

What is a Green School?

Green Schools are the most effective agents for enacting significant positive environmental and educational change in schools and communities. School greening is quickly becoming more than a trend; rather, it is now the method of choice for providing healthy, comfortable and productive learning environments while saving energy, resources and money.

A green school improves the health and energy-efficiency of the school facility, ensures science-based environmental and civic education in the classroom, implements healthy food choices into the cafeteria, promotes alternative means of transportation, and expands recreational choices and opportunities for all students.

The benefits of green schools are now well established and range from significant reductions in greenhouse gases to impressive energy cost savings, improved student test scores and higher teacher and student retention, as well as very impressive improvements in children's health. Studies have demonstrated that green schools greatly reduce student sick days, significantly improve the health of students with diabetes, asthma and other respiratory illnesses, reduce social inequity, enhance student motivation in both the short and long term, and provide an educationally rich setting.

Despite what many people think, green schools cost on average less than 2% more to build than a traditional school, yet the payback often occurs within only a few years due to the energy savings alone. A green school typically utilizes 33% less energy and 32% less water – enough savings to hire two additional full-time teachers.

Ultimately greening America's schools presents an extraordinary cost-effective opportunity to improve the health and educational settings for all students, increasing school equality and competitiveness while reducing long-term health and operational costs.