



Center for Green Schools
at the U.S. Green Building Council

Green Apple Resources Toolkit: A Project Planning Guide

A seven-part guide for leaders looking to plan a Green Apple Project: from the first steps of making your project happen, getting it off the ground, to executing the event.

centerforgreenschools.org



Green Apple started as a single day of service and now brings everything we have learned to your school as a toolkit. These resources will help guide you as you plan a sustainability project on your campus.

Part One: Getting Started



Pick your project location.

- Pick the location for your project.
 - * If you are planning your project at a school and are not a teacher, school staff, or student, reach out to schools in your community.
 - * Create a flyer to share with them.
- Look over the [Site Checklist](#) on page 5 to help you think about the logistics of hosting your project at a particular site.



Find out what your school needs.

- Talk with teachers, students, and administration to assess their needs and goals. Take a trip inside and outside your school and write down everyday practices or spaces that can be improved.
- It can help to reference project ideas before you do this assessment to understand what you should look for. Find a complete list of project ideas on various sustainability themes [on our website](#).
- Reference our [99 Ideas You Can Start Anytime, Any Day!](#) on page 6 below for additional project ideas.



Think about what kind of impact you will make.

- Consider which areas of sustainability are most important to the school and your community, the support and resources available, and what your school needs.

Part Two: Putting the Pieces Together



Craft your project vision.

- Define the goals and scope of your project and give your project a name. Spend time doing some research, especially thinking about logistics, funding, and volunteer requirements.



Establish a timeline.

- Create a timeline that includes the activities, steps, and permissions needed leading up to your project date. Include plans for promoting your event and recruiting volunteers and partners.
- Use the [Project Planning Timeline](#) on page 10.



Create a fundraising strategy.

- Create a budget for your project that includes the cost of all necessary materials and services.
- Even if it's just providing lunch or snack for your volunteers, figuring it out early will give you more time later to focus on your project.
- Reference our [Tips for Fundraising guide](#) on page 12.



Build your team.

- Find others interested in making an impact inside and outside your school community.
- Building a team with a diverse range of skills and experiences is an important way to boost the success of your project. And don't forget about the students! Students of all ages are awesome green school ambassadors, and service projects are great opportunities for them to demonstrate their leadership skills.

Part Three: Planning Your Project



Assign roles and responsibilities.

- Consider each team member's strengths and resources to maximize everyone's contributions.
- Define roles and responsibilities for your team and consider organizing a planning meeting to get everyone on the same page.



Finalize the important details.

- Double-check to ensure the dates, times, and project details you have in mind will work with your school.
- Be sure to think about how many volunteers will be on-site, whether you will need to store materials, the level of student involvement, and facility staffing needs.



Volunteers and students work on a schoolyard cleanup project at a flagship project at Harriet Tubman Elementary School in Washington, DC. PHOTO BY KAI KEANE



Gather materials and resources.

- What materials do you need for your project? What can be purchased, and what can be borrowed? Work with your team to strategize how you will get, haul, and store materials and supplies.

Part Four: Making Preparations



Get the word out.

- Get the word out to friends and family, the school community, and the local press. Consider creating flyers for your event that you can put up in the school and on community message boards.
- Reference the [Communications Guide](#) on page 12.



Create a detailed schedule for your project.

- Include roles, responsibilities, timing, location details, and a materials list. Share with volunteers to make sure everyone is on the same page.



Conduct any necessary volunteer or staff training.

- Set up your volunteers for success. Consider hosting an in-person meeting or happy hour with school staff, community volunteers, or parents who will be involved.



Do a final site visit.

- Check to make sure everything is in order and whether there have been any last-minute changes to the site.
- Use the [Site Checklist](#) on page 5 to make sure you have covered all your bases.

Part Five: The Final Details



Send out the final details to your volunteers.

- Send an email to volunteers a couple of days before your project to ensure they have all the information they need. Include project details, directions to the site, and any site-specific instructions necessary for their success.



Gather final materials and resources.

- Purchase additional materials and coordinate pick up for donated or borrowed materials.
- If you are borrowing tools and supplies, keep track of where everything needs to be returned to and label everything to avoid mix-ups.



Print out signs, sign-in sheets, and instructions.

- Make sure you have adequate signage at your school site (especially if it is hard to find), have sign-in sheets for your volunteers, and print any resources ahead of time.



Make a backup plan.

- For outdoor projects, make sure you have a backup plan or rain date for uncooperative weather.

Part Six: Executing the Event



Show up early.

- Be there first and make sure that everything is organized and ready to go for the project. Put out sign-in sheets, hang signage etc.



