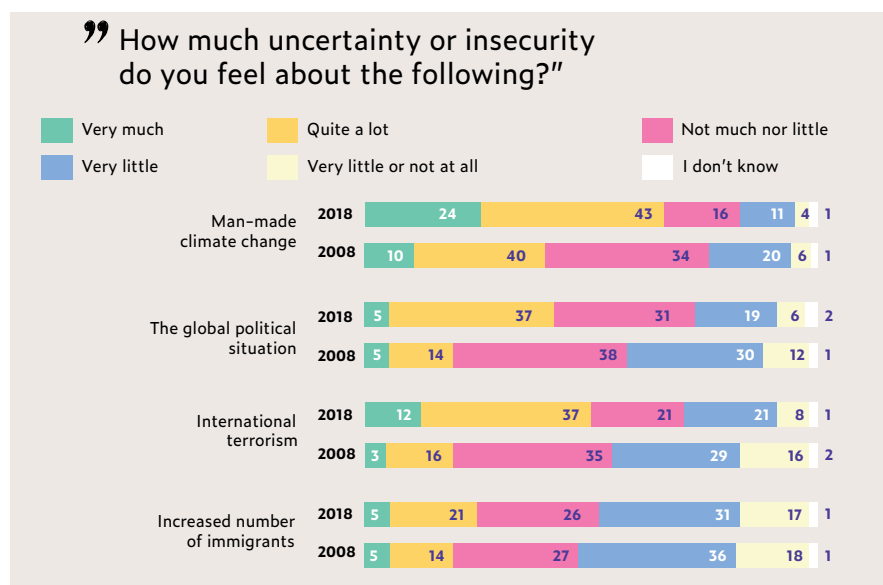
Picture: The change in planetary factors from the 1950s to the present.

Credit: J. Lokrantz/Azote based on Steffen et al. 2015.

In the fall of 2019, a group of sixteen young people from various countries issued a complaint to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child about five nations they considered to have caused the climate crisis by deliberately ignoring scientific knowledge about the effects of climate change. The basis of the complaint is that children are the ones to suffer the most from climate change progressing to dangerous levels.

In September 2021, the largest scientific study to date on the climate anxiety experienced by young people was published (Young People's Voices on Climate Anxiety, Government Betrayal and Moral Injury: A Global Phenomenon). According to the study, 75 percent of ten thousand young people stated their belief that "the future is scary" and 81 percent felt humankind had failed to protect their planet. Perhaps the most alarming message is the feeling among young people that they have fewer opportunities in their lives compared to their parents. For example, the study results indicate 42 percent of Finnish young people are hesitant to have children of their own due to climate crisis concerns. 43 percent of young Finns agreed with the statement suggesting that "humanity is doomed." Globally, as many as 56 percent of respondents agreed. The study was conducted by the University of Bath in the UK and encompassed about ten thousand young people between the ages of 16 and 25 from Australia, Brazil, the UK, the Philippines, India, Nigeria, Portugal, France, Finland, and the United States.

Domestic surveys also indicate sharply growing concern about climate change among young people over the last decade. The annual Youth Barometer is designed to measure the values and attitudes of Finns between the ages of 15 and 29. In 2008, approximately 40 percent of young people were fairly or very concerned about climate change, whereas in 2018 the figure had shot up to nearly 70 percent. In the survey, man-made climate change is the main source of insecurity and uncertainty among young people.



Picture: Nuorisobarometri 2018

Children's cultural centers as part of the solution

We are living in a time of sustainability crisis, where change can only happen through every individual and community. Children's cultural centers and children's cultural actors play a major role in the upcoming generation getting their voices heard and rights promoted. Children's cultural actors can respond to young people's and children's growing environmental concerns by identifying and addressing feelings on the environment through art and culture. But they can also help by finding new ways to harness art and culture to develop sustainable solutions for the future. According to multiple studies, creativity education and art play an important role in nurturing those who seek to create change in the future. At the same time, children's cultural centers must also challenge themselves to develop their own activities to more sustainable levels, in terms of ecological, economic as well as social and cultural sustainability. Bold new initiatives and experiments also introduce opportunities for new types of partnerships and funding sources. A sustainable lifestyle, nature, the environment, and outdoors learning are also widely involved in e.g., primary education.

Our goal with this guide is to provide inspiration and tips for these opportunities, as well as challenges. This guide focuses primarily on ecological sustainability, but we will also explore other goals for a sustainable future. Right now, art and culture may be needed more than ever. How can you, your work community and your children's cultural center adapt to change? What different roles might you find for yourselves as part of the solution?

Art and culture reforming society


Erkka Laininen: OKKA Foundation

We live in an anthropocene era in which man has become the main force affecting the state of the Earth. On this limited and interconnected Earth, we can only survive by working together with nature and each other. UNESCO has summarized the goal of future learning as follows: "The educational goal is no longer learning about the world in order to function in it, but to learn to become one with the world around us."

Where can we find the chance to turn the hopelessness of the man-made eco-crisis into hope once more? Where can new meanings of life and sources of a good life be found? The answer lies in art, culture, and the human sense of community. They allow us to broaden our understanding of reality and, together, imagine different futures based on our recognition of the ecological constraints of our lives and pursuing a good life through the enriching power of human interaction.

Education is a journey of exploration into one's self and the external reality. Repairing one's relationship with the world is all about harmony between body, mind and soul, and man belonging in the world. A renewed sense of self is built through human activity and interaction with the world around us. Man explores and marvels at the world and themselves as a scientist, artist, and spiritual being equipped with bold and creative experimentation, dialogue, and silence.

At the forefront of learning that can reshape one's relationship with the world, bold and agile actors with the courage to push beyond existing limits. Learning in the future will increasingly consist of interaction within different communities and shaping reality together. Art and cultural actors, such as children's cultural centers and organizations, civil society actors, and educational institutions, can act as pioneers to facilitate such learning.



The strong connection between children's culture and sustainable development

**Iina Berden, Advisory Officer,
Ministry of Education and Culture**

The Ministry of Education and Culture is committed to the goals of sustainable development, and the administrative activities of the ministry aim to promote a cultural shift towards all-encompassing sustainable development. The special responsibility of the Ministry's administration is to promote goals pertaining to social sustainability, such as improving education and people's well-being.

The Ministry of Education and Culture's Sustainable Development Policy (2020) aims to support and complement the implementation of Finland's National Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. This policy is an overview of the involvement of the Ministry's administration in the promotion of global sustainable development goals.

In terms of children's culture, the Ministry's key actions are listening and taking note of children's and young people's opinions, encouraging art and cultural actors to act in accordance with sustainable development ideals and improving knowledge on the subject, the protection and nurture of cultural heritage and promotion of sustainable use through a cultural heritage strategy, and facilitating equal hobby opportunities throughout the country.

Children's culture is strongly connected to the creation of a sustainable world, a better world. It is vital to include children and young people in the discussion regarding sustainable development and the protection of biodiversity. Art and culture provide excellent opportunities for children and young people to both process the issue and offer their own opinions.

02



Sustainability education at
a children's cultural center

Saving the world through art and culture education


What does sustainability education at a children's cultural center look like? It consists of exhibitions, performances, guidance and audience development, workshops, events, and creative collaboration, communication, everyday choices, and leadership. Nearly all children's cultural center activity can be seen through the lens of sustainable development. Sustainability education can be handled effectively in several ways and with different themes, using the context and methods of art and culture education.

Environmental education, for which the term "sustainability education" is also used, refers to activity aimed towards promoting a sustainable lifestyle. The new curricula for early childhood education, basic education, and upper secondary education encourage an even more comprehensive approach, with the ultimate goal of personal growth and development being an eco-socially educated citizen. An eco-socially educated citizen recognizes the effects of their own actions on other people, the environment, and society. They understand that while the intangible capital of humankind can be increased indefinitely, material consumption is limited by the Earth itself. They have the ability to add their personal everyday life into a larger storyline that reinforces the experience of life's importance.

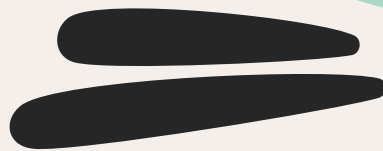
The objective of all environmental education work is environmental responsibility, meaning the desire and ability to participate in solving environmental issues. It has been proven that in order to grow into an environmentally responsible actor, one needs environmental sensitivity, eco-positive values and attitudes, and knowledge of environmental matters. In addition, confidence in one's own influencing ability and concrete skills to act to solve environmental issues are needed. Environmental sensitivity, i.e. a positive emotional relationship with nature, plays an important role for children under school age. With age, knowledge and awareness along with skills and confidence in one's abilities become increasingly important alongside the relationship with nature. Environmentally friendly values and attitudes remain important throughout. Art and culture education methods can improve all aspects of environmental education — the only limit is imagination, and everyone can surely find a suitable approach to the subject.



environmental education
democracy education
human rights education
empathy education
nature education
emotional education
global education
value education
media education
cultural heritage education
self education
peace education
futures education



cultural education
art education



sustainability
education



Expert text

Loving the world is the key to a good future

Arto O. Salonen

**Professor of Social Pedagogy, Faculty of Social Sciences
and Business, University of Eastern Finland**

Member of the Finnish Panel of Experts on Sustainable Development

Culture and art help us take notice of the remarkably wonderful world around our lives. That world is interdependent. There are no superfluous parts, as the different parts of the world support each other's existence.

Loving the world is the key to a good future. Loving the world means compassionately placing yourself in another's position and discovering the common good. That other can be a person or any part of nature.

People and the rest of nature form a whole, with inanimate nature also playing a central role. That is why the whole world is worth loving. Yes, that includes the crevice where so many before me in our chain of generations have perceived the same world I am now sensing.

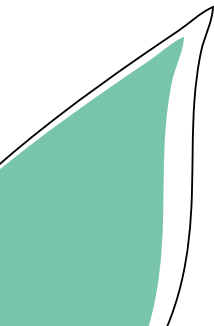
Could art and cultural education also be taken further outside?

**Compiled from the book "Loikkaa ulkoluokkaan,"
Aulikki Laine, Meri Elonheimo and Anna Kettunen (eds.)**

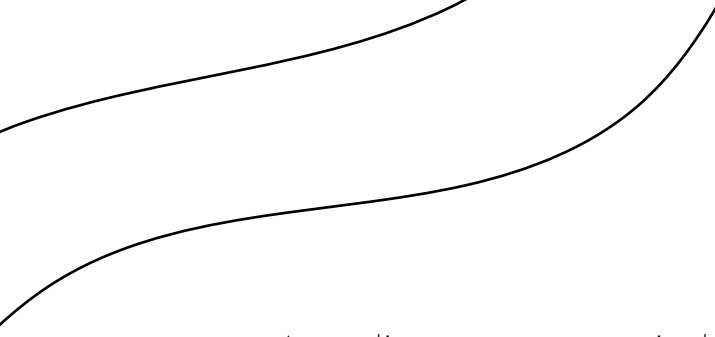
"In the days of our grandparents, everyone was inherently in touch with nature. Nowadays, nature is a foreign element to many children. Childhood or youth experiences in nature make a significant impact throughout life. Learning outdoors promotes the formation and deepening of children's relationship with nature.

