



Florida *Green School Designation* Program Best Management Practices



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 those who benefit and will help achieve environmental goals.

When people are aware of their impact on the environment, they become energy efficient leaders at school, at home and in their communities. The following Best Management Practices (BMPs) will assist the school in successfully transferring information about environmental activities and will assist in promoting sustainable practices.

Communication and Education BMPs

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 lounges and near or on recycling and trash receptacles.
- Broadcast short informational video showing the school's environmental initiatives on in-school television and website.
- Show environmental policies to each supplier and contractor.
- 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 initiatives or a green tip in student and employee newsletters.

Establish an environmental taskforce or "Green Team" to discuss, plan and execute environmental initiatives.

The "Green Team" should include members from the entire school, including a student representative and a parent representative. It is important to include all levels of stakeholders within the school – students, faculty and staff, parents and school board representatives. To achieve buy-in throughout the facility, consider appointing a team leader that is not on the school's overall management team.



Florida *Green School Designation* Program Best Management Practices



The “Green Team” should meet at least quarterly to review environmental concerns, plan upcoming outreach events and discuss ideas to improve environmental performance.

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 (facial tissue, paper towels, etc.).

Share an Environmental Action Plan created by the “Green Team” 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 the 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.
- Document transportation, outdoor habitats and overall health concerns.
- Make the updated information available to students, faculty, staff, parents and community members.
- In the Environmental Policy, include 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 and at school.

Work to integrate sustainable practices into everyday life. Discuss how to increase those practices both at school and at home. Integrate greening into the curriculum.



Florida *Green School Designation* Program Best Management Practices



Offer tours highlighting the school's environmental initiatives and achievements to parents and the public.

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

Provide a means for students, parents and employees to evaluate the facility's environmental practices.

Allow students, parents and employees to evaluate the school's environmental performance. Possible evaluation tools include on-line 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 school newsletters and website and local newspapers. Publicize important environmental policies and expectations through these same outlets.

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

Provide educational programs to students and the community on smart environmental practices. Use the school as a tool to show successfully implemented environmental practices. Event ideas include Arbor Day celebrations, Earth Day celebrations and environmentally-themed Green Fairs.

Provide training to all students, faculty and staff so that they understand the school's environmental policies, procedures and initiatives.

Timely and pertinent training is a vital part of any environmental improvement program. Ensure that every student and employee understands 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.