



Whether you are a parent, teacher, school staff member, student, or community volunteer, you want your school to provide a healthy, welcoming place to learn. The important effort of running greener schools needs action from everyone in the school community, and sometimes the scale of the task can make it hard to know where to start. Follow these 12 simple priority actions from the Center for Green Schools to help make your school healthy, efficient, comfortable and environmentally responsible.

Included Priority Action Checklists:

- #1: Find your superstars
- #2: Ready, set - wait, which bin do I put this in?
- #3: What's a watt?
- #4: Go behind the scenes
- #5: Put the kids in charge
- #6: Hey, what's this thing do?
- #7: You are what you eat...and recycle, throw away and compost...
- #8: Let the Sun Shine In
- #9: You know it's dust, but what IS it?
- #10: No really, what is that smell?
- #11: Lights out!
- #12: Carpooling - jump in, the water's fine!

Checklist includes:

- First steps to getting started
- Resources to support your actions
- Related lessons in Learning Lab to dive deeper into topics

LEARNING LAB

Learning Lab USGBC's online education platform for K-12 teachers and school leaders to find lessons, activities and resources that encourage student leadership, sustainability literacy and real-world action. It provides educators access to hands-on sustainability curriculum and resources to

bring classroom projects to life.

Subscribe to Learning Lab to enjoy a full year of access to comprehensive project- and STEM-based curriculum that encourages student leadership, sustainability literacy, and real-world action.

The checklists call out related lessons in Learning Lab. You can also search by grade, subject or theme in the advanced filters section of the Browse All page.

<https://learninglab.usgbc.org/learning-lab-subscription>



#1: Find your superstars

It takes a team to green a school, so take the first step to find out who's interested. 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. Look to advocates such as interested teachers, administrators, custodians, students, parents and community volunteers to be part of your green team. Talk to local organizations and professionals that have technical expertise and can help. Agree on a mission, individual roles and set realistic goals for the group. Shooting for quick and simple wins first will help motivate everyone to reach for more in the future.

First steps:

- ✓ Read up on your school's existing guiding principles, vision and master plan to look for opportunities to align with existing sustainability priorities.
- ✓ Conduct interviews with at least five key stakeholders at the school or within district staff. Interviews should be used to both create a relationship with key stakeholders (school custodial staff, school administrators, district facilities department, teachers) and also to find out critical information helpful to your projects. Make a list of questions before you get started. Write up your notes afterwards, and follow up.
- ✓ Locate your nearest U.S. Green Building Council community. We have local communities in every state, and many of them have volunteers or committees that support green schools and can help you find the technical resources and volunteers you might need to get started. (<https://www.usgbc.org/organizations/region>)
- ✓ Educate yourself about the effect that school-based staff and classroom teachers can have on the learning environment. The Center for Green Schools offers the Green Classroom Professional Certificate program, an online and self-paced course and exam. <https://www.usgbc.org/classroom/gcp>

Resources for creating a green team:

- Green Schools Initiative: Tips for Starting a Green Team: <http://www.greenschools.net/article.php-id=361.html>
- We Are Teachers "7 Simple Steps to Start a Green Club at Your School": <https://www.weareteachers.com/start-a-green-club/>
- EPA Climate and Energy Program Tip Sheet: Green Teams: <https://www.epa.gov/statelocalenergy/csc-tip-sheets-green-teams>

Related programs and lessons in Learning Lab (<https://learninglab.usgbc.org>)

Use the Advanced filters on the Browse All page to search for lessons by grade, topics, or theme to support your school's green team initiatives.



#2: Ready, set – wait, which bin do I put this in?

It's hard to know what to fix if you don't know where you stand. To start, if you want to kick off a recycling or composting program at your school, or increase the success of an existing program, it's helpful to know how much of each kind of waste your school produces so that you target the right items. Is the biggest culprit food waste, cardboard, or plastics? Let's find out!