Teaching outdoors has been widely studied in various countries, with the results indicating that going outdoors is a good idea. Compared to a classroom, the outdoors is a more diverse environment for learning. It enables functional, artistic, and research-oriented working methods. Nature allows a student to utilize different senses and better absorb the matters being taught. Learning in nature develops self-esteem and social skills while improving one's mood.

The basic education curriculum in effect since 2016 creates a solid foundation for learning outdoors, surrounded by nature. The value basis states that nature is used as a learning environment. Primary education emphasizes exploring nature and building a relationship with nature while promoting a sustainable lifestyle. The importance of this relationship with nature and the necessity of a sustainable lifestyle as part of the curriculum is described via the following sentences of the curriculum: "Man is part of nature and entirely dependent on the vitality of our ecosystems. Understanding this is key to growing as a person."




An outdoor classroom can take the form of your school yard, a local park, or even a nearby soccer field. It can be a nearby forest or swamp, by a creek, perhaps a lake or sea shore. The outdoor classroom is also an approach. What could a performance, workshop, or exhibition in a natural environment offer to art or cultural education?



According to many sustainability experts, art and cultural education is one of the most significant ways to promote sustainable citizenship. Cultural education already includes several perspectives and methods for tackling challenging sustainability issues. Through doing, experiencing, discussing, and wondering together, the message is often understood more deeply than, for example, simply by listening. In the artistic process, something of a space deviating from everyday norms is created, allowing play, indulgence, sensitivity, experimentation, and questioning the things we are used to. Skills often associated with art education, including communication skills (active listening, self-expression, dialogue), emotional skills, cooperation, critical thinking, problem-solving, and tolerance to uncertainty and contradictions, are exactly the skills needed for solving the wicked sustainability crisis in the future.

Participation in art activities can provide emotional tools, answers to questions, a platform for expression and opinions, and it can also simply mean concrete actions to benefit the environment. An art experience may be found touching and sensitizing amid everyday life, and help one pause to reflect on the attitudes and values brought on by their emotions. Art can help us put ourselves in someone else's shoes, see things from perspectives outside our own, and feel empathy for other lifeforms and even inanimate nature. Such an epiphany may provide an opportunity to move toward a more sustainable lifestyle and behavior. Art, culture, and community are precisely the paths we can use to create new meanings for life.

Emotions, reflection on the world, and self-reflection are at the heart of creating art. Climate change and other difficult, even anxiety-inducing issues may be easier to process through art while considering one's own role and thinking in terms of nature conservation, consumption, and human rights. Works of art and artistic activities allow us to take a stand, strengthen messages, and receive support from our group and help from cultural professionals to shape our thoughts into art. Art helps express emotions and thoughts, visualize them and put them into words.

A yellow abstract shape with curved edges, located in the top-left corner of the page.


Culture offers excellent opportunities to consider the state of the earth and humanity in the past, present, and future. Studying cultural heritage and history grows our understanding of the past and how the present came to be. Many contemporary artists contemplate the present and future, creating a golden opportunity to visualize the future with children and young people. The ability to imagine and make the invisible visible are needed when speculating on alternative futures.

The climate education bicycle model takes flight through art and cultural education

In order to make environmental education as effective as possible, various environmental education models have been devised, each outlining in its own way how to approach the desired goal and what components are needed for effective environmental education. Perhaps the most established models of Finnish environmental education are the 1998 Palmer tree model, and the 2001 house model by Jeronen and Kaikkonen.

In 2017, four climate education scientists — Sakari Tolppanen, Essi Aarnio-Linnanvuori, Hannele Cantell, and Anna Lehtonen — created the bicycle model for holistic climate education, which is quite possibly the most widely used environmental education model today. For this guide, we chose this new bicycle model as the template to help illustrate the multitude of methods and power of art and cultural education in both climate education and sustainability education at a wider scale.

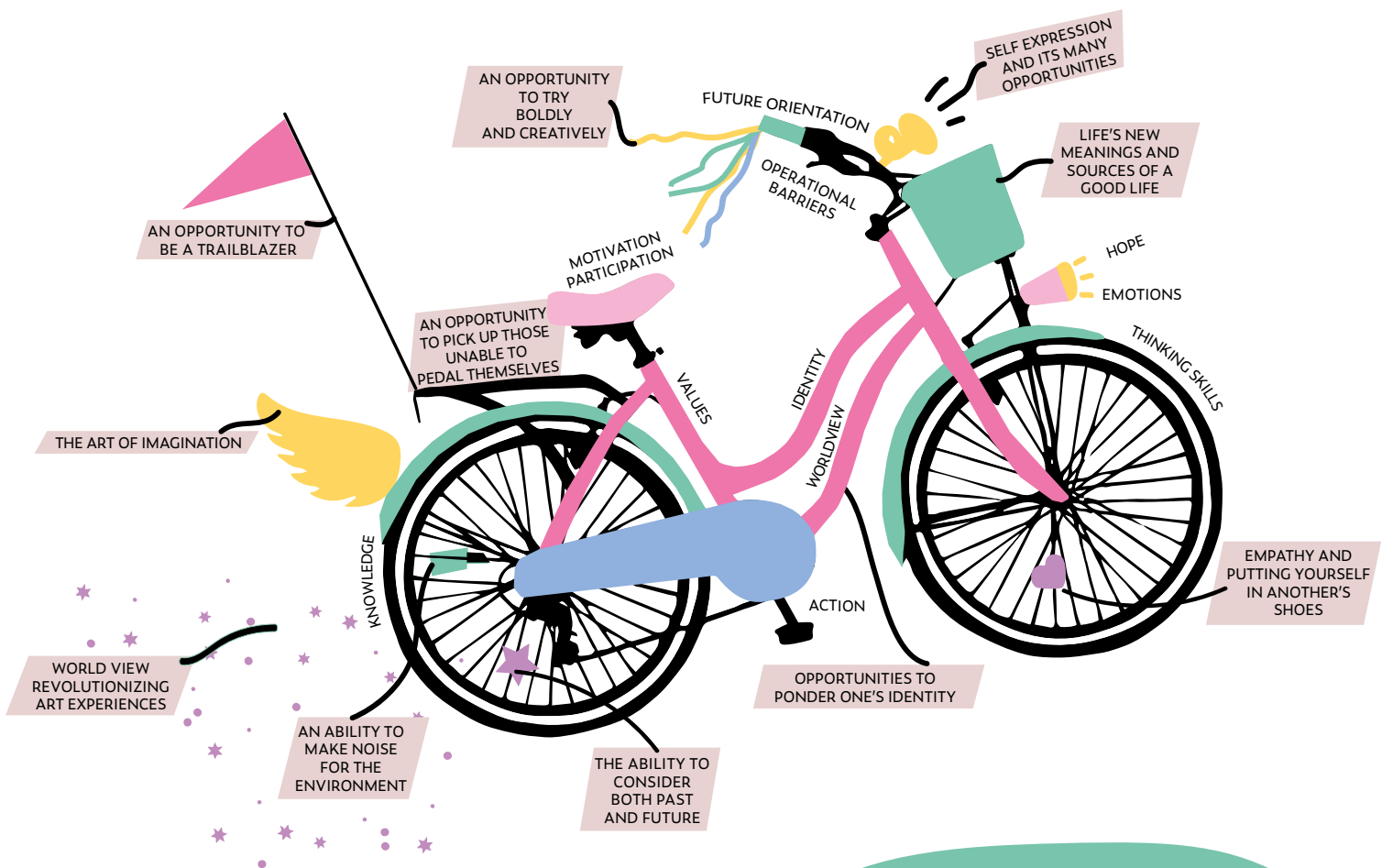
In the original climate education bicycle model, “the wheels represent information and thinking skills related to climate change. However, the amount of information must not be an end in itself, as the information must be used in a critical manner, by analyzing and building a new understanding. The learner’s identity, values, and world view form the basis for climate learning. These create the bicycle frame, to which new knowledge and skills also attach themselves. The chains and pedals represent action to contain climate change. Action in this context refers to action regarding “real life” issues. In the model, the seat the biker sits on represents the biker’s motivation and experience of inclusion. For climate education to be motivating, it must not portray climate change as a distant problem or something too difficult to understand. It is vital to emphasize that since society was built by people, people are also the ones that can change it.



Brakes represent obstacles to action. Such obstacles are often human in nature, stemming from things like laziness and convenience, but many structural obstacles also block the way forward. Climate change as a phenomenon evokes strong feelings in some people, and these are depicted in the model as a lamp guiding the progress. Contemplating and envisioning the future is a pivotal aspect of climate education, as the handlebar is used to steer the bike in the desired direction."

When the bicycle is tuned with the methods and opportunities offered by art and cultural education, it can take flight and soar to places we may not even be able to imagine right now. Just as one cannot look directly at the sun, challenging issues can sometimes be difficult to look at directly and truly see for what they are. Art, on the other hand, sees things and phenomena from a slight angle, allowing for something essential and perhaps even surprising to emerge. How would you tune the bicycle from the perspective of your own art or children's cultural center?

Polkupyörämalli



How would you tune the climate education bicycle from your art's or children's cultural center's point of view?

Picture: The original bicycle model for climate education : Tolppanen, S., Aarnio-Linnanvuori, E., Cantell, H. & Lehtonen, A. 2017. "Pirullisen ongelman äärellä – kokonaisvaltaisen ilmastokasvatuksen malli." *Kasvatus* 48 (5), 456–468. (in Finnish and English) A bicycle tuned with art and cultural education: Janina Ahlfors and Kristiina Tiainen, Illustrator: Outi Virtanen

Artistic strength, sensitivity, and sound for the world

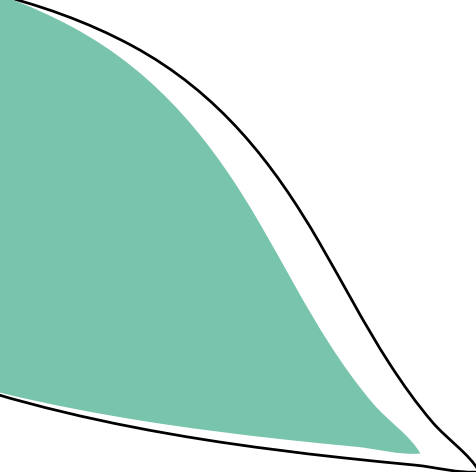
Mari von Boehm,
Art and environmental educator

Not only is children's culture geared toward future sustainability, but it can in fact represent sustainability right now, in the present day. If children are able to feel included and influence matters that affect them, it can carry all the way to adulthood as responsibility. Discussing sustainable values with children and young people is extremely important — after all, the future is theirs.

