# Mathematics textbooks for sustainable development

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The highly cultural nature of mathematics teaching is hidden in education practices.

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https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs

1. end poverty in all its forms everywhere

2. end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

3. ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

4. ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

5. achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

6. ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

ent.un.org/sdgs

7. ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

8. promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

9. build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

10. reduce inequality within and among countries

11. make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

12. ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

13. take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

14. conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs

15. protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

16. promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

17. strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs



## https://tinyurl.com/sustainablemath https tiny url .com sustainable math

## Sustainability is not an "add on". It is the core.



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Philosophies of mathematics:

- formalism
- platonism
- humanism
- etc.

To teach mathematics for sustainable development a humanist understanding of mathematics is most relevant.

Mathematics is a human activity, a way of addressing challenges in particular human contexts.

(or a set of ways)

Six activities of mathematics (Bishop):

- counting
- measuring
- locating
- designing
- explaining
- playing

When people design, explain, or play with counting, measuring or locating, they are doing mathematics.

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Potential contributions of math (basis for task/activity develo

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### We can communicate with

- precision
- accuracy

## Necessary for agreements (treaties, contracts,...)







### <u>To balance conflicting needs we:</u>

- consider measures that indicate identified goals,
- assign numeric values to things that are not easy to measure,
- weight these indicators to align with our values.

These indicators can

- measure various policy scenarios to identify an optimum decision,
- compare regions to see who/what needs attention.

This depends on the quality of our choices about:

- what to measure
- which measures to value the most, and
- the mathematical model for predicting results

It may seem arbitrary, but it is less arbitrary than the alternative.





We can measure:

- pollution
- income
- law breaking
- education attainment
- reading

• • •

• critical thinking

This supports

- local and global decision making
- engaged citizens

We can compare across:

- regions
- gender
- age
- ethnicity
- immigration status
- sexual identity
- socio-economics
- ...

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regions



## Limitations:

- <u>When</u> is it appropriate to measure love, fear, pain, hunger, ...?
- Mathematics can support good motives and bad. (bombs, eugenics, ...)
- Abstraction ignores local knowledge.

When doing human mathematics, students should discuss the limitations.





• Abstraction ignores local knowledge.



Mathematics is known for abstraction, but it has both processes:

- abstraction (moving to the abstract)
- particularization (moving from the general to the particular)

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Potential contributions of mathematics Moving away from context can help us see a system at work.

Incarceration Rates by Race 2010 (USA)

	% of US	% of US population in	National incarceration rate
Race/ethnicity	population	prison	(per 100,000)
White	64%	39%	450
Hispanic	16%	19%	831
Black	13%	40%	2,306

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Comparative death rates per 1,000 population, residential schools (Named and Unnamed registers combined) and the general Canadian population of school-aged children, using five-year averages from 1921 to 1965.



### **Beauty**

- appreciating diverse ingenuity
- standing beside each other to appreciate common experience.



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- standing beside each other to appreciate common experience



### **Real contexts**

Attention to context

- Attention to human choices Current issues
- Complexity (avoid simplicity) Acknowledging values
- Access to data
- Interdisciplinarity
- Sensitivity to marginalization

**Open dialogue** Collaboration Access to everyone Technology Courage Trust

to peace or sustainable development cross-curricular discussion. (See consider curriculum authors 1F, 2F.)

#### Sensitivity to marginal Balance the experience of stud potential learning gains by minimizin embarrassment of marginalized stude addressing an equality issue (gender, necessary but may draw attention to q stereotypes among students. (See cor curriculum authors 1F, 2D and ESD cor Introductory chapter – thinking and act

### Opening dialogue

Avoid thinking that your public maintain a singular focus on SDGs to an SDG could go further but it even good to leave space for teac to advance the conversation. Rela few explicit connections to sustain curriculum resources may prompt teachers and stu connections in mathematical ide does not connect to SDGs. (Se curriculum authors 3B, 4B, 5C in the Introductory chapter collaborating.)

#### Collaboration

Encourage and initiate questions and instructions th to to hoar each other

### Guidelines for embedding ESD in mathematic

In summary, it is important for mathematics textbooks to show examples of how math to support SDGs, including disaster risk reduction. In addition to examples that help injustice and unsustainable practices, examples of disasters - when people's best efforts help students to plan ways to address these challenges. It is also important to write the m expects and instructs the students to interact with each other to solve complex problem to listen to other people, develop respect for other's viewpoints and to make mathematic responsibly address the complex problems our communities face.

We outline below 15 guidelines for creating mathematics curriculum resources that sup developed more fully in the examples in the next five sections of this chapter. In fact, this comes from our work on developing those examples. Our approach to developing the guid of the intimate relationship between abstractions, such as the guidelines below, and conside situations, as described in the development of the examples in the next five sections. Mather curriculum resources should maintain close connections between the abstractions and part

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#### We outline Real contexts

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Use real mathematical contexts (as opposed to imaginary contexts or abstractions) to support the message that mathematics is a useful tool for addressing human physical needs in sustainable ways (especially related to SDGs 6-9 and 11-15). (See considerations for curriculum authors 1A, 2C, 3C.)

