

# Florida *Green School Designation* Program

## Best Management Practice

### Communication and Education



Two of the most important parts of any environmental plan are the communication and education components. The communication component relays to students and their families, faculty and staff, vendors, suppliers, and contractors, the facility's commitment to environmental protection. However, as important as the communication of environmental practices and achievements is, the only way to enact sustainable changes is to provide some level of education to these groups.

Any environmental plan devoid of these components is bound for failure. The following Best Management Practices (BMPs) will assist in successfully transferring information about environmental activities and will assist in promoting sustainable practices.



### Communication and Education Best Management Practices

**Clearly communicate environmental initiatives:** The school's environmental initiatives and achievements should be communicated to as large an audience as possible. Students, parents, and employees are the primary targets of any communication, but it is important not to overlook suppliers, vendors, and contractors in your communication programs.

**The following are examples of good possible media to use in communicating initiatives and achievements:**

- Post guidelines for recycling in classrooms, cafeteria, vending areas, teacher lounges and near/on any recycling and trash receptacles.
- Broadcast a short informational video showing the school's environmental initiatives on in-school television and website.
- Share environmental policies and expectations with suppliers and contractors upon entering the school.
- Post waste generation, water usage and energy consumption data in classrooms and employee areas. You can even post in the main lobby.
- Include information about environmental initiatives and/or a green tip in student and employee newsletters and communication.
- Place posters highlighting individual employees' environmental efforts and achievements.

**Establish an environmental task force or Green Team to discuss, plan and execute environmental initiatives:** The Green Team should include teachers, administrators, custodians, students, parents and community volunteers and partners. Successful schools have given student green teams prominence and responsibility, and they've steadily become the team that everyone wants to be part of. To achieve buy-in throughout the school, consider appointing a team leader that is not on the school's overall management team.

The Green Team should meet at least quarterly to review any environmental concerns, plan upcoming events, and discuss ideas to improve environmental performance. Talk to local

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organizations and professions that have technical expertise and can help. Agree to a mission, individual roles and set specific goals for the group.

**The “Green Team” should inspect the school grounds and outdoor areas to understand the current condition of the school:** Students should inspect and document energy, waste, and water usage; from lunch in the cafeteria to leaky faucets around campus. Transportation, outdoor habitats and overall health concerns should be documented. Make this information available to students, faculty and staff, parents, and community members. Post stickers, posters and signs as reminders to turn off lights, shut down equipment and unplug items when not in use. Also, reminders in the restrooms to use less water and conserve paper products.

**An Environmental Action Plan created by the “Green Team” to be shared with the school and community:** Set tangible and attainable goals for the school year with examples of how to promote environmental stewardship. Prepare long-term goals for continual growth towards environmental sustainability. Determine who is responsible for each sustainable practice and information collection. Monitor results to ensure the progress towards the goals is made and that the action plan is modified, as necessary.

**Regularly discuss environmental practices at student and staff events and meetings:** Environmental policies need to be continually updated to reflect current practices and the most current information available. Inspect and document energy, waste, and water usage. Transportation, outdoor habitats, and overall health concerns should be documented. Make the updated information available to students, faculty and staff, parents, and community members. It should be accompanied by a resolution from the School Board, Parent Teacher Association, the “Green Team” or other school bodies.



**Provide a means for students, parents, and employees to evaluate the school’s environmental practices:** Allow students, parents, and employees to evaluate the school’s environmental performance. Possible evaluation tools include online evaluations, suggestion boxes or surveys. Review suggestions and evaluations to learn how the school is perceived and to highlight possible environmental projects.

**Publicly communicate environmental initiatives through web resources:** Consistently update the public on current environmental initiatives and past successes through advertising materials and web resources. Publicize important environmental policies and expectations through the same approaches.

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**Host community and/or school-wide educational programs to highlight your school's environmental initiatives and success stories:** Provide educational programs to students and the community on smart environmental practices. Event ideas include Arbor Day celebrations, Earth Day celebrations, and/or hosting an environmentally themed Green Fair.

**Provide training to all students, faculty and staff, and parents on environmental policies, procedures, and initiatives:** Timely and pertinent training must be considered a vital part of any environmental improvement program. Ensure that EVERY student and employee understand the school's environmental policies and their role in implementing and following these policies. Webinar-based training will be provided on a regular basis by the Florida Green School Designation Program for faculty and staff. Further training can be obtained from suppliers, vendors, local utility providers, water management districts, and various other environmental specialists.

**Serve as a Florida *Green School Designation* Program mentor to another school:** Peer-to-peer training and education are invaluable. New environmental practices and policies are adopted faster if they have an industry champion. By serving as a Florida *Green School Designation* mentor to another school, you can increase the level of positive environmental impact at a local level.