Green choices and recycling alone are insufficient for solving the environmental crisis. We must change the consumption-based society, the loss of a connection to nature, and the associated unsustainable way of life. By means of artistic expression, environmental challenges can be faced in a positive light.

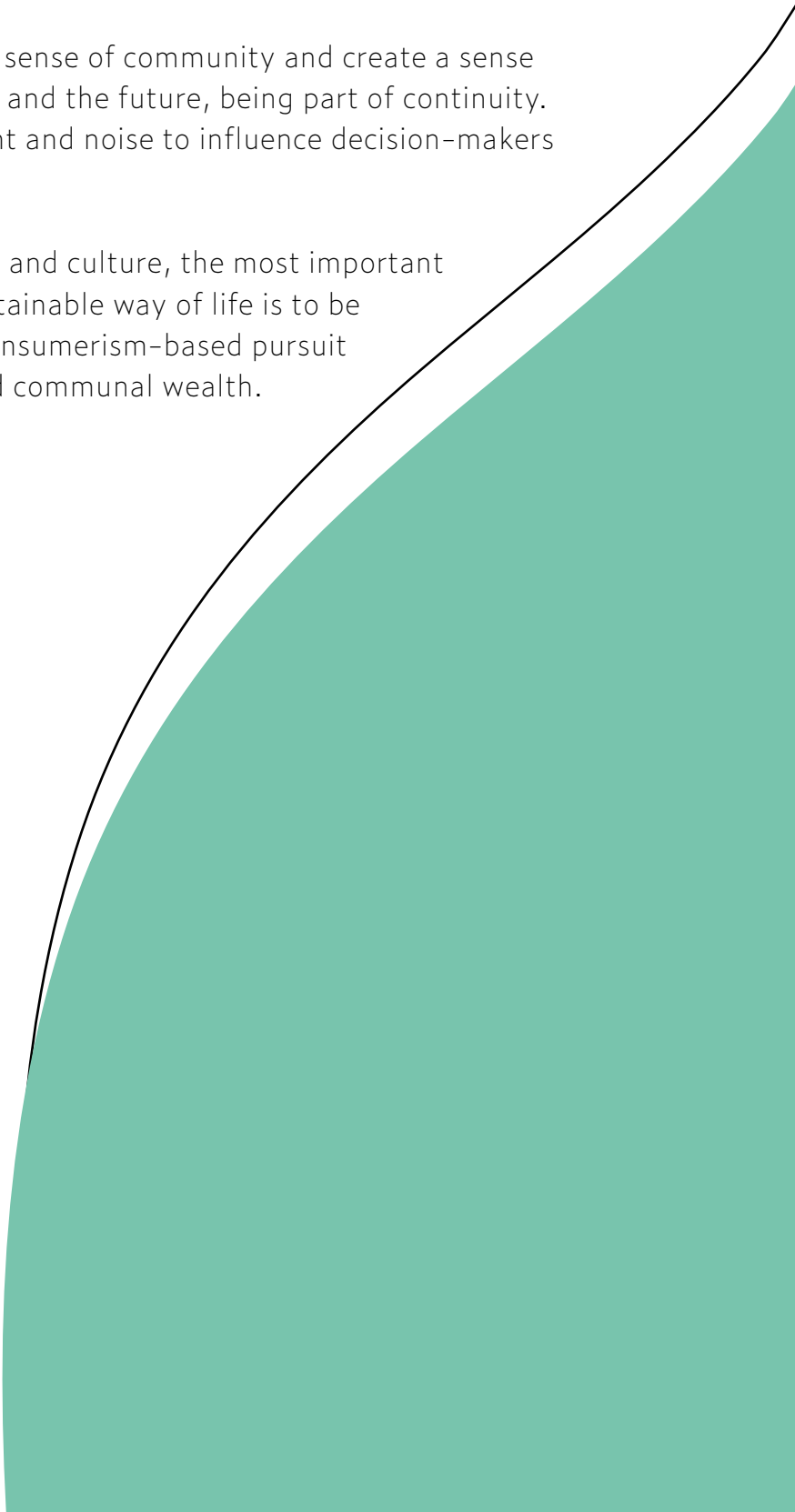
Art is an activity fundamentally associated with humanity, a characteristic of our species ever since humans diverged from apes. It can give us strength and evoke sensitivity in us, just like our early ancestors. It brings meaning to our lives.

Creating and experiencing art is connected to our senses and bodily experience. They contain a tremendous force for rebuilding humanity's relationship with the world. Using art, we can create new interpretations of reality and envision alternate ideas for the future. Art improves creative thinking, which is necessary for building solutions for a new kind of society.



Creating art can also foster a sense of community and create a sense of belonging to both the past and the future, being part of continuity. Art can provide the movement and noise to influence decision-makers and major actors.

For those of us working in art and culture, the most important goal in terms of finding a sustainable way of life is to be able transform the current consumerism-based pursuit of happiness into cultural and communal wealth.



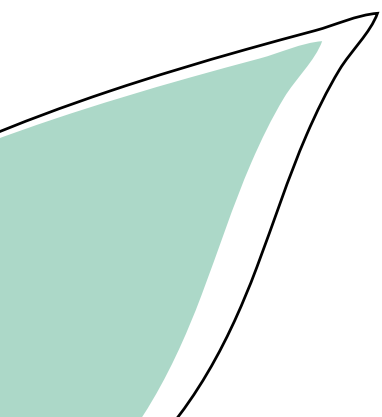
Belief in the future through art

**Heidi Valjus,
Annantalo**

The environmental crisis and the rapidly changing world have made children and young people concerned over the future. That concern was also evident from the thoughts of the children and young people participating in Annantalo's art education. But what could a children's cultural center do to create hopeful future prospects for children and young people? Perhaps combining art and future education might be the solution?

To study this, a working group of art teachers from the City of Helsinki's Children and Youth Center Annantalo and future education experts from the Futures School delved into the topic as part of the Future Laboratory's activities. The Future Laboratory was an installation based on researching the future, created by Annantalo, Futures School, and visual artist Nestori Syrjälä, also serving as a platform and inspiration for various multidisciplinary art and science events, training, and workshops.

The working group's task was to combine methods from different art forms and futures education and create new workshop approaches incorporating both equally. Together with groups of children, the working group developed two workshops, exploring the themes of future food and work. Dialogue, positive thoughts on the future, and the importance of imagination are at the heart of these workshops.





These workshops were published as a free-to-download method guide, "Art-Filled Journeys Into the Future: methods of futures education for children in lower stage comprehensive school", to provide inspiration for teachers and educators.

The combination of art and futures education proved to be a very natural one, although developing a consensus took some time. Futures literacy implementation is natural for children's cultural centers. Creative methods help us provide a positive influence on children and young people's outlook on the future and the power of their imagination, both now and in the future.

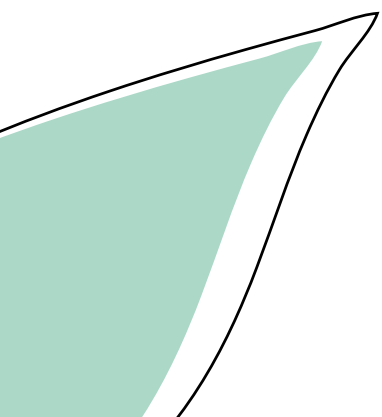
World Heritage Agents — and Ambassadors

**Victoria Nylund,
Ostrobothnia Children's Culture Network Bark**

The Ostrobothnia Children's Culture Network Bark has developed two pedagogical programs showcasing the Finnish part of the High Coast and Kvarken Archipelago world heritage. The aim of the world heritage-based program is to offer children a new lens through which they can see traces left on their immediate surroundings by ice caps.

The World Heritage Agents program is targeted at grades 0 to 2. This gives children a chance to become real World Heritage Agents in an inclusive and playful way. They learn to sneak just like agents, read the signs of the ice age in their area, and report their findings to the big boss! The program presents world heritage through assignments and animations. The pedagogical package contains an introductory video, an on-site visit for the agents, a post-visit assignment, and an exhibition.

The World Heritage Ambassadors program is targeted at grades 4 to 6. The program is based on our shared responsibility to protect and nurture our world heritage. The focus of the program is our unique geology and nature. Pupils become Ambassadors, learning to protect world heritage.



They use environmental art as a concrete means of protection at flads (bodies of water created by post-glacial rebound) By presenting some of the wonderful opportunities in the protection of world heritage, the program shows that man alone does not shape nature. Nature also has its own powers. The pedagogical package contains an introductory video and a pre-assignment, an educator's visit, and an endnote to the school.



Sustainability in suitcases

**Terhi Siippainen,
Children's Cultural Center Verso**

Early childhood education groups between ages 0 and 5 in the member municipalities of Children's Cultural Center Verso participate in an annual multidisciplinary art session named Satusalkkuseikkailu (Fairytale Suitcase Adventure). These art sessions look at sustainable development from different perspectives.

The Mermaid and Fish session features a suitcase brought by an art educator, containing introductory water-themed items such as messages in a bottle and seashells. During the session, a story about a mermaid whose fish friend got stuck in a jar is told actively through playing, exercising, and singing. Everyone saves the fish together while discussing water protection.

In the Forgotten Lunch session, the suitcase contains a magnified photo related to local cultural heritage, along with some old items. The story of a child bringing his father's forgotten lunch to his workplace is experienced through a drama play session, starting with traveling by time machine. While playing, everyone gets to think about things that used to be different in the old days.



The Trash Tale theme, on the other hand, makes use of prop theater utilizing recycled materials with characters such as Tony Tin and Jerry Juicecan, play scrap instruments, and learn proper waste sorting.

These themes of sustainability were created for multi-disciplinary art education sessions at the request of early childhood educators. Each theme can be explored deeper with the guidance of the group's own adult and the help of ready-made tips. Children find the topics immediately exciting, and feedback from adults has been grateful and encouraging.

Let's raise the builders
of a sustainable
future, all the way
from early
childhood!

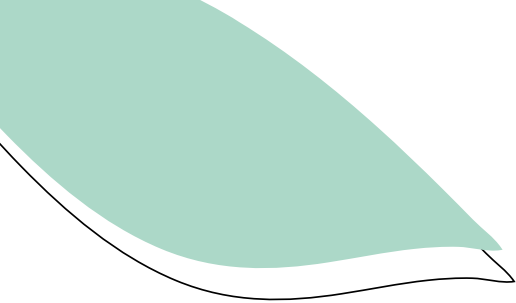
Wider policies guide the cultural education program

**Janina Ahlfors,
Taidekaari**

Taidekaari is the city of Tampere's cultural education program, encompassing all preschoolers and schoolchildren in the city. Sustainable development has already been important for us for many years, but for the past few years we have made it our top development priority. The development work has begun by reviewing our activity and sustainability perspectives. One approach to this review process has been to compare large-scale strategies and plans to our own activity.