#### Current issues

Acknowledge that any real context may soon feel out of date or may not be particularly relevant to certain students. Textbooks may position real contexts as examples of people addressing their current and local issues. This can inspire students to consider how mathematics may be a useful tool

(See considerations for curriculum ESD competency in the Introductory of on values.)

#### Access to data

Cite sources for data used in curri and point to other possible sou investigation. When students access data, they develop the skills and doing this when they face sustainal outside school. (See consideration: authors 1B.)

#### Human activity

## e.g., Lesson study by Roberto & Pedro – CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Peru and Chile

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## Tools for embedding sust

### **Real contexts**

- contexts real to the student with real data
- shows that mathematics is useful



e.g. Isoda

![](_page_30_Picture_6.jpeg)

### **Attention to context**

- Draw on students' context knowledge
- Structure textbooks around context instead of procedures
  - Chapters and topics organized around procedures tells students that the procedure is more important than the context.
  - Chapters and topics organized around contexts tells students that the mathematics responds to context.

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### **Word Problems**

- A long tradition
  - thus hard to change
- "throw-away contexts"

Children aged 14, 15, and 16 go to the store. Candy bars are on sale for 43¢ each. They buy a total of 12 candy bars. How much do they spend, not including tax? (Peterson & Gutstein)

### **Attention to human choices**

- Questions that have multiple possible responses
- Language that identifies human choice. ("I chose to") (Wagner and Herbel-Eisenmann)
- People from diverse demographic groups so that students can visualize themselves using mathematics powerfully

![](_page_33_Figure_5.jpeg)

If we think about the choices in our mathematics, it helps us STOP

to think about the choices behind the math others do

The vertices of  $\Delta DEF$  are D(3, -1), E(2, -3), and F(1, -1). The vertices of  $\Delta D'E'F'$  are D'(-2, 6), E'(-3, 4), and F'(-4, 6). Describe the translation that maps  $\Delta DEF$  onto  $\Delta D'E'F'$ .

### **Complexity (avoid simplicity)**

 Simplifying context gives the idea that the procedure is more important that the contexts it is designed to address or that math is not able to handle complexity

• Systems thinking

![](_page_34_Picture_4.jpeg)

### Acknowledge values

- Doing a problem requires decisions about what is most important
- Any choice of context suggests that the topic is an important one for students.

### For example:

A problem about running a business or responding to climate change.

- If it is about running a business, can a student choose to value profit, sustainability, or ... ?
- If it is about climate change, can a student choose how to balance current needs with future needs?

### Access to data

- Cite sources for data used.
- Point to other possible sources for further investigation.

When students access publicly available data, they develop the skills and confidence for doing this when they face sustainability challenges outside school.

### Interdisciplinarity

- Peace and sustainable development problems are especially good for interdisciplinary connections.
- Making interdisciplinary connections values complexity of contexts, and invites discussion about how mathematics can help with decisions in such complex situations.

### Sensitivity to marginalization

• Directly addressing an equality issue (gender, ethnic, etc.) is necessary but may draw attention to disparities and stereotypes among students.

e.g., We should give problems that ask about income distribution. Students who are very rich or very poor might be embarrassed.

![](_page_38_Figure_4.jpeg)

### Collaboration

- Encourage and expect group work.
- This enables students to hear each other's ideas and so
  - they learn to value other ideas
  - they see that mathematics involves choices

### What information does each form of representation show especially well?

### versus

news article. Describe how your group decided which representation is the best choice.

### Technology

- Get students using their technology to gather information.
- More than finding things on the internet
- Smart phones can collect and map data in a community.
  - GPS
  - seismometers
  - apps that analyze sound
  - ••••

e.g., Rubel, Hall-Wieckert, and Lim, 2016

### Courage

- Sustainable development questions are usually politically sensitive
- These are the most important issues

### If we avoid politically sensitive issues:

- We are saying they are less important.
- We are saying that mathematics cannot be used for them.

### Trust

When the problem is politically sensitive...

 Let students and teachers make judgments based on their mathematical investigation and knowledge of the relevant contexts (Do not make the judgments in the text)

Teachers and students may not be completely ready to handle these difficult issues.

- This is how they learn to handle them.
- No one is completely ready.

A teacher's guide may be helpful.

## Mathematics: proof and justification

- History tells us that quantification is associated with the development of democracies and other forms of community responsibility (Porter, 1995).
- When decision makers are not identified through heredity or connection to deities, they must prove that their decisions are made in the interests of the collective good.
- Mathematics gives citizens tools for this kind of justification.

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David Wagner University of New Brunswick, Canada dwagner@unb.ca Photo/chart sources: http://archive.archaeology.org/1111/artifact/wittenberg\_germany\_tally\_stick.html

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