Recycling programs that involve students directly teach responsible environmental habits they can apply at home. Diverting solid waste from landfills reduces impacts on municipal services. Composting food waste can teach students valuable lessons about consumption, while giving resources back to the earth.

First steps:

- ✓ Develop a Waste Audit Plan with the green team, and consider bringing in outside expertise for support. Using the information gathered in your interviews, determine what level of audit you will be able to conduct.
- ✓ Conduct a baseline waste audit, and educate the school community by sharing your results.
- ✓ Create a plan for implementing and/or improving waste reduction efforts. Communicate the plan to the entire school community, even more than you think is necessary. Success will be easier if the plan becomes part of a gradual change in school culture.
- ✓ Implement the plan, and MEASURE your success. Communicate, communicate, communicate. The community will be motivated by success, so they need to know if their actions are working.
- ✓ Consider joining EPA's Waste Wise program for FREE. The Waste Wise online tool helps you structure a Waste Audit and keeps all of your baseline and audit data to measure changes in recycling patterns over time.

Resources for improving your school's waste stream:

- EPA Lesson Plans, Teacher Guides, and Online Resources for Educators (see "waste" tab): <https://www.epa.gov/students/lesson-plans-teacher-guides-and-online-resources-educators>
- EPA Planet Protector Club activities (K-5): <https://www.epa.gov/students/planet-protectors-activities-kids>
- Harvard University's How to host a waste audit resource: <https://green.harvard.edu/tools-resources/how/how-host-waste-audit>
- EPA's Waste Wise program <https://www.epa.gov/smm/wastewise>
- Composting in Schools: <http://compost.css.cornell.edu/schools.html>
- Recycle Nation - <https://recyclenation.com/>

Related programs and lessons in Learning Lab (<https://learninglab.usgbc.org>)

- Waste Matters (K): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/854>
- Waste Not, Want No (1-2): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/1325>
- Trash or Treasure (3-4): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/1237>
- Waste and Energy (5-6): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/951>
- Imagine Zero Waste (7-8): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/1037>
- Waste Eco-Audit (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/2171>

In addition, you can search all lessons in the Waste theme using the advanced filters on the Browse All page.



#3: What's a watt?

Just as in waste reduction efforts, if you want to help your school save energy, you need to know how much energy it uses today and where the biggest energy inefficiencies are. There are a lot of reasons to find out where your starting point is—the celebration of your school's success will be so much sweeter if you can measure how far you've come. And showing measurable success is the best way to get others on board to help out.

First steps:

- ✓ If you can, get ahold of your school's or district's energy history. Depending on your location, this work can be very simple or much more difficult than it seems. If your school or district is not yet using tracking software, consider starting with a free online energy tracking program such as Energy Star Portfolio Manager.
- ✓ Involve students in the planning process for conducting an energy audit. Conduct a baseline energy audit, and educate your community by sharing your results. Work with all appropriate departments and with your local utility for support in conducting an energy walkthrough or a more comprehensive audit of your school.
- ✓ As part of the energy audit, conduct interviews with school custodial and energy staff to understand energy usage at your school, what energy efficiency measures are in place, and where there might be opportunities for improvement.
- ✓ Create a plan for reducing energy usage. Communicating the plan will be crucial for its success. Remember that you are working toward a shift in people's actions within the school. It will take time and constant reinforcement.
- ✓ Implement the plan, and track your success. Put the data somewhere visible in the school.

