



Florida *Green School Designation* Program Best Management Practices



Water Conservation

Schools require tremendous amount of water every day for heating and cooling systems, restrooms, drinking water faucets, locker rooms, cafeteria, laboratories, and outdoor playing fields and lawns. Conserving water lessens the impact a school has on the environment.

Increasing water efficiency provides opportunities for cost savings. Aside from the obvious decrease in water bills, savings are also realized through decreases in electricity, sewage and chemical costs. Water conservation can be achieved through behavioral, operational or equipment Best Management Practices (BMPs). Some of these changes cost very little to implement and can have large impacts on water usage.

Behavioral and Operational Water Conservation BMPs

Conduct a water-use assessment.

Contact the school's water utility provider to arrange for an assessment. Most assessments are offered at no charge and can help identify ways to conserve water. The assessor may be able to offer information on monetary rebates or incentive programs available to assist in equipment or operational changes that increase water efficiency.

Regularly track both water and sewage usage.

Track and monitor all types of water usage, including sewage. An operational water-use tracking program will allow the school to monitor for unusual variations that might indicate a broken pipe or leaky line. When variations are detected, resolve the issue as soon as possible. Not only will water be conserved but the impact to the "bottom line" will be reduced.

Develop, commit to and publicize the school's plan to conserve water.

The best plans are often those that have been soundly developed, have management and parent and student buy-in, and are widely publicized to employees, students and the public. The water conservation plan should include areas of concern, specific action-based goals and a detailed plan to achieve success.

Remind students, faculty and staff to use water only when needed.

Large amounts of water are wasted during simple activities such as showering and hand washing.

Harvest rain.

Rain is free. Water flowerbeds, shrubs or school gardens with rainwater collected in rain barrels.

Use reclaimed water for irrigation.

Reclaimed water has been properly treated, but not to potable standards. Use reclaimed water to irrigate lawns, shrubs and flower beds. Ask your utility if reclaimed water is available in your area.



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Install soil moisture meters or rain detectors on landscape irrigation systems.

Installing soil moisture meters or rain detectors will allow school grounds to be irrigated only when needed. Soil meters sense the amount of moisture in the soil and will indicate when the moisture level reaches a certain threshold. Rain detectors will automatically shut off the irrigation system if it begins to rain during the irrigation cycle. Both systems will reduce unnecessary watering.

Irrigate during the appropriate times.

Avoid during the heat of the day. The majority of the water used during this time will evaporate before it can reach the soil zone. Set timers on the irrigation system to run either in the early morning or evening. Contact your local extension service agent at <http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/> to learn about the best time to water in your location.

Use Florida friendly landscaping.

Choose plants and grasses native to Florida or to areas that have a similar climate. To further reduce watering needs, choose plants that are also drought tolerant.

Equipment Water Conservation BMPs

Use preventative maintenance for water consuming equipment such as ice machines, water heaters, dishwashers, washing machines, boilers and chillers. Preventative maintenance can increase machine efficiencies, lower maintenance and utility costs by correcting problems before they become large issues. Continually check for leaks and repair as soon as possible. All equipment should be placed on a preventative maintenance schedule and any necessary records kept accordingly.

Install low-flow fixtures in restrooms and shower areas.

The following is a listing of the appropriate use rates for low-flow fixtures:

- Low-flow faucets should use no more than 1.5 gallons per minute. Add aerators to all faucets.
- Low-flow showerheads should consume no more than 2.0 gallons per minute.
- Low-flow toilets should not use more than 1.6 gallons per flush.