



Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Florida *Green School Designation* 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 clearly relays to students and their families, faculty and staff, vendors, suppliers and contractors, the school's commitment to environmental protection. However, as important as the communication of environmental practices and achievements is, the only way to enact sustainable change is to provide some level of education to these groups.

Any environmental plan devoid of these components is bound for failure. When people are aware of their impact on the environment, they become energy efficient leaders at school, home and their communities. The following Best Management Practices (BMPs) will assist the facility in successfully transferring information about environmental activities and will assist in promoting sustainable business 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 possible media to use in communicating initiatives and achievements:

- Post guidelines for recycling in classrooms, cafeteria, vending areas, teacher loungers 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.
- Show environmental policies to each supplier and contractor upon their entering the facility.
- Post waste generation, water usage and utility consumption data in classrooms and employee areas.
- Place posters highlighting individual student, teacher, classroom and grade level environmental efforts and achievements.
- Include environmental initiative and/or green tip in student and employee newsletters.

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. Successful schools have given student green teams prominence and responsibility, and they've steadily become the team that everyone wants to be a 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 outreach events and discuss ideas to improve environmental performance.



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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 that progress towards these goals is made and that the action plan is modified, as necessary.

Constantly review all environmental policies, initiatives and actions for consistency and timeliness

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.

Regularly discuss environmental practices at student and staff events and meetings

Communicate environmental initiatives at student and staff meetings and events. At least one environmental topic should be presented at each meeting. Invite outside speakers to address employee and student groups about smart environmental practices they can do at home, school and work. Work to integrate sustainable practices into everyday life. Discuss how to increase those practices at both school and at home. Integrate greening into the curriculum.

Offer tours highlighting the school’s environmental initiatives and achievements to guests and the public

Public perception is often a large measure of the success or failure of any environmental initiative. Offer tours of the facility highlighting successful environmental projects.

Provide a means for students, parents and employees to evaluate the school’s environmental practices



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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 these same approaches.

Host community and/or school-wide educational programs that highlight your school's environmental initiatives and success stories

Provide education 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 is 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.