Take It Outside! Tips and Tools for Outdoor Classrooms

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**Overview of Sustainable Jersey for Schools’ program and related actions**

- Biodiversity Plans and Projects
- School Gardens
- Education for Sustainability

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**Tips and resources for making your outdoor classroom successful**

- Location, Location, Location – A Sense of Place
- Involving Students with Design to Development
- Common Outdoor Classroom Components
- Seasons, Safety and other Considerations
- Teamwork and Partnerships
- Curriculum Resources
- Outdoor Classroom Connections, Tools and Resources
Sustainable Jersey for Schools
Why Participate?

• Framework for action
  ➢ Best practices, guidance and training
  ➢ Technical support resources
  ➢ Small grants

• Positive impact on school community
  ➢ Cost savings
  ➢ Healthier learning environments
  ➢ Student and staff performance
Why Participate?

• Move towards a sustainable future
  - Increase recognition and understanding of current and future challenges
  - Arm students with knowledge and insights to make wise choices
  - Connect STEM education with real-life
  - Expose students to future career paths

• Recognize and reinforce progress
  - Celebrate accomplishments
  - Share successes
  - Distinguish your district and school
Sustainable Jersey Program Participants

- Municipal: 432 towns, 193 certified
- Schools: 155 Districts, 400 Schools

- Currently Certified: 59 Schools
- Bronze: 54 Schools
- Silver: 5 Schools

BECOME CERTIFIED ➔
Levels of Certification

150 Bronze
- Green team
- 2 out of 11 priority actions
- Actions completed in 6 of 17 categories

350 Silver
- Green team
- 3 out of 11 priority actions
- Actions completed in 8 of 17 categories
Program Actions: Where Can We Start?

**STUDENT & COMMUNITY OUTREACH**
- Green Team**
- Community Education & Outreach*
- Green Fair
- “Green” Your Green Fair or School Event
- Green Challenges
- Civic & Stewardship Volunteer Initiatives
- Enrichment Programs through Partnership

**DIVERSITY & EQUITY**
- Breakfast After The Bell
- Accessible Communications
- Diversity on District Task Forces & Committees

**FOOD & NUTRITION**
- Healthy Food Choices
- School Gardens
- Promote Locally Grown Foods

**STUDENT SAFETY**
- Safe Routes to School District Policy
- School Travel Plan for walking & biking
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety & Promotion Initiatives
- Safe Driving Awareness Programs for High School Students

**STUDENT & STAFF WELLNESS**
- School Wellness Council*
- School Health Assessment
- Policies to Promote Physical Activity

**ENERGY EFFICIENCY**
- Energy Audit*
- Building Efficiency Measures*
- Energy Tracking & Management
- Sustainable Energy Transition Plan

**LEADERSHIP & PLANNING**
- Professional Development for Sustainability*
- School Community Asset Mapping
- Green Facilities Management Checklist
- Green Enhancement of District Strategic Plans
- Strategic Plan Implementation of Green Initiatives
- District Sustainability Policy
- School District Foundation

**STUDENT LEARNING** (only one action in this category will be counted toward priority requirements)
- Education for Sustainability K-3*
- Education for Sustainability Grades 4-12 Science*
- Education for Sustainability Grades 4-12 Math*
- Education for Sustainability Grades 4-12 ELA*
- Education for Sustainability Grades 4-12 Social Studies*
- Education for Sustainability Grades 4-12 Creativity/Arts*
- Education for Sustainability Grades 4-12 Health*

**CLIMATE MITIGATION & RENEWABLE ENERGY**
- School Carbon Footprint*
- On-site Renewable Generation System-Solar
- On-site Renewable Generation System-Geothermal
- Buy Renewable Electricity
- Collaborate with Municipality on Government Energy Aggregation Program

**SCHOOL GROUNDS**
- Biodiversity Audit & Management Plan
- Biodiversity Project
- Green Infrastructure Assessment & Plan
- Green Infrastructure Installation
- Sustainable Landscape Design

**GREEN DESIGN**
- Green Building Policy*
- Green Building Training
- Green Building Survey
- Bid New Construction & Major Renovations using Green Standard
- Build New/Renovated Project that meets Green Standard
- Commissioning Approval for New/Existing Building that meets Green Standard

**GREEN PURCHASING**
- Green Purchasing Policy*
2016 Certification Cycle

• **January 15** – Initial Application Deadline
• Late February – Reviewer Comments
• **April 8** – Second Application Submission
• Early May – Reviewer Comments
• **June 24** – Final Application Submission
• Mid July – Certified Schools Notified
• **October** – Certified Schools Celebration
Biodiversity plans and projects enable schools to address issues such as invasive species proliferation, habitat restoration, and ecological diversity through targeted biodiversity projects on your school grounds.

