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# talk2learn highlights

Inspiring leaders;  
improving children's lives

Issue 11b

In case you missed it...

Recent highlights from NCSL in Dialogue, talk2learn's  
online community for national education debate

Also available as a podcast

## Is it easy being green?

**The government has set out a distinct environmental agenda for education but how easy is it for schools in practice to manage their green commitments?**

In a talk2learn debate, part of the interactive forum for NCSL's Ldr magazine, Jonathan Porritt, chairman of the UK Sustainable Development Commission, said education for sustainable development was not something that can simply be delegated down to hard-pressed staff.

"It has to be a shared, embedded set of commitments," he insisted. *"Indeed, it needs to be mainstreamed not just across the curriculum, but across the totality of what is going on in every school and its surrounding community."*

Echoing the point, Stan Terry, a consultant with a special interest in environmental sustainability, said it was important not to see the green agenda as just 'yet another initiative':

"Sustainability shouldn't be a bolt-on process. Start from a serious piece of thinking and then restructure the school with sustainability as a focus. It makes sense on so many fronts. Sustainable approaches to procurement can assist the creation of a market for such goods and schools can contribute to increasing the market for such goods."

Developing an environmental management system should save the school money, he added. "Best of all, by exemplifying sustainability, the message gets delivered into the community."

Margaret Richards, a school business manager in a small rural primary in Essex, agreed but said that, in reality, with staff and time in short supply, yet more culture change was difficult to contemplate:

"Although Jonathan Porritt quite rightly says the responsibility shouldn't be 'dumped' on one member of staff, *it has to start somewhere with someone and when you are already working to capacity it can be difficult to add another stress, no matter how worthwhile.*"



Contributors also had plenty of practical suggestions to offer. Zoe Mitchell, a year 5/6 leader from Manchester, said: "We asked the site manager to only put lights on in the corridors in the morning (every other one) and to leave classroom lights for teachers. When teachers arrive, they open blinds in the first instance, *only turning on lights when really necessary. The school bursar is really on board as less electricity means saving some money.*"

Stephen Keeble, assistant headteacher at Stradbroke Business and Enterprise College in Suffolk, argued that student voice could be used more to lead on initiatives: "Most young people are very aware of the issues so rather than getting them to monitor energy use, *have a clear agenda at school council and empower students to make an impact and be involved, let them design and lead the initiative.*" This gives students ownership of any project or cross-curricular focus and has an impact on their learning and teaching and ultimately their views on citizenship and their role within a sustainable community."

If you are not yet a member of talk2learn and would like to join, more information is available at [www.ncsl.org.uk/onlinecommunities](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/onlinecommunities)