For example, going through the goals of the UN's Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Tampere 2030 programs and comparing them to our cultural education program's activities and values gave us new perspectives — for example, we realized that even as a municipal body, we were naturally carrying out several aspects of the Agenda 2030's Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth). It was reassuring to see how our hometown takes action on larger issues a small cultural education program struggles to influence in a large city. On the other hand, we noticed we were already doing plenty for our shared visions and achieving a variety of goals from larger strategies.

Our other approach was to break down the cultural education program by art form and look for the most natural and suitable forms and goals for building a sustainable future.



This requires mulling things over with the instructors of each art form, which is an ongoing process, but this is how we can truly integrate sustainable development into our program without forgetting the nuances of each art form.

The cultural sector has the opportunity to act in a highly ethical and sustainable manner, and while we are ahead of other sectors in many respects, it is also worth looking at our own activities from slightly different or outside perspectives. This way, we can find new areas of development while improving our perception of our own achievements and strengths. Every action is a step towards common goals, and surprising new ideas may be found by moving beyond your own way of thinking and put e.g., global goals into proportion as practices, actions, and ideas suited for your own activities.



Water circulation with traditional instruments

Henna Leisiö,
Culture Cooperative Uulu

Traditional instruments from different continents, most of which are built using traditional natural materials, have always been at the heart of Uulu's activities. The instruments in our collection are made from not only wood and leather, but also bark, reeds, feathers, squash, straw, mussels, animal shells, clay, and numerous types of fruit. For seventeen years, we have used these to teach themes of sustainable development. We also have, for example, a series of nature-themed concerts whose different parts demonstrate water circulation, the forest ecosystem, the nature conservation mindset, the importance of pollinators, plastic and recycling, and several works related to forests and pastoral heritage. On tour, Uulu uses ethanol and gas-fueled cars.



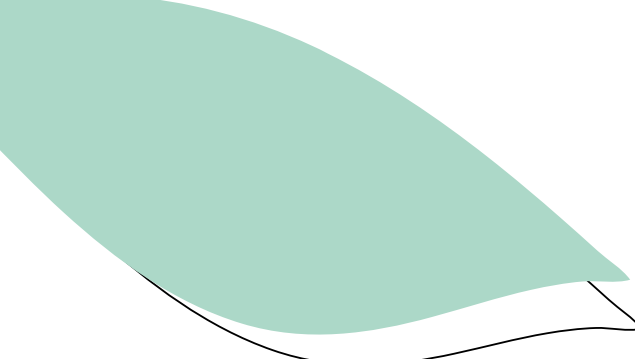
The museum as a learning environment for sustainable living

**Kristiina Tiainen,
Sagalund**

Sagalund is a museum and children's cultural center located on the island of Kemiönsaari. The driving force of Sagalund's children's cultural activities as well as environmental education is the cultural heritage cherished by the foundation's museums — the cultural environment, buildings, artifacts, and archives, but also the biological and intangible cultural heritage.

A cultural history museum can concretize the temporal scale and remind us how rapidly certain changes have occurred in society and everyday life. It can show us how many different ways we can live and how our ways of life can change. This helps the audience understand that today's reality is not set in stone and the future is something we cannot even begin to imagine yet. We can make radical changes to build a more sustainable future for ourselves. This mentality also drives Sagalund's environmental education plan.

The basis of Sagalund's environmental education content is learning about self-sufficiency. This is achieved through, for example, school garden activities and using vegetable gardens as learning environments. Self-sufficiency involves precise use of materials and self-producing what is needed, usually from natural materials. The idea of being *mingy* in a positive way, i.e. repairing, reusing, and recycling, is a core aspect of self-sufficiency thinking.



On one hand, Sagalund also teaches skills that tangibly increase one's self-sufficiency and facilitate a sustainable lifestyle, such as learning how to mend or use surplus food. On the other hand, we should not forget that not too long ago, we lived in a very different reality without abundant material. Another important aspect of learning about self-sufficient living is a close relationship with nature and respect for nature. In terms of methods, the drama-based time travel method is one example of a memorable and emotional way to convey information, so it is also an excellent choice for environmental education.

Sagalund was the first museum and the first children's cultural center in Finland to receive the Green Flag award in May 2020. Sagalund was also selected for the Green Flag of the Year 2020 award. Our Green Flag activities are planned together with children. The theme of the year is also taken into account at events and in time travel programs. This ensures we always systematically find new perspectives on using the cultural heritage of the foundation's museums to highlight themes of sustainable development.



Environmental emotions and responding to them

Many educators have noticed a growing concern over the future among children and young people. Worry, grief, anger, or indifference may be channeled into creating art. All kinds of feelings are fine, and often they actually vary between situations and days. It is important to face emotions the way they are, talk about them openly, let them out as much as possible, and also help see them in a positive light. Hope is built through action, so we can ease the concerns faced by children and young people through doing, discussion, and expression. The adult must ensure they are prepared to face a wide array of emotions before delving into difficult themes with children and young people. It is a good idea to consider the thoughts and feelings evoked by changes related to sustainable development and, for example, climate change.

According to researchers, the climate anxiety among young people is a stress factor that can turn into a mental health problem or exacerbate prior mental health struggles. "Even though it hurts and causes grief, climate anxiety is completely rational and not a sign of mental illness. It could be considered 'practical anxiety,' which sometimes drives people to reassess their behavior and respond appropriately to uncertainty," states the University of Bath's international survey on emotions caused by climate issues.

Do children and young people need to know about unpleasant things, or do these difficult issues have to be brought up? Children have the right to know what is going on in the world, but they also have the right to gain that information in a safe, age-appropriate, and controlled manner. You can respond to emotion with knowledge and action. Action offers an outlet for frustration or feelings of helplessness, and knowledge provides a basis and

justification for action. Naturally, you should not always wallow in unpleasant things because hope is also increased by admiring and studying the magnificence of nature, achieving sustainability goals, good news, and celebrating them through art.

Tip: The Good News About Sustainability Facebook group is collecting positive opinions.

Click here to enter the group!

Hope requires emotional skills and action

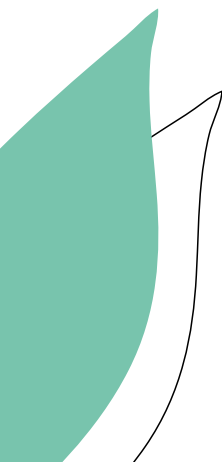
Pinja Sipari,
Toivoa ja toimintaa project

Hope has found a special place in the hearts and minds of many of us living in the world of sustainable development challenges. Clearly, it is an important feeling for our well-being and quality of life. Many of those working with children and young people are now frantically searching for ways to increase hope when it comes to sustainable development issues. My main advice for those searchers is this: find hope of your own first, then you can pass it on to others as well.

Unfortunately, the challenges of sustainable development have reached a point where one who searches for hope can find it, but it might not be easy. The first step is the hardest, and that is accepting the challenging current situation. Only then is it possible for hopeful experiences to truly emerge.

Practicing emotional skills, i.e. recognizing, putting into words, regulating, and expressing emotions, is a huge help on the path to discovering hope. Hope is also movement, doing, and action. Taking action for things important to you is right at the heart of fostering hope. The role of adults is to help children and young people find the ways of influencing that interest them. The possibilities are endless.

Art, culture, and creativity play a key role in building hope. They help us face and process our emotions, imagine a better world, and create messages that make a difference.



In this world of environmental concerns, I would like to remind you that hope is just one feeling among others. When improving the world, you can also foster joy, enthusiasm, curiosity, community, importance, gentleness, compassion, and strength.

The Utopia Space

Elsa Lankinen, the Vaara collective

Hanna Kaisa Vainio, Kainuu Children's and Youth's Cultural Center Kulttura

The Utopia Space— Climate Change and Environmental Feelings is a participatory art project organized by the Vaara collective and the Kulttura children's and youth's cultural center, focusing on the feelings of Kainuu-based young people about the environment and future utopias. Climate change and the ecological crisis have a ripple effect on our entire way of life, and considering alternatives is inevitable as we strive for a more sustainable and fair world. The Utopia Space invites young people into the conversation and looks to create a safe space for diverse emotions and utopias.

The project began with an online survey about young people's feelings about climate change and the future, sent to all Kainuu secondary schools. The survey offers ninth-graders throughout the county an anonymous and equal opportunity to participate. The goal is not to find a singular consensus, but to give a voice to young people's experiences and feelings. On the basis on the survey and advanced workshops, the Utopia Space is built inside a vacated retail space in downtown Kajaani, serving as a backdrop for a multi-disciplinary exhibition inspired by the experiences of young people and artists. The Utopia Space is designed as an immersive, multisensory space offering a variety of impulses and ways of engagement for addressing the topic.

All ninth-graders in the Kajaani area are invited to the Utopia Space as part of a school day. The project offers Kainuu youth an innovative new forum for addressing climate change and their feelings on environmental matters together with professional artists. At the heart of it all is listening to the experiences of young people, strengthening agency and inclusion, also as those who could solve the ecological disaster.

The difficulty, contradiction, and existential extent of the subject may be present in the work.

Artists and art educators from the Vaara collective, Mustarinda, and Kulttura work at the Utopia Space (2021). Elsa Lankinen from the Vaara collective serves as the initiator. The project is supported by Arts Promotion Centre Finland.



Does an activist live inside you too?!

What kind of thoughts do the words "activism" or "activist" evoke in you? Sometimes, these words are associated with negative ideas, even though activism is usually driven by a positive goal such as equality, respectful treatment of animals, or protecting our environment. Perhaps the way activists tend to press their issues with plenty of noise or bold demands for change, sometimes even through disobedience, annoys some people. Activism may seem like a party-political statement or a personal opinion, which may feel problematic from a neutral educator perspective. Climate change caused by human activity or the loss of biodiversity, however, are neither opinions nor politics but facts verified by a broad international research community.

Cultural folk have never been shy to express their opinions, discuss values, or bring up even difficult issues. Every art educator most likely strives to foster the creativity of children and young people, along with their thinking skills, interaction, courage, self-expression, and ability to act. Thus, could it be said we are raising activists since these skills are needed for activism? Participation, influencing, and building a sustainable future is one of the broad competencies in the basic education curriculum. Our schools are working to raise active, eco-socially educated citizens, so art educators are not alone with their goals.

Helping children find their own opinions and voices, encouraging them to right the wrongs of the world, and act for positive things important to them, is an eco-friendly act in itself. The Earth desperately needs as many of us as possible to defend and repair through activism. Every art educator can light the spark or support children and young people in taking a stand and advocating for their own future.

Tampere University environmental education and sustainable development lecturer Essi Aarnio-Linnanvuori stated in one of her lectures in the autumn of 2021 that a child now has the right to be an environmental citizen. The structure of our society means children and young people need adults to support that right. Every educator has the duty to personally contribute to securing the future of children and young people through active efforts for a sustainable future. If you are a children's rights activist, you must also be a sustainable development activist. How does that sound? Could your children's cultural center as a whole, or the body you represent, profess itself to be a sustainable development activist?

