

# Greening Your School: First Steps

## **Inventory: What is going on in your school right now?**

It is important to know where your school stands in terms of energy conservation, waste management, water use, and building practices. Having a benchmark allows you to know where your school is starting from. If there is no documentation of current energy usage, contact an energy auditor and have them assess your school. Find out the history of your school as well: Did the school have a recycling system? Did your school change its energy source in recent years? Has there been an energy committee put in place?—these questions, once answered, will help you start the process. It will also be helpful for students to take home their own “home audit” to involve families at home and get students involved in the process.



## **Research: What are the possibilities?**

After an assessment has been completed, the range of project ideas can begin to be brainstormed. Understanding and analyzing the pros and cons of other school projects in the area, in the state, or in another part of the country, can allow you to gauge what possibilities exist for your school.

## **Focus Group: Who will lead?**

Before tackling a project on your own, find a small group of individuals that are willing to lead the project along. Having a core focus group to assess the progress of the project and act on the challenges that may come up, will make everything run a bit smoother. It may also be helpful to create a “Green School Committee” to anchor the project. Also, include students in the focus group, have them apply if need be so that they can get involved as well. Students will take the lead if you show them the way.

## **Larger Meeting: Who will help?**

After the small group has met and deliberated on possible project ideas, invite a large group of people to meet and discuss the larger vision of the project. You will need support from as many people as you can to complete the greening process; having an organized session for people to brainstorm new ideas and input additional information will give your focus group a more global perspective.



## **Small First: What should your school do first?**

Before beginning, have experts come in to discuss green practices with the students: have them understand why the project is important. Initially, start a small scale project. This can include something like a signage project that allows students to create posters that can be posted around the school calling for behavior changes in terms of energy usage and waste management. It is important to first have a small success in order to develop a larger project.

## **Big Project: Have you had a success?**

If you have completed a small task successfully, larger projects can be developed and implemented. Installing wind turbine(s), solar paneling, a rooftop garden, among others, have higher budgets and take a lot more administrative backing. By demonstrating your team’s determination and results from the previous smaller initiative, school administrators and community leaders will be more willing to help technically and financially.

## Project Ideas: What are some small project ideas to consider?

- Signage Project
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance Paper Program
- CFL Drive or CFL Trade
  - Lights Off Campaign
  - Green Festival
  - Green Day
- Recycling Drive
- Packing a “Green” Lunch
- Lunchroom Composting Initiative

## Resources: Need helpful links?

- Ideas for reducing waste at school, work and home can be found at [www.reduce.org](http://www.reduce.org)
- Find out how to reduce waste in this Campus Dining Guide: [www.informinc.org/getatlunch.php](http://www.informinc.org/getatlunch.php)
- The Minnesota Retired Engineers Technical Assistance Program (Minnesota RETAP) provides free services in the areas of pollution prevention, waste reduction, energy use reduction assistance and other services. Visit their website: <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/oea/p2/retap.cfm>
- The Environmental Defense Fund has a paper calculator to assess paper use and it’s impacts on the planet. <http://www.edf.org/papercalculator/>
- A “Do It Green” Website with helpful websites: <http://www.thegreenguide.org/taxonomy/term/129>
- Learn how to start an Environmental Club at your school and read their Green School Toolkit! <http://www.bringrecycling.org/images/E-Club.pdf>
- Learn about environmentally friendly ways to raise money for your school! Go to [www.terracycle.net](http://www.terracycle.net)



For more information about school energy projects, case studies and resources available, go to [www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org](http://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org) and click on community projects then project planning then go to schools. Diana McKeown 612-278-7125 [dmckeown@greeninstitute.org](mailto:dmckeown@greeninstitute.org)