Resources for reducing energy usage:

- Energy Audit Steps: http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/wue/energy2_procedures.html
- Energy Calculator: http://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=about_energy_conversion_calculator-basics
- ENERGY STAR Score for K-12 Schools: <https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/tools-and-resources/energy-star-score-k-12-schools>
- DataTrends: Energy Use in K-12 Schools: <https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/tools-and-resources/datatrends-energy-use-k-12-schools>
- Energy Kids: <https://www.eia.gov/kids/>
- EPA Lesson Plans, Teacher Guides, and Online Resources for Educators (see "energy" tab): <https://www.epa.gov/students/lesson-plans-teacher-guides-and-online-resources-educators>

Related programs and lessons in Learning Lab (<https://learninglab.usgbc.org>):

- ✓ What is Energy (K): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/2892>
- ✓ Energy in Action (1-2): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/2964>
- ✓ Fueling Our Future (3-5): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/14172>
- ✓ Energy House Design Challenge (4-8): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/11814>
- ✓ The Impact of Energy (9-10): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/4048>
- ✓ Energy Eco-Audit (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/3738>

In addition, you can search all lessons in the Energy theme using the advanced filters on the Browse All page.



#4: Go behind the scenes

Speaking of figuring out where your school stands—why not ask the real experts? When is the last time you talked to your school’s custodians or school facility staff? The men and women who take care of school buildings are the best source for knowledge about how to make schools more efficient, healthier, and more environmentally responsible. They have often been trained on green cleaning methods or energy efficiency initiatives. Where can the lights be turned off more often? Why is there a strange smell in that corner room? They know their buildings inside and out, and asking them for ideas is a great way to appreciate their work and bring them onto the team.

First steps:

- ✓ Schedule a time to talk with your custodial and maintenance team, both supervisors and staff. Plan carefully ahead of time: How do you want to structure the conversation? What questions do you want to ask the team? How will you work with the team to come to a few actionable steps or suggestions for the school or district?
- ✓ Questions to consider when interviewing your maintenance staff:
 - What green policies are in place and which are working?
 - What green cleaning methods are being used by staff?
 - What do staff members know about a sustainable purchasing policy?
 - What do staff members know about an integrated pest management plan?
 - Do we currently have a way to track how much (in weight or volume) the school recycles, composts vs. sends to the landfill?
 - Do you know how much the school spent on utilities (electric, gas, oil and water) last year? How can we make sure everyone in the school knows what our utility usage is?
 - Where do you see opportunities for improvement?
 - What do you think we could each be doing to reduce energy, water, and resources used at school?
 - What are some of the challenges or barriers you face in putting in place green practices?
- ✓ Act on at least two suggestions put forward, and follow up with them to let them know what has been done.

Resources for investigating the day-to-day operations of the school or district:

- Center for Green Schools (select Web Trainings): <http://centerforgreenschools.org/resources>
- USGBC Greening Existing Schools Implementation Workbook: <https://www.centerforgreenschools.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/Docs6427.pdf>
- EPA Buildings & Grounds checklist: <https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/building-and-grounds-maintenance-checklist-indoor-air-quality-tools-schools>
- Sustainable Marketplace: Greener Products and Services: <https://www.epa.gov/greenerproducts>
- Healthy Schools Campaign’s Green Clean Schools program: <https://greencleanschools.org/>

Related programs and lessons in Learning Lab (<https://learninglab.usgbc.org/>):

- Energy Eco-Audit (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/3738>
- Public Spaces Eco-Audit (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/5521>
- Air Eco-Audit (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/3738>
- Food Eco-Audit (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/4380>



#5: Put the kids in charge

If you are a parent or you work with kids, you know that no group is better able or more willing to speak up about why being smart about the environment is important than kids—they get it! Students across the country are starting green clubs in their schools, with the help and support of teachers and parents. These students plant gardens on school property, calculate carbon footprints, advocate for environmentally preferable purchasing, assess school energy use, enforce the school’s recycling program with their peers, encourage teachers to bring sustainability curriculum into the classroom, and much more. Help start a club at your school, and let the kids run with it!

First steps:

- ✓ Educate students about the components of environmental sustainability, and create a plan with them for at least three realistic goals during the year. Educating students is important to fostering awareness and giving them the skills to speak confidently and take action. Whether it’s in the classroom or after school, start with the basics and build the expertise to tackle big projects!
- ✓ With the students, implement a project that directly affects energy, water, and/or resource use at the school or that directly affects the health and wellness of school occupants. Conduct and register a [Green Apple Day of Service Project](#) to provide a rallying day to connect your effort with others around the world.