At the Association of Children's Cultural Centers' 2020 spring event, Annantalo held a "Sustainable Future and Children's Culture" webinar, whose participants came up with the idea that us children's cultural actors should basically "riot" for a better future for children and young people. Peaceful, pointed, poignant, and passionate protests are possible through art. What does your center's demonstration for nature look like? How do you highlight important issues through the power of art and your creative abilities? Is art used to take over houses and spaces for nature? Do you make art to influence people? Or perhaps environmental actions through cultural education? Are your actions driven by the goal of building a sustainable future?

Tip: Could a children's cultural center even act like a nature or environmental school? For instance, the Lastu school of architecture and environmental culture is part of the nature and environmental school network and also serves as a development center.


Click here to
access the nature
schools website!

The foundation of Lastu's art and architecture education is its own everyday environment

Mervi Eskelinen,
Architectural and environmental school Lastu

Lastu is a long-time player in the field of sustainable development. A school of architecture and environmental culture, Lastu runs Children's Culture and Building Culture Center Lastu, and the principles of sustainable development are at the heart of the school's everyday activities. Good environment, economic sustainability and responsibility, as well as social and cultural sustainability are the values at the core of Lastu's day-to-day activities based on creativity and continuous learning. The Finnish Constitution highlights everyone's responsibility for nature, its diversity, the environment, and cultural heritage. Work at Lastu is based on developing the ability to take responsibility for both environmental and human wellbeing.

Activity at Lastu began in the early 90s with the rescue and transfer of an old elementary school and the repair of other buildings in the yard of an old farmhouse. This way of life based on respecting and preserving traditions has been continued on all levels of activity. The goal is to not only focus on the buildings and physical environment, but also turn our attention to the reality of the world around us with its layers of time, social dimensions, and the relationship between environment and human existence and activity. The activities are aimed at getting to know and appreciate the material and spiritual cultural heritage of one's own environment comprehensively. Participants get to make things with their own hands and sense and experience different materials, techniques and art forms with their bodies. There is a focus on personal activity and participation, strengthening participants' knowledge and skills of nurturing one's own environment.



The most important goal of Lastu's activities is to open participants' eyes to their own everyday environment. A concrete, down-to-earth relationship with your environment. The architectural and art education at Lastu awakens a person's sensitivity to notice various phenomena in their environment and to stop and perceive even the finest details. Activities are based on multisensory approaches to train participants' environmental sensitivity and perception.

Sensing one's environment holistically by seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling as well as exploring with movement and play work to build an experiential and multi-layered relationship to the environment. Genuine personal experiences make participants become aware of and reflect on the values of human life and humanity. Through artistic expression, observations are turned into works of art: structures, paintings, photographs and handicrafts. Creation and critical thinking strengthen participants' personal relationship with their environment along with a sense of participation and belonging. A strong, meaningful and personal relationship awakens you to take care of your own surroundings. During observation, experience and work, we also discover tools and ways to influence the development of our own environments.

Location-based activity works to develop an understanding of the value of one's own everyday environment and strengthens local identity. The activities combine information and artistic expression, science and art engaged in a dialogue. Phenomena are examined from multiple points of view in a collaborative way. We collect and sort periods of time, events and things through research, expeditions and observation. Our multidisciplinary approaches include creating images, building, craftsmanship, performance and community art. We experientially ponder a person's relationship to the environment they live in, the multifaceted relationships in environments and the

human impact on them. Art helps to work on meanings, question things, give form to different experiences and promote participation and community. As work progresses, the lived environment becomes more and more meaningful and multifaceted to the participants working on and experiencing the activities. We foster joy, play, creativity and imagination as part of the experience. Stories, worlds, imagined realities and futures are built into the works of art. Our environment is not a story – it's many stories.

Natural and recycled materials as well as the economical use and recycling of materials are the basis of art practice at Lastu. Genuine, traditional and original materials are kinder to the environment and clever use of recycled materials utilizes waste and promotes circular economy. Doing things yourself and genuine experiences of different phenomena, spaces and places are what's important. Handicraft and traditional craftsmanship instill and create understanding. They introduce a way of life where art and craftsmanship have strong ties to everyday life, the yearly cycle and the local environment. In addition, working with your hands helps the mind stop, focus and calm down. Creation strengthens self-confidence and faith in the future: I can do this.

Activity at Lastu is based on the belief that an interest once aroused lasts a lifetime. The activities not only open eyes but also keep them open, curious and perceptive of the dialogue between human and environment. The participants having these experiences and doing the work grow into citizens who know their own environment and take care of it.



A children's cultural professional is ready to be an environmental educator

As a professional in the field of children's culture, you have the skill to inspire and support children and young people to boldly see the surrounding world with open minds and from new perspectives.

As a professional in your art form you know the methods and new possibilities. Right now, art and culture educators are needed more than ever.

Building a sustainable future requires many different blocks and involves many perspectives. As a sustainable development educator, you can also act in many different ways. Not everyone needs to be a biologist, an outdoors person, or climate change's Captain Planet. The challenges and solutions of sustainable development affect every one of us in our daily lives and work.

We must maintain and expand our own basic knowledge of environmental issues in order to have the courage to address themes of sustainable development together with children and young people, curiously researching and learning new information together. For an art and culture educator, looking at one's own values and attitudes is also a good idea. However, the most important thing is that the child or young person gets a positive and safe feeling of that adult caring.

A tiny environmental educator lives in every one of us

Satu Jovero,
Finnish Environmental Institute Sykli


How would you feel if you had the opportunity to do something very concrete and meaningful to help the Earth provide adequate living conditions for these children? And what if that also meant the knowledge you were teaching them important survival skills for the future?

Sustainable development is a journey towards a better, smarter life. And environmental education is a way to prepare people for that journey.

As educators, we are doing important work to shape the future we desire, because a shift in culture and customs can only happen if people begin to implement it. And if we want people to get involved, they must first understand what is going on — and most importantly — they must want to get involved!

In other words, it is all about creating motivation. As educators, we are experts at exactly this. People are difficult to motivate from the outside, but education and culture can help us create conditions for people to see the world in a more sustainable way, hopefully finding their own internal motivation in the process.

“Emotions are connected to motivation. When you do something you find necessary, meaningful, valuable, or simply interesting, the emotional tone remains positive even when you need to work hard. You feel good for doing these things, and you are in line with yourself



and your values. On the other hand, if you have to work on something without seeing why it is meaningful, even reaching the point of neutral emotion requires mental effort.

“The job of our emotions is to guide our actions. Pleasant emotions make us want more of the same, whereas unpleasant or painful emotions drive us away from the situation that creates them.
(Excerpt from Uuvuksissa by Liisa Uusitalo-Arola)

Storytelling is a solid tool for facilitating sustainability. Let’s help people’s imaginations produce hope rather than horror. Let’s collect stories, individuals, and examples that already show the desired change, and let others see our successes. Let’s encourage each other and celebrate our breakthroughs together!

Changes are easier to implement if they appear possible. Running a full marathon unprepared is very different to running the same marathon in three-mile stints and in good company. At first, taking small steps is always recommended. Through successes, we gain enthusiasm, skill, and fitness. Then it is time to shoot for bolder and more ambitious goals. And sometimes, we should also stop to take a breather and make sure we have actually run in the right direction.

When people believe change is not only possible but positive, hope and enthusiasm become infectious and invite others to join in. Welcome to the journey!

03

The everyday eco-life of
children's cultural centers



The ecological footprint must also be reduced


Children's cultural centers have near-limitless opportunities to bolster their positive environmental effect, or ecological handprint, by e.g., creating impressive art-based methods for imagining sustainable futures or perhaps by building an experience-based environmental relationship through cultural heritage.

In addition to increasing the ecological handprint, everyone from individuals to organizations must carry their weight in order to reduce humanity's shared ecological footprint.

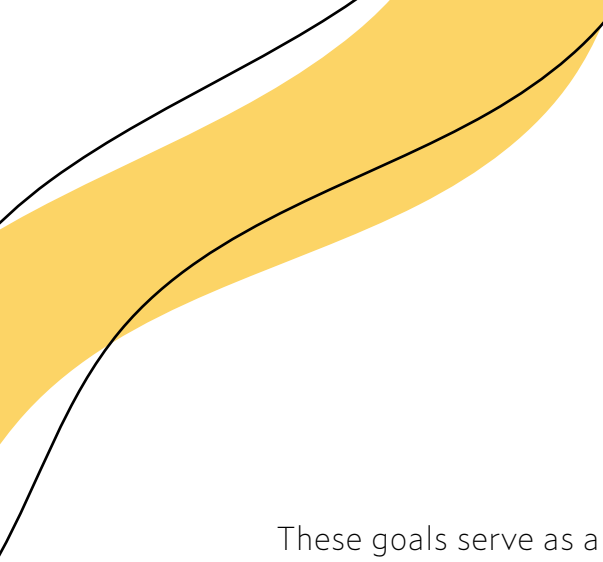
Examining and developing the ecological sustainability of your children's cultural center's activities, along with setting your operating culture and management in line with sustainable development goals, can improve the environmental impact of the activities immediately and directly in the short term.

For example, Paula Toppila, Executive Director and Curator of IHME Helsinki, a commissioning organization for contemporary art, motivates pioneering in the sustainable production of contemporary art. "Our core value is to support the freedom of art within systems that maintain life. We are looking for a more long-term solution for how we, as an international player in the art field, can continue our artistically and productively ambitious work even in the future, in the midst of the environmental crisis, and bring our audiences relevant content.

The work on sustainable development in all countries in the world is guided by the UN's Global Agenda for Sustainable Development introduced in 2015, which is named Agenda 2030. It includes seventeen goals for countries to reach together by 2030.



Click here for the wedding cake model of the Agenda 2030 goals (in English)



These goals serve as a guideline for assessing the impact of everyone's activities, including children's cultural centers. Pavan Sukheev and Johan Rockström (2015) from the Stockholm Resilience Centre have proposed an alternative method for outlining the goals of Agenda 2030, which is currently in widespread use. In this new model, the objectives are arranged in a hierarchical order. At the first level, planetary boundaries define the basis of everything, because ensuring the sustainability of the biosphere is considered the lifeblood of humanity. The next two levels feature the goals of human development and economic goals in such a way that the economy serves as a tool for promoting human development within the planetary boundaries.

In 2021, Earth Overshoot Day was on July 29. Finns consume their share of the world's natural resources roughly four months earlier than the global average. In 2021, Finland's calculated Overshoot Day was April 10. The Overshoot Day is calculated as the date our consumption exceeds the Earth's ability to produce renewable resources and handle fossil fuel-induced carbon dioxide emissions in a single year. The Overshoot Day is based on the Global Footprint Network's calculations, which use the latest UN statistics. If everyone consumed like Finns do, we would need more than three Earths. However, we can change our consumption habits to ensure the biodiversity loss caused by overconsumption does not threaten future generations' chances for a good life.

