

Tips for Starting Your Green Team

The Green Team is at the heart of green school efforts. Here are some tips for organizing your own Green Team.

- 1. Who should be on your Green Team?** - Greening a school touches on all aspects of a school's operations and administration, from facilities and maintenance to curriculum, from school lunch to purchasing. So, the Green Team can offer a forum where all the different members of a school community can come together to brainstorm ideas and solutions, make joint recommendations, and collaborate on implementation. Ideally, a Green Team at a school or district level should have representatives of teachers, parents, students, administrators, and facilities and maintenance staff. Student involvement is essential. Sometimes student representatives will come from the Student Council, other times there may be students specially appointed or elected to the Green Team. However, there are schools where a Green Team starts initially as a student club or as a parent committee, and later grows to include more members of the school community. Many schools PTAs or PTOs are creating a Green Team Coordinator position as part of their leadership. Regardless of how your Green Team starts or who your members are, it is critically important to coordinate your efforts with your school's administration and facilities and maintenance staff, since many activities - from recycling to energy conservation - touch on the jobs of facilities staff.
- 2. Purpose and Role of the Green Team** - The purpose of the Green Team is to help identify issues, undertake research and analysis through conducting the PLT investigations, make recommendations to relevant school decision-makers, coordinate many of the greening activities, and facilitate communications with the school community. The Green Team is most often advisory and decision-making authority remains with the school board, principal, and/or governing bodies of the school and district. The Green Team can collaborate with student clubs, PTAs or PTOs, individual teachers, or specific school departments to implement activities or host events.
- 3. Getting permission from the school or district** - We highly recommend that you get official approval and permission from your school's principal and/or your school board or school district administration for your Green Team. This way, they will be supportive of the efforts and it will make it easier to move your activities along. Write a letter to the principal, superintendent, or school board president and ask permission to establish a Green Team. Describe the purpose, role, and goals of the Green Team and ask for a representative of the administration to participate in the Green Team.
- 4. Establish regular meetings and goals** - To make it easy for people to participate, it's best if you can establish regular meeting times - whether monthly or quarterly - at times when everyone can participate, most likely after school or at lunch. Work with the whole school community to identify key issues and goals that people are excited about. You can do a survey of families, teachers, students and staff, hold an assembly, organize an evening forum or other ways of reaching out to the whole school community. It is best to set some small goals initially that can be achieved within one school year. Demonstrating early success is the best way of building more support for bigger or longer-term goals. Goals could include setting a specific schoolwide recycling and waste reduction target (like increasing recycling rates by 5% or diverting 50% of the school's wastestream) or establishing an annual Earth Day celebration.
- 5. Develop a work plan and timeline** - The arc of a school year provides the natural timeline for your school greening workplan. Ideally, you want to work with teachers in September - or even at the end of the previous school year - to identify some student projects that can be integrated into the curriculum. The topic can be introduced to students in October and student-led environmental audits (aka investigations) of school resources uses can be done before Winter Break. Students can analyze the results in January and February and take actions based on their analysis in February to April. They can share their results and celebrate by Earth Day around April 22, and evaluate their progress in May, reporting results by the end of the school year.

This information was adapted from the Green Schools Initiative website: <http://www.greenschools.net/>