



# Alliance SHE Kindness School Program

## November 29, 2021

### The Challenge and Our Response

As part of the Alliance's response to a world facing daunting challenges from the global pandemic, the murder of George Floyd and widespread inequity, the climate crisis and threats to democracy, the Alliance conducted a several months long planning process. We developed our SHE Kindness Campaign (Sustainability, Health, Equity and Kindness), an effort to co-create a diverse, inclusive alliance of more than one million people and organizations working together for personal and organizational transformation and public policy shifts to generate strategic tipping points achieving fundamental systems change.

### SHE Kindness School Program

We created the SHE Kindness School Program (SP) as one key component of the SHE Kindness Campaign because of the significant role schools play on so many levels, especially in shaping students' understandings, behaviors and actions at school, home and in the community. Furthermore, the attitudes and concerns of students can affect their parents, the sustainability of their home and, consequently, public policy priorities. In addition, as institutions, school operations have significant impacts on the environment, staff and the broader community.

The SP is designed to build on our nearly 40 years of experience successfully providing thousands of sustainability education presentations and developing and implementing action plans with numerous schools, colleges, businesses, cities, government agencies and congregations. It will inform, inspire and engage students, teachers, staff, administrators and parents in taking action to bring about sustainability, health, equity and kindness at school, home and in the community.

### Goals

The goals of the School Program are to:

1. **Awaken awareness, excitement and engagement** among students, teachers, staff and administrators about sustainability, health, equity and kindness;
2. **Support a shift in participant behavior and actions** at school and home, as well as the community;
3. **Create strong, student-led Students for Sustainability (Sfs)** groups or clubs at each school;
4. **Train college interns** (and possibly retired school teachers and other volunteers) in presenting and implementing the program so it can be rapidly expanded;
5. **Create School Sustainability Teams (SSTs)** with teachers, staff, administrators, students and parents at each school to address operations, programs and policies and develop a vision, goals, action plan and metrics at each school;
6. **Develop a comprehensive SHE Kindness curriculum;**
7. **Build a sense of community** around SHE Kindness;
8. **Mobilize students to support shifts in school district and city policies**, such as developing sustainability and climate goals and action plans;

9. **Bring together Students for Sustainability groups through social media and an Annual Conference** to collaborate, share ideas and best practices to increase their impact and be acknowledged through Annual Awards;
10. **Build collaboration among School Sustainability Teams (SSTs)** through online and regional networking, as well as an Annual Conference with Annual Awards;
11. **Document the SHE Kindness impact** schools are having based on their metrics; and
12. **Create a scalable model** for broad implementation based on strong evaluation.

A particular focus will be the impact that students' individual actions can have to effect change, including in their own attitudes and behavior, the behaviors of their friends and family, their schools, and in the community. For the students to be effective, we also need to support them in addressing climate anxiety. It can be a very heavy feeling for students as they face the seemingly overwhelming impacts of climate change. We will help the students understand that there is hope and that they can make a significant difference, beginning with their own lifestyle choices and actions at home, school and the community.

Furthermore, by having their own Students for Sustainability (SfS) group, we seek to empower them to positively affect their school operations, as well as school district and city policies. The effectiveness of student-led efforts in doing this has been documented in the City of St. Louis Park, MN and cities across the country. We'll also increase the impact by connecting the SfS groups through social media and bring them together to collaborate and further empower their actions.

Another key element is the training and engagement of paid college student interns (and possibly retired schoolteachers and other volunteers) so that they can deliver the presentations and be articulate sustainability leaders. This is a key element in creating a model, scalable program that can be inexpensively offered around the country to have large-scale impact.

We have developed a three-year plan that is presented below.

## **Year One of the SHE Kindness School Program**

We will develop both 40-60 minute prototype virtual and in-person presentations for middle and high school audiences in Minnesota and the U.S. addressing sustainability, health, equity and kindness. We will present to 20 diverse public and independent schools, 10 of which will be in underserved communities. In some cases we may present to each class within a grade individually, in others we may present in a combined-class assembly, depending on the needs and capacity of the school. The presentation will physically and mentally engage students and share inspiring opportunities for saving money, time, energy and other resources, while assuring the health of people and ecosystems, equity and kindness.

At the end of each presentation, a paper or online resource sheet, action sheet and commitment form will be provided to each participant and they'll be asked to make a commitment to do at least one thing to address each of the four areas: sustainability, health, equity and kindness. The action sheet will provide space for the participant to note their daily progress.

The teacher will ask the students to complete this assignment for class credit and the Alliance will announce that there will be prizes (such as an e-SHE Kindness certificate, the e-book *You Can Save the World*, and restaurant and store discounts or samples) offered to everyone who completes their commitments. Participants will also be asked to complete a short evaluation so that there is immediate feedback.

Based on our previous experience, we have found that participants feel hopeful and energized to take a wide range of household and lifestyle actions. We would help students think about and identify ways in their own lives where they can practice sustainability. Some of these include simple things like smiling, helping a classmate, doing random acts of kindness, volunteering, not buying something, reusing, turning off lights and faucets, encouraging their peers and families to recycle, walking or biking to school, starting or joining the

Students for Sustainability group at their school, and helping their families at home take the actions towards sustainability that work best for them.

Over the course of the next month, the teacher will be asked to check in with the students to determine how they're doing with their four commitments and if there are any challenge areas. The Alliance staff and interns will also do quick check-ins with the teacher. At the end of the month, the participants will turn in their action forms to the teacher, along with an evaluation sharing any insights, challenges and suggestions. We will then provide additional action sheets and resources for students who wish to stay engaged after the 1-month period.