Sustainable Development Program

The most systematic and therefore most effective way to examine and further improve the sustainability of your organization's consumption habits is to create a bespoke sustainability program for the organization. Devising a sustainability program is also a major step in the process of various sustainable development certificates. Each organization creates its program from its own starting point, and there is no single right way. The goal is to create a working tool to integrate learning a sustainable lifestyle as a systematic part of the organization's operations.

Four art organizations in Finland — Frame Contemporary Art Finland, IHME Helsinki, HIAP, and Mustarinda — hired a joint eco-coordinator for 2020. The eco-coordinator determined what the emissions from the organizations' activities consisted of, looked for less harmful alternatives, and communicated with the organizations about those alternatives. This was the first time in the history of the Finnish art world that an individual was hired with the job title of eco-coordinator. A similar idea is also being tested in the Finnish museum field. Would it be a good idea for multiple children's cultural centers or other, perhaps local cultural organizations to jointly hire an eco-coordinator?

Creating a sustainable development program in five steps:

1. Appoint a sustainable development working group or an environmental council. It is recommended to choose a wide range of individuals from different positions: management, art educators, maintenance, cafe staff if applicable, and definitely include children if possible.

2. The working group carries out a sustainable development review, assessing the ecological, economical, and social impact of their own children's cultural center's activities one theme at a time.

3. The most important development targets are selected based on the review, and a sustainable development program or roadmap is devised, outlining the development measures to be undertaken and the schedule for doing so. This should be done together in order for everyone to get their voices heard and ensure all are motivated to develop their own areas. At this point, it is also a good idea to think about ways to integrate the chosen themes into the children's cultural center's yearly activities and content.

4. Implement the planned measures and introduce possible themes to events, exhibitions, workshops, and projects. Based on the actions taken and lessons learned, everyday guidelines can be devised and brought to the attention of both staff and customers.

5. After the agreed time period (one calendar year, for example), carry out a final review and evaluation. How well did you meet your goals? Should you continue with the same theme for a second year and further improve our activities, or choose a different theme?

Aspects of everyday eco-life

Energy consumption

To put it as simply as possible, emissions from the energy consumption of a children's cultural center can be reduced in two ways. Reducing consumption is a priority. Reducing energy consumption also leads to reduced emissions. What kind of practices and guidelines could be agreed upon to minimize energy use? Could room temperatures be controlled even more effectively (an appropriate temperature is 21 degrees Celsius on average)? Are all windows and doors properly sealed? Second, centers could switch to low-emission energy solutions or promote such solutions in their own larger organization.

One quick and effective way is to switch power contracts and start buying electricity with the EKOenergy label. Energy with the EKOenergy label meets the responsibility criteria approved by environmental organizations and funds projects to alleviate energy poverty. Wherever possible, centers could switch to renewable district heating or choose another low-emission heat source such as geothermal or solar energy.

Of course, energy refurbishment is a major investment, but often it is also the most significant concrete way to reduce your organization's carbon footprint if your children's cultural center has its own facilities. Various subsidies are available for energy refurbishment depending on the operator, and in the long run it is also a financially sound investment that pays for itself.

Tip: To help reduce emissions from energy consumption, you can use a carbon footprint counter.

Click here to access the Hiilifiksi website! (in Finnish)


A youth orchestra's carbon footprint

**Kia Lindström, student of environmental engineering
Lappeenranta–Lahti University of Technology LUT**

For my bachelor's thesis, I calculated the 2021 carbon footprint of Orkester Norden, a Nordic youth orchestra. Based on the selected system boundaries, Orkester Norden's carbon footprint totals approximately 17,700 kgCO₂e when audience travel is not taken into account.

The largest carbon footprint is caused by the participants (the players) and staff traveling to Lahti, from Lahti to their places of residence, and the orchestra's trips to concert venues. This accounts for approximately 71% of the carbon footprint. Food accounts for approximately 13% and merchandise for 10%. The energy consumption of properties and accommodation, along with waste treatment, account for roughly 6% of the carbon footprint.

Reducing the carbon footprint of travel is difficult, because Finland is currently not easily accessible by train from other Nordic or Baltic countries. In addition, the orchestra's roster changes every year, so the carbon footprint of travel can vary significantly from year to year. Traveling by train would be desirable because electric trains do not produce many emissions. Those traveling from Sweden could reduce their own travel carbon footprint by traveling to Finland on a gas-powered ship whose emissions are lower than a ship running on fuel.

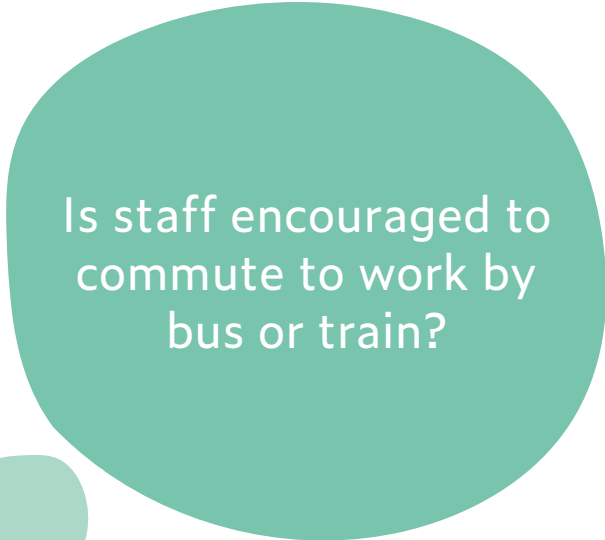
The page features two large, abstract teal shapes. One is a large, dark teal shape on the left side, and the other is a lighter teal shape in the top right corner. Both have organic, flowing edges.

Purchasing electricity produced from renewable energy for the properties used by Orkester Norden would be another way to reduce the carbon footprint. In terms of catering, serving exclusively vegetarian food would reduce the carbon footprint. Eliminating merchandise would also significantly reduce the carbon footprint. If doing so is not desired, it may be possible to find a way to purchase these products to ensure the lowest possible carbon footprint. The methods outlined in the report could reduce the carbon footprint by nearly a quarter. However, Orkester Norden will not be carbon neutral without emission compensation.



Travel and logistics

A carbon footprint counter is an excellent tool for rethinking travel and logistics practices. When outlining the carbon footprint in terms of all children's cultural center activities, appropriate guidelines or recommendations can be devised for the staff and customers to minimize emissions. Is staff encouraged to commute to work by bus or train? Is remote working possible? Are emissions from work-related travel compensated? Have customers been instructed to arrive or are you facilitating travel by public transport, bicycle, or walking? Do you prioritize local or nearby service providers? How could resources be allocated to minimize travel? For example, could a visiting foreign artist appear at multiple events or children's cultural centers? Could international cultural exchange with neighboring countries be strengthened, instead of more distant countries? When should the children's culture experience come to the children, and when should the children come to the experience? How could transport be handled in the most eco-friendly way possible? How could transport emissions be minimized in the planning stage of a traveling exhibition?



Is staff encouraged to
commute to work by
bus or train?

Art Testers take you to art and culture

**Heidi Rantanen and Joonas Keskinen, Art Testers
Association of Finnish Children's Cultural Centers**

Finland's largest and only nationwide Art Testers cultural education program offers all eight-graders in Finland and their teachers high-quality art visits. Along with travel and tickets, the visits include preliminary and subsequent work to enhance the experience, and a review application which allows the young people to provide feedback on their art experience.

Traveling to art institutions is an integral part of Art Testers activities. These trips are desired by schools, and many young people may find traveling by train or tram an experience equally important to the actual art experience. A visit to the capital is also part of the civic and democracy education of young people. At its best, it can increase a young person's sense of inclusion and expand their environment.

Depending on the distances, Art Testers trips are taken on foot or by bicycle, train, ship, or plane. Emissions from travel are unavoidable, and that is why the eco-friendliness of the Art Testers operating model has been considered both in the children's cultural field and among young people themselves. These trips are as eco-friendly as possible while taking into account other factors, such as the required travel time and availability of transport equipment. Rail transport is used as much as possible, and we require bus companies to commit to equipment with a Euro 5 emission standard at minimum.



If we offer transport to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area from across the country, complete withdrawal from air travel is not possible because travel times from parts of Finland would become excessive. In addition, moving thousands of people simultaneously on the same journey section hits the limits of railway transport capacity. To reduce air travel, we have replaced some two-way flights with one-way flights (e.g., flight to the destination, return by night train) and also allow school groups to inform us if they would prefer not to fly at all and would instead choose a two-way railway trip.



In addition to the ecological perspective, sustainable development includes economical, social, and cultural sustainability, whose central issue is to secure the conditions of well-being from one generation to the next. The Art Testers make art equally accessible to all Finnish eighth-graders, regardless of their socio-economic background or geographical location. The knowledge, skills, and creative abilities learned on these art visits are the key to solving a variety of challenges, including ecological ones, both today and tomorrow.

The Art Testers activities are funded by the Finnish Cultural Foundation, Svenska kulturfonden, and the Ministry of Education and Culture, and coordinated by the Association of Finnish Children's Cultural Centers.



Procurement

At most children's cultural centers, procurement has become a key method to improve the ecological, economic, and social impact of the organization. Certain procurement choices are also visible to the public, thus speaking for your sustainable practices. One method is to go through the unit's accounts and determine what categories the children's cultural center's incoming purchases can be divided into. For example, depending on the center, these can be art materials, cleaning equipment, office equipment, catering, event materials, exhibition materials, IT and other equipment, etc. After this, you can draw up the specific set of sustainable procurement criteria that best suits your children's cultural center, which in the best-case scenario can also be included in tendering processes. What can be rented, borrowed, or shared? What can be repaired, tuned, or reused? What can be obtained second-hand? How can the materials be recycled? When buying new, how to choose the most sustainably and fairly produced option? How to minimize printed material at the office, events, exhibitions, and other activities? Does the center's catering prefer vegetarian, local, seasonal, organically produced ingredients and products with sustainability certificates? How does procurement take local and global social impact into account?



Does the center's catering prefer vegetarian, local, seasonal, organically produced ingredients and products with sustainability certificates?

Dialogical relationship with materials

**Tero Hytönen,
Annantalo**

Following my discussions with several Annantalo teachers, it became evident that art education focuses in many respects on the work process, and not necessarily the outcome. This means that the work process does not only involve crafting something already known, when the steps of working on it would only be seen as delays for the end result. In contrast, art education emphasizes the work process itself, which involves active exploration and finding something new.

A dialogical relationship with materials is an essential component of this work process. Materials are not merely for consumption and use, but they themselves shape the artistic process and communicate through exploration the meanings and relationships they can be suited for. Materials teach their shapers in equal measure, and as their shape shifts they present new, possibilities no one could expect.

A dialogical relationship with materials encourages us to move away from consumer thinking and, at its best, can give us an appreciative and understanding relationship with our materials and their inherent historical meanings. As a result, a skilled teacher can encourage multisensory work and a wider understanding of materials.