Resources for getting kids involved:

- Kids Gardening: <http://www.kidsgardening.org/>
- Meet the Greens carbon calculator: <http://www.meetthegreens.org/features/carbon-calculator.html>
- Classroom & home energy audit for students: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/teachers/activities/3519_energy.html

Related programs and lessons in Learning Lab (<https://learninglab.usgbc.org>):

- Introduction to Sustainability for Elementary Students (K-6): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/11468/11387>
- Introduction to Sustainability for Middle School Students (5-8): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/11468/11415>
- Introduction to Sustainability for High School Students (9-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/11468/11453>



#6: Hey, what's this thing do?

Your school might already be a green school. Heck, your school might be the greenest school in the world. But how would you know? There is a simple way to find out (and share) this information: SIGNS! For instance, simple stickers on light switches work wonders. The more you find out about your school and how it works, the more you will gain to share with all of the students, faculty and staff in the building. If you want to green your school, everyone needs to feel like they're part of the team—and people don't get behind something they don't understand.

First steps:

- ✓ Hold a competition among students to create signage about components of the school and/or to communicate environmental lessons to students, faculty and staff.
- ✓ Talk with students and staff to find out what they know and don't know about how the school runs every day. With your student group or green team, take a tour of your school to see where information from signage could make a difference. Take photos to document what is already in place, and keep track of where and how many of each signage type is in place.
- ✓ Talk to maintenance staff about policies for hanging signs in the school and how they can help with your project. Consider durability of signs and how they will remain in place.
- ✓ Design and print signs to post important information around the school.

Resources for communicating through signage:

- Video of Manassas Park Elementary School has some great examples of signage: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2WVqJ6Doo4>
- School Planning and Management "Everywhere a Sign": <https://webspm.com/Articles/2015/11/01/Sustainability-Signage.aspx>
- Oregon Green Schools signs, stickers, and clip art: <http://oregongreenschools.org/school-tools/signs-stickers-and-clip-art/>

Related programs and lessons in Learning Lab (<https://learninglab.usgbc.org>):

- Building Bins (3-4): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/1237/1271>
- Zero Waste campaign (7-8): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/1037/994>
- Picturing Pollution (9-10): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6447/9299>
- Air Data is Beautiful (11-2): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6227/6209>
- Energy Data is Beautiful (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/3738/3678>
- Waste Data is Beautiful (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/2171/1191>
- Public Spaces Data is Beautiful (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/5521/5497>
- Transportation Data is Beautiful (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6252/6234>
- Water Data is Beautiful (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/855/853>
- Food Data is Beautiful (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/4380/4360>



#7: You are what you eat...and recycle, throw away and compost...

The attention that school lunch food has been getting lately—through programs like Alice Waters’ Edible Schoolyard and Jamie Oliver’s Food Revolution—is beginning to change the way Americans look at the food we give our kids. You can get the movement started at your school in a number of ways. You can plant a school vegetable garden to help students understand where food comes from. You can work with kids to prepare fresh meals or snacks that they can enjoy on the spot. And don’t forget about the opposite end of the lunch period—what about hosting a waste-free lunch day?

First steps:

- ✓ Investigate how food is purchased and brought to your school. Learn what initiatives for healthy food in schools are already in place.
- ✓ Plant a food garden to teach students about where food comes from. School gardens can be wonderful teaching tools and inspiration for students, but they must be maintained. If you’re bringing one to your school, ensure that you have spoken to your school district staff and that there is a maintenance plan in place with the necessary resources to make it sustainable in the long-term.
- ✓ Food is a great way to connect with a wide audience and talk about sustainability issues spanning topics such as social justice, economics, agriculture, operations, health, and more. Consider hosting a taste test with samples of tap water vs. bottled water; local vegetables vs. canned veggies; organic vs. non organic, and take this opportunity to educate your taste testers.
- ✓ Connect with community partners who can bring expertise and resources to help make school lunches healthier and bring fresh food to students.
- ✓ Institute a waste-free lunch day, and make it a recurring event.