Have clear instructions ready to share with your volunteers.

- Think about the minimum amount of work that should be done and have instructions ready in case you accomplish more than anticipated.



Service project at Leckie Elementary in Washington, DC.

PHOTO BY ANA KA'AHANUI



Make sure someone takes a few pictures of you and your volunteers hard at work.

- Take pictures before and after, and photos of your event! The best photos show people hard at work, making a difference at the school together.
- If students participate in your project, ensure you or their teacher have their photo release forms. If not, be sure not to photograph them!
- Be sure to share the photos on social media and use the hashtag #GreenAppleDay. Share your photos with us by emailing schools@usgbc.org or tagging the Center for Green Schools on social media.

Part Seven: The Wrap-up



Document your impact and share your results.

- Documenting your project's impact and sharing the results with those who participated and those in your community is important. Recording stories, capturing metrics, taking before and after photos are examples of some ways you can document your impact.



Thank everyone for their time and efforts.

- Send a thank you note to your volunteers, school administrators, sponsors, and everyone who made the event happen. You can also host a small party to celebrate your success.



Get feedback.

- Send out a survey about your event to your volunteers, the school community, and staff. Find out what worked well and what could be better for next time.



Service project at Payne Elementary in Washington, DC. PHOTO BY ANA KAAHANUI

Site Checklist

Hosting a project at your school or a school in your community? Use this checklist early in the process to make sure you have considered all the factors affecting your ability to host an event at the school.

School features

- ☐ Proximity to public transportation
- ☐ Parking availability
- ☐ Handicap accessibility
- ☐ Recycling and/or compost available on-site for project waste

Scheduling

- ☐ Planned renovations or changes
- ☐ Available dates or conflicts

School Rules

- ☐ Cost or fees, if any, to host after-school events or projects
- ☐ Cost or fees, if any, to use school equipment for the project
- ☐ Rules concerning food and beverage service
- ☐ Rules concerning access or security

Project Site

- ☐ Proximity to restrooms
- ☐ Proximity to water access, if needed
- ☐ Proximity to power source, if needed
- ☐ If project will use A/V, any restrictions, or rules about using or bringing in A/V
- ☐ If project needs Wi-Fi, availability at the school and necessary passwords
- ☐ Locations for project signage or way-finding signs



Service project at Leckie Elementary in Washington, DC. PHOTO BY ANA KA'AHANUI

99 Ideas You Can Start Anytime, Any Day!

The Center for Green Schools team came up with 99 ideas that anyone can do at their school. Yes, anyone. In this list, you will see ideas for teachers, parents, volunteers, and students at any grade level, from pre-kindergarten through college and beyond. Pick one, pick two, pick two dozen!

MAKE AN IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

How much waste can you keep out of the landfill?

1. Create a scrap paper pile in the school copy room and include signage for teachers about how and when to use it.
2. Invite students to decorate a reusable water bottle and pledge to use it every day for a full month.
3. Conduct a waste audit at school to see what makes up the most trash and what can be improved.
4. For the next school dance, make it a zero-waste event.
5. Create a waste management system (or a series of bins) to use at home.
6. Plan to collect recyclables from an athletic event, performance, or other after-school events.
7. Assemble trash-free meal kits using only reusable containers for food, drink, utensils, and snacks.
8. Host a zero-waste school lunch day, and pair it with educational materials for students and their parents.
9. Map all the trash, recycling, and composting bins on your campus, and make sure they're located next to each other to help students and teachers sort their waste.
10. Make signs explaining the benefits of hand dryers in bathrooms and facts about paper towel consumption to encourage use.
11. Create signs to improve recycling education on campus, to be posted on or near bins.
12. Add recycling and composting bin to your classroom.

How many square feet of habitat and green space can you create?

13. Install a green wall on campus using recycled water bottles and wire on a chain link fence.
14. Create a water filter to install in rain gutters at school.
15. Design and plant a small rain garden near a drainage area on campus.
16. Plant trees to promote habitat restoration.
17. Plant species that are native to your geography.

How many gallons of water can you save?

18. Create a water fixture inventory for campus and work with facilities staff to see what efficiency changes can be made.
19. Invite students and teachers to sign a pledge to take showers that run the water for less than 5 minutes.
20. Install a rain barrel for the schools' downspouts that uses recycled materials.

How much energy can you save?