In the pilot phase of the OKKA Foundation's sustainable development indicators, the eco-friendliness and economy of the materials emerged very strongly. These are important and noteworthy matters, of course, but more relevant for art education itself is a substantive perspective on sustainable development. What is special to art education, specifically? In my opinion, this substantive perspective, which teaches a new dialogical relationship with materials, is a unique feature of art and art education, and many other actors could imitate it.

Blue as a cornflower — non-toxic art with babies

**Sanna Pajunen-Kyynäräinen,
Pori Centre for Children's Culture Kruunupää**

The first Vauvojen värikylpy® (Baby Color Immersion) workshops for children under the age of one were launched in 2003. Through the Centre for Children's Culture Kruunupää, Vauvojen värikylpy® has expanded both domestically and internationally. Värikylpy activity is constantly developed as global phenomena and the world situation change. From the very beginning, the main principles have been art, safety, sustainability, and quality.

When working with very young children under the age of two, all materials and colors must be absolutely safe because they can easily get in children's mouths. Few existing colors like this are available. That is why we at Kruunupää have developed all-new ways to produce and handle pigments and food ingredients to find a paint-like form. The Värikylpy dyes are currently the safest for babies to handle, as they are non-toxic, contain no synthetic ingredients, and close to organic production quality at their best.



Värikylpy workshops also pay attention to recyclability, minimizing material loss, and culturing dyes. For a few years, the search for a blue color has even led to cultivating cornflowers and violets just for Värikylpy workshops in cooperation with a local organic farm. The flower fields serve as spectacularly beautiful carbon sinks and guaranteed safe sources of color.

Luonnonväripaletti (Natural Color Palette)

Päivi Venäläinen

Art Centre for Children and Young People/Villa Arttu

The Cultural Center of Youth Villa Arttu's Luonnonväripaletti (Natural Color Palette) exhibition on natural dyes and their uses inspired reflection on the eco-friendliness and the future of dyes and art practice. The exhibition showed that exhibitions and their workshops are multidimensional and experiential environment for both children and adults to awaken to issues of sustainable development. Works of art, images, videos, materials, objects, texts, and one's own activity can convey information and create sensations. Some of the exhibits at the Natural Color Palette exhibition included yarn and fabrics dyed with plants. Subjects important for the ecosystem and the creation of dyes, such as water, light, and darkness, forests, insects, fungi, and microbes were presented through works selected from the International Archive of Children and Young People's Art.

The exhibition on themes of sustainable development is also a learning process for its creators. To ensure the methods are not in conflict with the message of the exhibition, materials for exhibition elements and workshops must be carefully chosen. For example, plastic-free paints were used at the Natural Color Palette exhibition. In the workshops, materials such as blueberry juice, lemons, and coffee were used for painting, but the workshops could have been even more natural in terms of content. On the other hand, the exhibition also feature works by art school students, created in nature with natural materials.



What kind of waste is generated the most in your children's cultural center, and what activities generate it?

Material efficiency and waste

Recycling and proper waste sorting are a fundamental part of a sustainable children's cultural center, which is also visible to the public. Depending on the center, adequate sorting points are needed for public spaces, workshop areas, events, and offices. The proper emptying of each of these must also be organized. However, it is also crucial to think thoroughly about waste prevention. What kind of waste is generated the most in your children's cultural center, and what activities generate it? Could the amount of waste be reduced by planning the activity, or perhaps catering, differently? How to optimize the use of raw materials? How to extend the life of products? How to improve material efficiency in storage and procurement? Is hazardous waste generated through activity, and how is it identified, stored, and sent to be treated?

Water consumption and pollution

In Finland, we still have enough clean water for everyone, so monitoring water consumption is not considered essential by many. However, sensible water consumption practices also form part of the daily life of a sustainable children's cultural center. Water purification, treatment, and heating consumes energy and resources. During dry summers, Finland has also suffered from local water shortages. Therefore, when planning activities, it is important to ensure clean water is not used wastefully or unnecessarily. How is the water consumption of the children's culture center monitored? Is water being saved systematically? How?

How is the water consumption of the children's culture center monitored?

When considering the children's cultural center's water consumption, so-called hidden water should not be ignored either. Through the products we use, we consume water in countries of manufacture, many of which struggle with severe clean water shortages. Usable, i.e. fresh water begins to run low worldwide, and a large proportion of the world's population already suffers from a lack of clean water.

Hidden water can be saved by favoring locally produced foods which are adapted to the local conditions.

Children's cultural actors should also consider the issue of water pollution. One of the most significant challenges to Finland's environmental protection efforts is to control and prevent eutrophication. The release of hazardous chemicals into bodies of water also presents a problem. Choosing safe, properly certified cleaning agents and other chemicals is something that should be included in your sustainable procurement criteria. Vegetarian food produced nearby is also the preferred option for preventing eutrophication. The purchase of farmed fish should be carefully considered, because fish farming is a major source of water eutrophication.

Biodiversity

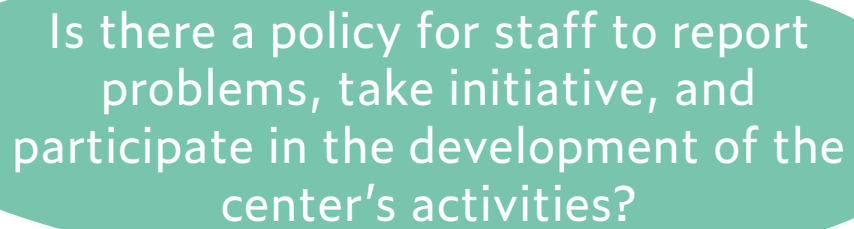
Along with climate change, biodiversity loss is one of our most concerning global problems. Simple everyday eco-friendly choices, such as sustainable food choices and reducing consumption, also form part of the solution for protecting biodiversity. For example, many fish stocks of the world are overfished, so in terms of biodiversity it is also recommended to choose only non-threatened species of fish, such as domestic roach, herring, perch, and pike, and any MSC-certified fish.

However, children's cultural centers may also discover some rather wild ideas to enrich the biodiversity of the center's yard or the nearby environment — meadows and fields, decaying wood gardens, insect

hotels, and birdhouses can become veritable oases of biodiversity in an otherwise poor urban environment.

Tip: Good choices can be found, for example, in the WWF's sustainable seafood guide.

Click here for the guide! *(in Finnish, other languages available)*



Is there a policy for staff to report problems, take initiative, and participate in the development of the center's activities?

Occupational well-being, occupational safety, development, and advancement

Naturally, a sustainable children's cultural center also takes care of the health and safety of its staff, along with the physical and mental safety of the children and young people involved in the activities. Occupational safety is facilitated by, for example, an occupational safety program and safety rules, rescue and safety plans, preparation and training for hazardous situations and accidents, maintaining first aid skills, and general cleanliness and order. At the children's cultural center, are accidents and incidents reported? Are identified risks corrected immediately?

On the other hand, occupational well-being is facilitated by proper orientation practices, and simply the improvement of work ergonomics and working conditions. Zero tolerance for harassment and bullying is also essential, along with timely handling of such incidents. Joint development is also part of a sustainable children's cultural center's operating culture. Is there a policy for staff to report problems, take initiative, and participate in the development of the center's activities? Are initiatives addressed or rewarded?

Sustainability aspects are also connected to staff development. Do the center's personnel have equal access to training and advancement? And are sustainable development skills and recruitment attitudes considered? Does the children's cultural center offer work for hard-to-employ individuals? How is workplace well-being monitored?

Customer orientation

Child orientation is already an established part of the Association of Children's Cultural Center's values and a familiar operational cornerstone, but simultaneously it is an essential part of examining the sustainability of your activities. How is feedback collected from children, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders, and how is it handled? How is feedback taken into account when developing activities? Does the children's cultural center perhaps also involve external stakeholders in developing its activities? Do you know your customers' needs?


Sustainability certificates suitable for children's cultural centers

The OKKA Foundation certificate

The OKKA Foundation for teaching, training, and education awards sustainable development certificates to schools and educational institutions. The Finnish Association for Basic Education in the Arts (TPO) and the OKKA Foundation created new sustainability indicators for basic education in the arts in their 2019–2020 project. In 2021, this process was continued by testing the indicators at six different children's cultural centers and developing appropriate sustainability indicators for children's cultural centers on the basis of the trial.

The sustainability indicators for basic education in the arts and children's cultural centers encapsulate the idea of art education providing an opportunity for learners of all ages to broaden their thinking, imagine alternative futures, create new meanings, and strengthen their sense of community. The TPO/OKKA project collected information about the sustainability perspectives and methods that are emphasized in the teaching of different art forms. For example, the circus, dance, and music promote building a community together with practice, performing, and serving as an audience. Through narration and dialogue, theater and word art are able to examine society and human activity through a critical lens. In visual arts, crafts, and architecture in particular, the materials used and their life cycles must be considered.

The realization of sustainability goals is determined by three indicators, which are teaching, operating culture, and management. For each indicator, a three-level description has been developed to assess how the children's cultural center's activities reflect 1) existing reproductive, 2) forward-looking, and 3) socially innovative approaches in terms of the activity being reviewed.



The certification process is based on the children's cultural center's self-assessment, meeting the basic requirements of sustainable operation, and the children's cultural center's commitment to the implementation of their sustainable development program. In external evaluation, the emphasis is placed on the ambition of the children's cultural center's development goals and how forward-looking those goals are.

Green Flag

Green Flag is a sustainable development program for daycares, schools, educational institutions, and children and young people's leisure activities. In addition, the Eco-Schools Green Flag label is an international environmental certificate for education. A participant meeting the program's criteria is granted access to the green flag, which serves as the program's logo.

Green Flag activity is always carried out on a per-project basis. Children and young people are active in project planning, implementation, and results evaluation. In addition to sustainable development education, the program also takes genuine measures to reduce the environmental impact.

If there is a suitable group of children at your children's cultural center that meets regularly and can serve as the environmental panel for the program, the Green Flag program is for you. For example, at the Sagalund Children's Cultural Center, the Sagalundkerho afterschool club serves as the environmental panel.

The operating model of the program is based on seven steps, which are setting up the environmental panel, selecting a theme, identifying a baseline, the action plan, action and review, Green Flag practices, and a final report. Green Flag activities encompassing the entire operational unit must take place at least six times per school year, with at least 70% of the children/young people participating in Green Flag activities as everyday actors and/or event participants. At the end of a successful and approved project, you get to raise an actual green flag!




EcoCompassi

The EcoCompass environmental management system allows organizations to reduce the negative environmental impact of their operations while increasing positive actions in their own operating environment.

In the EcoCompass program, a bespoke environmental program is developed. Concrete objectives and measures are recorded in the environmental program to reduce the environmental impact. The objectives are selected based on environmental impact assessment. The program is created with the help of an EcoCompass expert, who then approves the completed program. The organization carries out its completed environmental program for six months to a year on average prior to an audit. The audit allows the EcoCompass auditor to confirm that the ten criteria of EcoCompass are met in the organization's operations.