Resources for improving the lunch period:

- School Garden resources:
 - Alice Waters’ Edible Schoolyard: <http://edibleschoolyard.org/>
 - The Kitchen Community school gardens: <http://www.thekitchencommunity.org/>
 - School garden funding sources: <https://kidsgardening.org/grants-and-programs/>
 - Gardens for Learning: https://learnaboutag.org/resources/gardens/gardens_learning.pdf
- Healthy Lunch resources:
 - Jamie Oliver’s Food Revolution: <http://www.jamieoliver.com/foundation/jamies-foodrevolution/>
 - Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine – Healthy School Food: <https://kidsgardening.org/grants-and-programs/>
- Waste Free Lunch resources:
 - General resources and signage: <http://www.wastefreelunches.org/>
 - EPA Food Tips for K-12 Schools: Get Kids to Eat More and Waste Less: <https://www.epa.gov/schools/food-tips-k-12-schools-get-kids-eat-more-and-waste-less>
 - Waste free lunch audit and lesson plan: <http://www.recycleok.org/okra/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/wastefree-lunch-lessonplan.pdf>
 - EPA - Waste free lunch resources: <https://www.epa.gov/students/pack-waste-free-lunch>



Related programs and lessons in Learning Lab (<https://learninglab.usgbc.org>):

- 9-Minute Nutrition Ninja (K-2): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/12342>
- 9-Minute Nutrition Ninja (3-5): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/12312>
- How Dirt Works (5-8): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/7237>
- Sustainable Eating (9-10): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/4483>
- Resiliency Among the Salmon People (9-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/7239>
- Food Eco-Audit (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/4380>

In addition, you can search all lessons in the Food theme using the advanced filters on the Browse All page.



#8: Let the Sun Shine In

If you've ever had to spend a few hours in a windowless office or conference room, no one needs to tell you much about the relationship between daylight and productivity (and happiness!). But in case there is any doubt, several studies have connected the two in adults and children. So open the blinds and turn off the lights! Take that student artwork off the windows and hang it somewhere else. No windows or small windows in your kids' classroom? Move class outdoors every once in a while or to a room with more access to the sunshine.

First steps:

- ✓ Prepare your classroom to receive maximum daylight without the glare. To make way for more light, remove paper, display boards, or other obstructions from your classroom windows! Keep blinds open except when direct sun is causing too much glare. Test out different scenarios at various times of day with natural or indoor light to find the right balance.
- ✓ Hold your classes outside at least three times a year, and encourage others to do the same.
- ✓ Educate your colleagues on the benefits of daylight and how to maximize daylight in their classrooms.
- ✓ Ask school administration about policies for hosting classes in other areas of the school or outside. If there is hesitation or restrictions against this, make your case and get others to speak up about the benefits of taking students outside. Set a goal for taking your class to a more daylit area or even outside during nice weather.

Resources to increase access to daylight:

- National Education Association tips for taking your class outside: <http://www.nea.org/tools/take-your-class-outside.htm>
- Whole Building Design Guide: <https://www.wbdg.org/resources/daylighting>
- Teach Engineering Hands-On Activity: Daylighting Design: https://www.teachengineering.org/activities/view/cub_housing_lesson03_activity1

Related programs and lessons in Learning Lab (<https://learninglab.usgbc.org>):

- What is Energy? (K): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/2892>
- Life Science in the Garden (K-1): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/life-science-garden>
- Learning with Nature (9-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/14128/12525>



#9: You know it's dust, but what IS it?

