

**Home and Away: Changing the Way We Think about Education**  
**Report of Sustainability Education Discussion, March 27, 2008**  
**By Raissa Marks, Sustainability Education Alliance of New Brunswick**

“What knowledge, skills, and values do we want to encourage in our population?” This was the question that framed our discussion on March 27, 2007. We were presented with three hypothetical choices for our education system – one focusing on preserving the environment, one on developing social/community values, and one on maintaining a strong economy. None of the choices were realistic on their own, but they certainly provided an interesting framework for dialogue!

In my opinion, the most important thing that came out of the discussion was that all participants, regardless of their organizational affiliation or background, agreed (more or less!) on the values that we should be teaching our children. Here are the highlights of the discussion:

- Teaching a balance of environmental stewardship, community values, and an equitable economy is essential in our education system;
- People and communities live in natural environments, so it is impossible to teach about community values without teaching environmental stewardship and vice versa;
- It is important to equip people with the skills and knowledge to contribute to the economy and society in a positive way, but not at the expense of the environment or people’s quality of life.

During the second half of the discussion, Dr. Gerald Farthing provided some information on what Manitoba’s Department of Education is doing to promote sustainability education in that province. He spoke of three areas:

- Leadership: The department’s policy documents identify sustainability education as one of their top priorities. Currently, they have 2.5 staff persons working full-time on sustainability education.
- Support for teachers: The department provides training to help teachers teach sustainability education. They also provide grants for teachers to develop sustainability education lesson plans and/or school-based projects.
- Partnerships: By partnering with other organizations, everyone’s time and money go further.

In addition to me, the following people participated in the discussion:

Brent Shaw, New Brunswick Teachers Association

Gerald Farthing, Manitoba Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth

Greg LeBlanc, Environment and Sustainable Development Research Centre

Jean-Paul L’Italien, Comité en développement durable du nord-ouest

Jim Petrie, Learning for a Sustainable Future – New Brunswick

Julie Stinson, Falls Brook Centre

Nancy Butler, Harbour View High School

Randy Nason, Grand Lake Watershed Guardians

Sylvie Lebel, New Brunswick Department of Education (Francophone Sector)