

Statement on Education for a Sustainable Future
April 2, 2012

Sustainability has been defined variously as the perpetual maintenance of diverse and productive environments upon which all life depends;¹ the responsible use of resources over an indefinite period of time;² or “meet[ing] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”³ A sustainable future depends on a workforce of professionals knowledgeable about creating practices, processes, and infrastructure to optimize resource management, and on a community informed about the ethics and influence of human activity on the integrated environmental, economic and social aspects of sustainability. For these reasons our **disciplinary** societies believe that STEM education, both formal and informal, is key to developing the knowledge, the technology, the skills, the motivation, and the policies needed for a sustainable future. STEM educators have a unique responsibility to contribute to a more sustainable future by including information about our shared sustainability challenges and how STEM-knowledgeable people can contribute to solutions.

The American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT) together with 10 other disciplinary societies in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), recognizes that human activities and use of natural, human and economic resources are **adversely** affecting individuals and societies and will continue to have an effect in the future. Both professionals and members of the general public have the ability **and ethical obligation** to develop and implement innovative strategies and technologies that will mitigate our negative impact. Recognizing the **quintessential** importance of education, AAPT supports the inclusion of educational themes in our STEM classrooms that will lead to a greater understanding of natural systems, sustainable resource utilization and development, and improved human health and well-being.

¹ Renewable Natural Resources Foundation

² National Association of Biology Teachers

³ World Commission on Environment and Development