We don't always think about it, but dust is not just magically-appearing gray clouds. It comes from our clothes, our skin, and various other items we use during the day. It also, importantly, contains dust mites and cockroach dander (yes, it's true!) that can be very harmful to breathe, especially to kids with asthma or other respiratory problems. Nearly one in every 13 school-age kids suffer from asthma, a chronic disease which is the leading cause of absenteeism. The EPA's Tools for Schools Indoor Air Quality program gives tips for keeping a healthy classroom, and one of the most simple and crucial steps is to clean out the clutter. Those corner piles of paper, decorations, and science experiments serve as great collection areas for dust—not to mention their tendency to block daylight from windows and get in the way of air conditioning and heating vents. Clean them out, and your classroom will be automatically easier to keep clean and healthy.

First steps:

- ✓ Interview your school's custodial and maintenance staff to understand what green cleaning and health and safety practices are in place.
- ✓ Organize and clean classrooms, perhaps by hosting a "Classroom Green Cleaning Day."
- ✓ In cleaning out classrooms, remove un-used papers, books and supplies. Strongly consider removing items that typically collect dust and mites, including stuffed animals, cloth pillows, and fabric. Clean all carpet thoroughly to remove all dust and dirt build-up. Ensure that the heating and cooling units, windows and vents supplying air to your classroom are free of obstructions. Ensure that animal cages and fish tanks are regularly cleaned.
- ✓ The school district may want to form a specific team focused on green cleaning, due to its health and safety benefits. Key participants to consider for this team are nurses, Environmental Health & Safety staff, custodians, and community health experts.

Resources for improving cleanliness at school:

- Healthy Schools Campaign Green Clean Schools: <https://greencleanschools.org/>
- EPA Creating Healthy Indoor Air Quality in Schools: <https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools>
- EPA Teacher's Classroom Checklist: <https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/teachers-classroom-checklist-indoor-air-quality-tools-schools>
- EPA - Asthma prevention: <http://www.epa.gov/asthma/school-based.html>
- American Lung Association's Asthma Friendly Schools Initiative: <http://www.lung.org/lung-health-and-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/asthma/asthma-education-advocacy/asthma-friendly-schools-initiative/>
- EPA Lesson Plans, Teacher Guides, and Online Resources for Educators (see "health" tab): <https://www.epa.gov/students/lesson-plans-teacher-guides-and-online-resources-educators>

Related programs and lessons in Learning Lab (<https://learninglab.usgbc.org/>):

- Sensing Quality Air (3-4): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6067>
- Air Eco-Audit (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6227>
- School Transportation Eco-Audit (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6252>

In addition, you can search all lessons in the Air theme using the advanced filters on the Browse All page.



#10: No really, what is that smell?

We know schools can really smell—whether it’s someone’s day-old snack, the students’ recess sweat, or the closet full of who-knows-what. The temptation is to mask all those smells with plug-in or spray air fresheners, but please don’t! The problem is that those smells could also be coming from mildew under the sink, cleaners or sealants used by the custodian, mold above the ceiling tiles, or any number of other sources. If you mask the smell with something additional (like the air freshener), you’re not only NOT getting rid of the problem, you’re also ADDING to the asthma triggers within the classroom. Air fresheners and other commonly-used chemical agents such as bleach-based cleaners do not make air better for students and teachers; they add other smells on top of an already bad situation.

First steps:

- ✓ Use the guidance from EPA’s Tools for Schools program to form an Air Team to keep track of issues within the school that may affect air quality. Many actions to fix air quality can be simple and low-cost if the problem has been caught early.
- ✓ Investigate the school’s classrooms. Find where the odors or leaks are coming from, and report what you find to the facilities maintenance team. Work with a custodian to identify and fix problems in your classroom. Remove air fresheners, clear supplies from vents, ensure fume hoods are working properly, and review the chemical inventory in science classrooms or labs for possible hazards.
- ✓ Educate yourself on green cleaning and the importance of healthy indoor air quality in schools. Healthy buildings are critical for ensuring students and teachers have the highest quality learning and working environment.