These responses will be evaluated and compiled by the Alliance to determine the total impact of the actions and any shifts that are needed in the program. We are also hoping to create a fundamental needs fulfillment and happiness index and develop methods for measuring the number of random acts of kindness, savings of money, energy, CO2, water, and waste and consumption, etc. This will be modeled after similar happiness indexes used around the world.

The teacher and/or the Alliance can then do a short presentation of the results with the students and announce the prize winners. If the school has the capacity and interest, we'd present the results in a school assembly. We'd also welcome students' participation in presenting on their own experience with the program. Afterwards we will seek feedback from the teachers and administrators assessing the program to make any needed modifications for the future.

In addition to this being promoted in the school's and district's newsletters, participating schools will be highlighted in blogs and articles in the Alliance's e-Newsletter, website and social media platforms, with quotes from the participants, teachers and administrators. This will give positive publicity to the schools and generate interest among new schools.

A thorough evaluation of Year One will be conducted to assess its impact and any changes that are needed.

In addition to donor and foundation support, funding for this effort will come from our GoFundMe SHE Kindness Campaign, Sustainability Partners Program, GiveMN, Giving Tuesday and contributing memberships.

## **Year Two of the SHE Kindness School Program**

- 1. Present to 10 new schools on SHE Kindness**, with 5 of the schools in under-served communities.
- 2. Support organizational adoption and implementation of SHE Kindness at the Year One 20 schools** - We'll work with the administration, teachers, staff, students and PTOs of our previous school partners to implement School Sustainability Teams (SSTs) that will address school operations, grounds (including gardens), policies and programs on SHE Kindness. We will work with each SST to develop a vision, goals, action plan and metrics for tracking progress. We will offer a presentation for the PTO and parents so they can feel more aware and engaged. In addition, we'll network with state and national sustainability school groups on integrating their efforts.
- 3. Develop Students for Sustainability (SfS) groups or clubs** at each school for students to participate at the Middle School, High School and even College levels. We'll help students at each school form a student-led SfS Club and connect them to the growing SfS network. We'll create a SfS hub on our website with resources for the students and conduct meetings of the various groups.
- 4. Begin development of SHE Kindness curriculum modules** that schools can use in collaboration with existing state and national sustainability school groups and teachers.

5. **Conduct a complete assessment of Year Two**, including both evaluations and metrics, and make needed modifications.

## **Year Three of the SHE Kindness School Program**

1. **Present to 20 new schools on SHE Kindness**, with 10 of the schools in under-served communities.
2. **Organizational adoption and implementation of SHE Kindness at the Year Two 10 schools** - We'll work with the administration, teachers, staff and PTOs to implement Sustainability Teams to address their operations, grounds (including gardens), policies and programs on SHE Kindness. We'll help them develop a vision, goals, action plan and metrics for reporting. In addition, we'll continue to network with national sustainability school groups. We'll also offer a SHE Kindness presentation for the PTO and parents to increase engagement.
3. **Continue implementation of SHE Kindness at the Year One 20 schools** – We'll provide continuing support to the Sustainability Teams at each school. Together we'll review progress with their SHE Kindness goals and action plan and collect their impact metrics. We'll also send out surveys to the participants to evaluate their progress implementing SHE Kindness. We'll then tally the overall metrics of impact and provide a report which would assess areas that most need assistance.
4. **Expand Students for Sustainability** with campus chapters for students to participate in at the Middle School, High School and College levels. We'll continue to connect them through social media and the SfS hub on the Alliance website and convene a virtual National Conference and Awards Ceremony.
5. **Build collaboration among School Sustainability Teams (SSTs)** through online, regional, and peer-to-peer networking, as well as a virtual Annual Conference with Annual Awards.
6. **Provide SHE Kindness curriculum modules** that schools can use.
7. **Encourage Students for Sustainability groups to give a presentation to their school board and city council** on the need for sustainability and climate action. In St. Louis Park, the result of such a presentation by students was that the city began Minnesota's strongest climate action plan. Students in other cities have successfully done the same thing.

## **Leadership**

The overall project manager will be **Terry Gips**, Alliance Co-Founder and President. Terry has worked on sustainability in the public, private and nonprofit sectors for more than 40 years as a sustainability consultant, agricultural economist, founder of a health and sustainability start-up, Natural Step Framework Instructor, speaker and author of *Breaking the Pesticide Habit* and *The Humane Consumer and Producer Guide*. He has done thousands of sustainability presentations and trainings, along with the development and implementation of sustainability vision, goals and action plans for numerous institutions.

Previously, he worked as White House assistant, aide to two U.S. Representatives, Aveda Director of Ecological Affairs and Sustainability, Cargill grain merchant and assistant to the chief economist and grain merchant, Wall Street brokerage assistant, Adjunct faculty with the Minneapolis College of Art & Design's Sustainable Design Program, consultant with the University of Minnesota Center for Spirituality and Healing (where he created the their online sustainability training module), and co-founder of the Sacramento Community Garden Program. He graduated from Claremont McKenna College and completed his M.S. in Agricultural and Applied Economics at the University of California, Davis and a Masters in Public and Private Management from the Yale School of Organization and Management.

He will be assisted by **Lydia Sulik**, the Alliance Communications and Administrative Coordinator. Lydia has extensive experience working with the Macalester College Office of Sustainability, MN Pollution Control Agency and the Minnesota Eco-Experience at the State Fair.

Support will also be provided by Alliance intern Brock Munsterteiger, who serves as an Alliance e-Newsletter editor.

Finally, the Alliance has been able to attract diverse college and graduate school interns from top schools in Minnesota and across the country, such as the University of Minnesota, Macalester College, University of St. Thomas, Bowdoin College, Smith College, Middlebury College, Northwestern University, University of Texas and University of Alabama. They play a key leadership role in every program at the Alliance and will provide the dynamic energy and perspective, ability to relate to students, presentation skills and immense work output for SHE Kindness to be a success.