Projects can include native species gardens, butterfly gardens, birdhouses, ponds or water features, invasive species removal, or any other habitat elements necessary to support specific wildlife species.
Biodiversity Audit and Management Plans

- **Complete a biodiversity survey** using the audit tool developed by the National Wildlife Federation's Eco Schools program (or similar tool). Biodiversity audits give schools a snapshot in time that addresses key aspects of local habitats and ecosystems that promote biodiversity.

- **Create an action plan** that includes monitoring activities, and identifies future biodiversity projects.

- The **biodiversity audit report** must include: a school site map, site survey information that includes tree and shrub, habitat data (plants and habitat areas) and a mammal, reptile, and amphibian species observation. The audit must also include the documentation of the site biodiversity index.
Involving students in the installation of the biodiversity project. The biodiversity project must include a classroom learning component.

Create a Biodiversity Team: Schools may find assistance from a variety of sources such as landscape architects, conservation organizations, and local businesses willing to donate their technical expertise, equipment, and supplies to support the project installation.
10 Points – School Action

In order to earn points for this action, the garden needs to have been active during the current or previous growing season and include plantings that produce fruits, vegetables and/or herbs that could be consumed by students.

The garden must be utilized to teach environmental and/or nutrition education involving students interacting with the garden for learning activities during the school year.
There many ways to connect the garden to the classroom: Involve students in designing a garden plan, measuring and staking out garden beds, making garden signs, constructing a solar greenhouse, and/or analyzing soil for pH and nutrient content.

School Garden Checklist:
1. Plan the garden
2. Purchase Tools and Materials
3. Build the garden
4. Maintain the garden
5. Manage the garden
10 point – School action

This action awards points for under multiple disciplines for lessons that have delved into a sustainability-related issue, employed effective methods to engage students, and assessed student learning of sustainability core principles (or the enduring understandings of sustainability) in the current school year.
1. Identify areas within the 4th-12th grade arts curriculum or specific grade level lessons that are linked to sustainability issues (climate change, energy, water, waste, ecological systems, food systems, economic systems, health and wellness, social and cultural systems, or the built environment) and which lend themselves to teaching approaches that are inquiry-based, experiential, interdisciplinary and/or place-based.

2. Determine the **enduring understanding(s) related to sustainability** (see EfS Questionnaire) that the students are to gain from the lessons (the learning objective).
Develop a significant sustainability lesson plan or unit. The sustainability lessons need to employ at least one of these instructional approaches:

**Inquiry-based:** Ask questions, plan and carry out investigations, analyze and interpret data, construct explanations, engage in argument based on evidence.

**Experiential:** Students learn through doing—participating in projects, events, challenges, experiments and other learning activities.

**Place-based student learning:** Students participate in investigations and learning activities in school grounds, neighborhoods, or natural areas that engage them with real-life scenarios that are tangible, observable and meaningful to them.

**Interdisciplinary:** Two or more teachers covering different academic disciplines design and/or present related lessons that integrate subject matter from two or more academic disciplines.

Design tools—such as a rubric—and methods to properly assess whether students have grasped the sustainability enduring understanding(s) of the lesson. The assessment must be aligned with the sustainability-focused enduring understanding. The "Resources" section of the action provides references to effective and aligned assessment.
What to Submit:

• A **copy of the lesson plan** that documents the planning and delivery of a significant lesson or set of lessons, and assessment of student learning of the sustainability enduring understanding (see [EfS Questionnaire](#)).

• **Samples of student work** and graded rubrics that demonstrate the students' learning of the enduring understanding(s) of sustainability.

• **Completed Education for Sustainability Questionnaire** ([EfS Questionnaire](#)) where you check off: sustainability-related topic taught; enduring understanding of sustainability incorporated; and the instructional approach used to create a significant lesson or set of lessons.

A short narrative summary of the learning objectives of the sustainability lessons, and a description of how student learning was assessed.

• **Optional**: Additional documentation of the lessons such as relevant photographs, videos, and news articles may also be submitted.
Marc Rogoff: *Tips and resources for making your outdoor classroom successful*

Visit [http://www.nj.gov/dep/seeds/syhart/outclass.htm](http://www.nj.gov/dep/seeds/syhart/outclass.htm) for links related to outdoor classrooms.
Program Partners
Questions?

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