Tips for improving air quality:

- Green Seal certified green cleaning products: www.greenseal.org
- Greenguard Virtual Walkthrough of School IAQ: <http://www.greenguard.org/en/HealthierSchools.aspx>
- Healthy Schools Campaign Green Clean Schools: <https://greencleanschools.org/>
- EPA Toolkit for Safe Chemical Management in K-12 Schools: <https://www.epa.gov/schools-chemicals/toolkit-safe-chemical-management-k-12-schools>

Related programs and lessons in Learning Lab (<https://learninglab.usgbc.org/>):

- Air All Around Me (K): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6068>
- Clean Air Guardians (1-2): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6047>
- Sensing Quality Air (3-4): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6067>
- What’s Up? (5-6): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6149>
- The Air We Breathe (7-8): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6166>
- A Breath of Fresh Air (9-10): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6447>
- Air Eco-Audit (11-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6227>

In addition, you can search all lessons in the Air theme using the advanced filters on the Browse All page.



#11: Lights out!

Did you know that lighting typically uses over 25% of the energy used in a school? A school-wide lighting retrofit is an easy way to save on electricity bills—the payback time from the decrease in energy costs is typically less than two years. But if a retrofit isn't in the cards for your school, a good old-fashioned “Turn Out the Lights” campaign can go a long way. Your student green team and your excellent signage will forge the way, and a chat with your custodian will ensure you're hitting all of the bases. If you're looking for more ways to save energy at school, you can find great tips from Alliance to Save Energy and EPA's EnergyStar program.

First Steps:

- ✓ Find out how much you spend on electricity in your school, and communicate this information to students, faculty and staff. Put up signage that recognizes when the school has successfully lowered energy usage.
- ✓ Conduct a “Lights Out” campaign. Establish a leadership team, and set clear goals for the campaign. How much energy do you want to save? How long will the campaign run? Is it just in the school or does it translate to student households?
- ✓ Keep school occupants informed about the effect of the Lights Out Campaign. Knowing the concrete effect of their collective actions will motivate your colleagues and students.
- ✓ Contact your utility provider to see if there are lighting efficiency rebates available. Present a lighting retrofit proposal and energy/cost savings proposal to school or district administration.

Tips for conducting a 'lights out' campaign:

- Overview of a school's energy use from the EPA: <https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/tools-and-resources/datatrends-energy-use-k-12-schools>
- Consider aligning the campaign with Earth Hour or a district-wide energy reduction competition to get attention. Earth Hour's Lights Out Campaign: <https://www.earthhour.org/>
- Implement lesson plans on lighting and energy usage in the classroom as well as in students' own homes. Ask students to talk to their families about the importance of turning off lights.
- Energy saving tips from the Alliance to Save Energy: <http://ase.org/resources/energy-saving-tips-schools>
- Maintaining Good Indoor Air Quality While Conserving Energy: http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/environmental_health/eoha/pdf/energy_conservation_fact_sheet.pdf

Related programs and lessons in Learning Lab (<https://learninglab.usgbc.org/>):

- ✓ What is Energy (K): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/2892>
- ✓ Energy in Action (1-2): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/2964>
- ✓ Energy is Everywhere! (3-4): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/3173>
- ✓ Science of Electricity Model (5-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/11812>
- ✓ STEMhero Stage I: Identify and read real data sources(6-8): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/11289>
- ✓ My Carbon Footprint (7-8): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/3404>
- ✓ Great Energy Debate Module (6-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/11112>
- ✓ The Impact of Energy (9-10): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/4048>
- ✓ Energy Eco-Audit (9-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/3738>

In addition, you can search all lessons in the Energy theme using the advanced filters on the Browse All page.



#12: Carpooling – jump in, the water’s fine!

You can start small, but a school carpooling program can have a big effect. The more kids or teachers in a car on the way to school, the less fossil fuel used per person and the less pollution emitted per person. Start in one or two classes to see if parents seem interested in reducing the number of times they need to drive back and forth from school. There are several ways to scale it up from there—from a simple bulletin board by the office to a paid service for online carpool coordination. You could also start a campaign to get kids and families walking or biking to school as a group, and encourage the group to stick with it for the year.