The EcoCompass program is especially well suited for events. The Children's Winter Carnival in Lahti is one example of an EcoCompass event. The Hämeenlinna Hippalot event is also applying for an EcoCompass of its own.



An eco-friendly children's art festival

**Riikka-Leena Puistola,
ARX – Open Cultural Center**

Eco-friendliness is a priority for the Hippalot art festival for children, held annually from late July to early August. The Hämeenlinna-based event is the largest multi-disciplinary art festival in Finland. Hippalot is applying for the EcoCompass certificate, but COVID has slightly delayed the process. The goal is to examine the festival processes and make them as eco-friendly as possible. Being considerate of the environment is in the interest of both visitors and the production team.

At the Hippalot festival, eco-friendliness manifests as, for example, the recycling of decorations, environmentally friendly and, if possible, reusable workshop materials, and compensation for foreign artists' air travel. The staff canteen serves vegetarian dishes, and all restaurants at the festival display the carbon footprint of each lunch option. Festival-goers are encouraged to arrive by public transports, and visitors have even been picked up from Helsinki by a festival bus. The area features plenty of opportunities to refill your own water bottle. By operating in an existing cultural center, the Hippalot festival's structures and crowds do not put a strain on nature and, for example, animals nesting in the summer.





Know the facts

Terminology related to sustainable development can be confusing, and all the different terms can be difficult to keep track of. It is important to know the terms in order to talk about things under their proper names and stay on the same page with your conversation partner.

Glossary

Active citizenship

The Finnish school system strives to educate participating, responsible, and critical citizens and encourages them to participate and influence political, economic, and social activity and cultural life at local, national, European, and global levels.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity, or the biological diversity in nature refers to the vast range of species and biological communities on Earth, and genetic variability within species. Diversity helps nature adapt to changing conditions. The loss of species e.g., threatens human food production, plant pollination, and clean water.

Ecological footprint

Describes the size of an area of land or water required for the food consumed by a person or a group of people, producing sufficient energy and materials, and treat the waste generated. Finland has one of the largest ecological footprints in the world.

Ecological handprint

The ecological or green handprint represents our positive impact on the world, and what good we leave behind.

Eco-social education

The foundation of eco-social thinking is that caring for nature's well-being also increases human well-being. Such an understanding can be found through perceiving the big picture as one learns to examine the interactions between nature, man, and society.

Carbon footprint

Human-induced climate emissions or climate load that can be determined for a company, organization, activity, or product. The carbon footprint can be used to assess the impact of actions and products on global warming.

Carbon sink

A carbon sink collects and stores a chemical compound with carbon content, usually carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide is one of the natural greenhouse gases that enable the greenhouse effect. Seas and forests are the most significant carbon sinks.



Climate change

Global warming of the climate caused by the large increase of man-made greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The Earth's temperature has fluctuated quite widely throughout the planet's existence, but never before has the change happened this quickly, which is why the situation is alarming.

Civil disobedience

A peaceful and non-violent form of protest, refusing to comply with a law considered unfair or actively breaking it. The goal is public, deliberative, and attention-grabbing influencing to raise awareness of the relevant issue.

Civic engagement

A citizen has many ways to influence society, politics, the media, or companies' activities through e.g., voting, demonstrating, contacting decision-makers, letters to newspapers, or association activities.

Greenhouse effect

The greenhouse effect refers to the atmosphere's ability to absorb the heat radiation reflected by the Earth's surface. This insulation ability means heat cannot escape into space, making the Earth's temperature higher than it would be without the greenhouse effect.

Sustainable development

Sustainable development is development that meets the current needs without depriving future generations of the change to meet their needs. There are ecological, economic, social and, cultural dimensions to sustainable development.

Relationship with nature

A person or community's way to view nature, informed by values, knowledge, or experiences among other things.



Futures education

An area of education that aims to improve the student's ability to envision the future and thereby improve their chances to survive in the future.

Empowerment

The first definition of empowerment refers to an individual's discovery of their inner sense of strength and their own strengths. The second definition refers to an individual's ability to advocate for themselves and participate in decision-making at the societal level.

Environmental and climate feelings

Feelings related to nature, the environment, and socio-ecological challenges, such as climate anxiety, environmental rage, winter grief, or future hope.

Environmental education

An area of education that aims to increase environmental sensitivity, awareness, and positivity, along with support for individuals or communities moving toward a sustainable way of life.



**More important
terms and
explanations**

Sustainable development categories

Ecological sustainability

The basis of sustainable development is ecological sustainability. It refers to maintaining the diversity of plant and animal species and ecosystem functionality, along with adapting human economic and material activity to the Earth's natural resources and natural resilience. Ecological sustainability is the foundation to build human well-being on.

Examples:

- Environmentally friendly procurement
- Conservation of materials, energy, and water
- Reuse, recycling, and sorting
- Economical and low-emission modes of transport

Cultural sustainability

Sustainable development casts a wide cultural net. It means taking into account both creativity and cultural diversity. It means respect and acceptance of the existence and diversity of both one's own culture and other, different cultures. It also involves the development of cross-cultural coexistence. Cultural sustainability allows cultures to be preserved and developed through different generations.

Examples:

- Preservation of the cultural environment
- Fostering local cultural traditions and customs
- Multiculturalism
- Intergenerationality

Economic sustainability

Economic sustainability is balanced growth not based on long-term debt or destruction of natural resources. A sustainable economy helps face upcoming challenges and make value judgements. Economic sustainability can be achieved primarily through sustainable use of renewable resources and, for example, improving resource and material efficiency while following the principles of a circular economy.

Examples:

- Products and services are offered with a smaller environmental load while saving on natural resources and energy (eco-efficiency, life cycle).
- Fair trade products/local food/organic
- Eco-labels, energy labels
- Repair/maintenance of buildings

Social sustainability

Social sustainability refers to equality and equal opportunities among members of society. Social sustainability is about people's opportunities to influence their future, demand their rights, and raise their concerns.

Examples:

- Prevention of exclusion, discrimination, and physical and mental violence
- Well-being, health, coping, and equal treatment at work and school
- Transparency, cooperation, and participation opportunities

05



Here is a challenge for
children's cultural centers!

5 +1 actions toward a more sustainable children's cultural center

1.

The children's cultural center as an environmental educator

Consider suitable approaches for your children's cultural center and/or art form into themes of a sustainable future, and highlight them in all activities and projects. What are the different roles your center can actively take on to become part of the solution?

2.

Supporting inclusion and activism

Listening carefully to the environmental concerns of children and young people and helping them process their environmental feelings. Engage in activism started by children and young people with an open mind, and bring your own artistic and cultural expertise to them for support.

3.

Together

Appoint a sustainable development working group for your children's cultural center and, if possible, an environmental panel of children.

4.

Everyday eco-life

Consider in your next project, event, or exhibition how sustainability aspects can be taken into account in both content and production.

5.

Sustainable development plan

Start developing sustainable children's cultural center activity even in the long term Determine the ecological footprint of the children's cultural center's activities, decide on development targets, and monitor their progress.

1.

Challenge your stakeholders, partners, and another larger organization to join in on the world-saving efforts!

This is what we did, what could you do?" Children's cultural centers, join in to secure a safe future for children and young people!

Links



Research information on the importance of art and cultural education:

- Reorienting Environmental Art Education (2021) *(in Finnish and English)*
- Art-Eco Project – towards empathetic-ecological humanity *(in English)*
- Creativity, the Arts, and the Future of Work (2019) *(in English)*
- Climate Change Education: A New Approach for a World of Wicked Problems *(in English)*
- Tulevaisuuden koulutuksen käsikirja (2017) *(in Finnish)*
- Taidekasvatus ympäristöhuolen aikakaudella: avauksia, suuntia, mahdollisuuksia (2016) *(in Finnish)*
- Tarvitsemme taidetta ympäristökriisin käsittelemiseen (2020) *(in Finnish)*

Other research and background information:

- Young People's Voices on Climate Anxiety, Government Betrayal and Moral Injury: A Global Phenomenon (2021) *(in English)*
- Youth Barometer 2018 on influencing and Europe *(in Finnish, Swedish, and English)*
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child *(in Finnish and Swedish)*
- The Future of the Planet and the Rights of a Child (2014) *(in Finnish)*
- Cultural Sustainable Development project 2010–2012 *(in Finnish)*
- The Ministry of Education and Culture's administration's sustainable development policy *(in Finnish)*

Information on sustainable development themes:

- The Toivoa ja toimintaa materials discuss sustainable development, related feelings, and how schools can work to promote sustainable development *(in Finnish)*
- Open ilmasto-opas is a guide for teachers to support teaching and education work, which describes each climate change phenomenon separately from the perspective of all subjects taught at the school *(in Finnish, Swedish, and English)*
- Climate change information produced by SYKE, Aalto University, YTK, Finnish Meteorological Institute *(in Finnish, Swedish, and English)*
- Planetary boundaries *(in English)*
- Agenda 2030 *(in English)*
- Agenda 2030 alternative wedding cake model *(in English)*
- Earth Overshoot Day *(in English)*

Inspiration for sustainability education at a children's cultural center:

- Toivoa ja toimintaa project, Taide maailmaa muuttamassa *(in Finnish)*
- Culture declares a state of emergency *(in Finnish)*
- Material Bank for Outdoor Learning, Environmental Education and Sustainable Living *(in Finnish, Swedish, and English)*
- Network of Nature and Environmental Schools
- The Ruusuvuori School's "Korso valittaa" project
- The bicycle model for climate education
- Models for sustainability education
- Intangible cultural heritage The sustainable development compass
The curriculum and environmental education

About environmental feelings:

- Nature and feelings: on the site, you can find solution-oriented information on environmental anxiety and other feelings brought on by the environmental emergency *(in Finnish)*
- Toivoa ja toimintaa project, Emotions *(in Finnish)*
- Ympäristöahdistuksen mieli (2020–2022) project *(in Finnish)*
- Pieni opas ympäristöahdistukseen (2021) *(in Finnish)*

The everyday eco-life of children's cultural centers:

- Hiilifiksi, a carbon footprint counter for organizations *(in Finnish)*
- Ecological guidelines for Finnish cultural institutes *(in English)*
- Slow travel guidelines for visitors to Finland *(in English)*
- Art production guidelines created during the Helsinki International Artist Programme and Mustarinda's Post-fossiilisen muutos project *(in English)*
- Eco-coordinator *(in Finnish and English)*
- The Museums Association's sustainable development action plan *(in Finnish)*
- Museums and sustainable development *(in Finnish)*
- Keke koulussa – Kestävän kehityksen opas *(in Finnish)*

Sustainable development certificates:

- The OKKA Foundation's educational institutions' sustainable development certification for children's cultural centers
- Kestävän taiteen perusopetus project *(in Finnish and Swedish)*
- Green Flag *(in Finnish, Swedish, and English)*
- EcoCompass *(in Finnish, Swedish, and English)*

