

# Preparing for and Supporting Education for Sustainable Living

By Gary Babiuk and Thomas Falkenberg



**E**ducation can play a central role in causing shifts in awareness and in everyday practices regarding issues of environmental damage and over-consumption of non-renewable and renewable resources.

Throughout Canada, education for sustainable development (ESD) has become an important focus, but there is a need for research into the levels of preparedness of and support for Manitoba teachers for ESD, and how these levels could be improved. To address this need, we have initiated the research project “Sustainable Development and Living through Changing Teacher Education and Teaching in Manitoba.” This project is a collaboration among university and teacher researchers. It investigates ways in which school divisions, schools, classrooms, and teacher education programs in Manitoba are addressing, and could better address, teaching for sustainable living.

More recently, the concept of sustainability has been broadened from a focus on environmental matters to include other essential aspects of human living. Adopting this more holistic and systems-theoretical view, the research project focuses its concern for sustainable living not just on the environmental aspects, but also on the health and well-being, socio-economic, and socio-cultural aspects, of human living.

Within this concept of education for sustainable living, the purpose of this project is

- to identify the attitudes, competencies, and understandings teachers need to prepare students in Manitoba schools for sustainable living
- to identify ways in which the development of these attitudes, competencies, and understandings can be supported in teacher education programs and through professional development opportunities
- to assess how existing teacher education programs and professional development opportunities in Manitoba affect student teachers’ and teachers’ development of those attitudes, competencies, and understandings
- to identify policy requirements at the school, division, and ministry level to support education for sustainable living

This project includes a cluster of eight research sub-projects involving a total of 33 research collaborators. The sub-projects focus on a school/community

garden, an ESD school division student conference, a school-based sociocultural event, cultural diversity teacher training, rural environmental curriculum development, and sociocultural and diversity programs in teacher education programs. Co-researchers include teachers, school-based administrators, and university teacher educators. These projects will provide eight case studies that will complement and add to the overall baseline project conducted by a team of researchers led by the principal investigators.

All participants in this research project will not only conduct their own collaborative action research but will contribute to the overall understanding of the need for sustainability in education for sustainable development and living. The research project is jointly funded by the Canadian Council on Learning ([www.ccl-cca.ca](http://www.ccl-cca.ca)) and Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth.

For more information on this research project, please contact

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## profile

Thomas Falkenberg is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. Beginning with his doctoral thesis work in education, his research interest has been in the areas of teacher education and teacher development. Since coming to the University of Manitoba four years ago, he has been actively supporting and creating opportunities for pan-Canadian collaboration in teacher education practice and research. Falkenberg is currently the president of the Canadian Association for Teacher Education ([www.csse.ca/cate](http://www.csse.ca/cate)) and a co-organizer of the Series of Working Conferences on Research in Teacher Education in Canada ([www.umanitoba.ca/education/TEResearch](http://www.umanitoba.ca/education/TEResearch)).



Gary Babiuk is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. After 23 years of teaching and school administration in a number of public schools in Alberta, he completed his doctoral work in 2000, which focused on holistic, transformational, and global education. Since then, Babiuk’s research has been directed toward the need to make transformational changes in our education system at all levels to adopt a more progressive focus, and to make direct connections between education for sustainability and the solutions needed to address issues involving environmental threats, socioeconomic disparity, cultural tensions, and non-healthy living. He is currently the co-facilitator of the Holistic Learning and Spirituality in Education Network of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).