First steps:

- ✓ Survey your students to find out how they typically get to and from school. Identify leaders and alternative transportation advocates in the school or community to act as role models and to get the message out. Do some of your teachers ride their bikes to work regularly?
- ✓ Host a walk/bike to school day, sometimes called a “Walk and Roll” Day, to encourage alternative transportation or carpooling to school. Walking and biking to school/work is a great form of exercise. Does your school have goals for physical activity or obesity prevention? A walk/ride campaign may be something that city or school district health and wellness staff would love to support.
- ✓ Get local law enforcement involved in a walk/ride day or a long-term campaign to ensure that everyone gets to school safely. Consider aligning with National Walk to School Day, Safe Routes to Schools, or another national campaign.
- ✓ Set up a system to coordinate carpooling with families and staff.
- ✓ Set up a walking school bus, a group of children walking to and from school with one or more adults.

Resources for encouraging alternative transportation options:

- Carpool to School: <https://www.carpooltoschool.com/>
- Green Streets Initiative – Start a walk ride day in your school: <https://www.gogreenstreets.org/walkridedays>
- Safe Routes to Schools: <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>
- National Walk and Bike to School Day: <http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/>
- Walking School Bus: <http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/>

Related programs and lessons in Learning Lab (<https://learninglab.usgbc.org>):

- ✓ Bodies In Motion (K): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6487>
- ✓ Let’s Ride Together (1-2): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6533>
- ✓ Transportation Trends (3-4): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6585>
- ✓ Fueling Our Future (3-5): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/14172>
- ✓ Getting Around (5-6): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6781>
- ✓ How Did I Get Here? (7-8): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6831>
- ✓ Transforming Transportation (9-10): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6877>
- ✓ School Transportation Eco-Audit (9-12): <https://learninglab.usgbc.org/module/6252>

In addition, you can search all lessons in the Transportation theme using the advanced filters on the Browse All page.



Additional Resources

Check out these additional resources to support greening your school:

- ✓ U.S. Green Building Council: <http://www.usgbc.org>
- ✓ Learning Lab: <https://learninglab.usgbc.org>
- ✓ Center for Green Schools Resources - <http://centerforgreenschools.org/resources>
- ✓ Green Apple Day of Service: <http://www.greenapple.org/>
- ✓ UNESCO “Education for Sustainable Development Goals Learning Objectives”
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002474/247444e.pdf>
- ✓ Certified LEED school examples:
 - Thurgood Marshall Elementary School: <https://www.usgbc.org/projects/thurgood-marshall-elementary-school>
 - Learning Gate Community School: <https://www.usgbc.org/projects/learning-gate-community-school>
 - Adlai E Stevenson High School: <https://www.usgbc.org/projects/adlai-e-stevenson-high-school>
 - Lake Mills Elementary School: <https://www.usgbc.org/projects/lake-mills-elementary-school>
 - Dunbar Senior High school: <https://www.usgbc.org/node/2579699>
- ✓ General green school resources:
 - Washington Green Schools: <http://www.wagreenschools.org>
 - Healthy Schools, Healthy Kids: <https://www.epa.gov/schools>
 - EPA Guidance and Tools for Schools: <https://www.epa.gov/schools/epa-guidance-and-tools-schools>
 - Healthy Schools Campaign: <https://healthyschoolscampaign.org>
 - National Wildlife Foundation Educator Tools: <https://www.nwf.org/Home/Educational-Resources/Educator-Tools>
 - National Wildlife Foundation Pathways to Sustainable Development: <https://www.nwf.org/Eco-Schools-USA/Become-an-Eco-School/Pathways.aspx>
 - EPA Lesson Plans, Teacher Guides, and Online Resources for Educators: <https://www.epa.gov/students/lesson-plans-teacher-guides-and-online-resources-educators>