21. Conduct a classroom light bulb audit and present the results to your facilities staff.
22. Lead a "lights-off class" for one or more days.
23. Encourage all classes to hold one "lights-off" hour at the same time each day for a week.
24. Work with the IT staff to begin an automatic power-down initiative for computers across the school or district when they are not in use.
25. Investigate options for cutting down power going to vending machines, such as installing Vending Misers at each one.
26. Organize a field day of fun indoor or outdoor activities like a scavenger hunt or flying a kite that doesn't require electricity.
27. Organize a Friday campus walkthrough to ensure lights are powered off for the weekend.
28. Bring in energy-saving power strips or install daylight sensor outlets for a group of classrooms.

29. Work with the facilities department to create a display that shows the amount of energy used at school every day/week/month and translate the energy used into the equivalent number of households or cars.
30. Use a light meter to look for areas that are more brightly lit than needed, and work with the facilities department to explore de-lamping options.
31. Create a substantive greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory for the school using the EPA's Climate CHECK software or a similar online tool to see where improvements can be made (recommended for high school students).
32. Invite energy auditors to check on school building energy usage, and have a class shadow the auditors during their visit.
33. Create a map of energy use in the school using simple tools (e.g., watt meter, light meter) and then generate suggestions for conservation in different locations.

SUPPORT HEALTH AND WELLNESS AT SCHOOL

How many healthy eating habits can you inspire?

34. Plant a small vegetable garden with help from parents, friends, and neighbors.
35. Plant vines (grapes, beans, or other similar plants) on railings.
36. Create a map of water fountains on the campus or locations where you want water fountains – or bottle refilling stations!
37. Plant herbs like basil, cilantro, or mint in a recycled container and maintain it in your classroom.
38. Create signage about how to pack a healthy, zero-waste lunch.



For GADOS 2016, children from the Vjeveci kindergarten group in Kriz, near Zagreb Croatia, planted a catalpa tree. This seedling was grown from a tiny seed. PHOTO BY DJEČJI VRTIĆ KRIŽ

How much additional active time can you make for students?

- 39. Host a “walking school bus” or a bike-to-school day.
- 40. Experiment with holding recess before lunchtime to encourage active time and healthy eating.
- 41. Work with teachers to incorporate movement into classes, with a goal of 50 percent active time, by playing learning games and stand-and-sit questions.

How much healthier can you make the environment at school?

- 42. Recruit a local professional to train custodians on green cleaning practices.
- 43. Raise awareness of outdoor air risks by looking up the outdoor air quality in your area from the EPA and posting it each day for students and teachers.
- 44. Create a no-idling campaign for cars and buses at drop off and pick up, including signage and student patrollers.
- 45. Conduct an all-hands-on-deck classroom clean up to tackle dust.
- 46. Create a “biophilic” craft, or brainstorm how to bring nature into your classroom.
- 47. Bring plants into classrooms and create a watering schedule.
- 48. Conduct an indoor air quality assessment using a checklist.
- 49. Create a green cleaning kit for teachers to share and borrow in their classrooms.
- 50. Research ideas to make the bathroom smell good without the use of chemicals.
- 51. Take an inventory of potentially toxic cleaning materials and propose to the facilities team to use green products in their place.
- 52. Design a new outdoor, shaded area for learning, studying, and playing.
- 53. Make signs for classrooms about the value of daylighting and when and why curtains should stay open.

TEACH STUDENTS ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

How can you use creativity to inspire new ways of thinking?

- 54. Work with students to create a “Why I’m Inspired” wall, making environmental commitments at the same time.
- 55. Invite students to create a sustainability-themed short film, documentary, infomercial, or music video, and share them with the school during morning announcements or an assembly.
- 56. Host a recipe contest for students that uses only local, seasonal foods.
- 57. Design a recycled materials arts-and-crafts project.
- 58. Help students organize a recycled material fashion design contest and show.
- 59. Coordinate a found material craft contest and art show.
- 60. Create a contest to design furniture using only recycled materials.
- 61. Have students build a model green school (with recycled materials or building materials/toys).
- 62. Create posters that showcase the green aspects of your school building.
- 63. Create a classroom planter from used plastic bottles.
- 64. Have students find their favorite tree on campus and write a descriptive poem about it.
- 65. Have students find their favorite green space on campus, sketch it, and then share it with classmates and teachers.
- 66. Host a gallery for students to draw or write about a solution to a global sustainability challenge.

How can you involve non-academic staff to teach students and make changes to your building?

- 67. Work with school nutrition staff to provide a lunch menu with health information to students for one week and use the week to teach students about nutrition.
- 68. Hold a taste test with samples of organic and non-organic foods to teach students about the benefits of organic farming on the environment and health.
- 69. Have students interview a wastewater treatment facility manager on video or for your campus paper.
- 70. Connect your classroom with sustainability professionals online or in person.

How can you use signage to remind others about good sustainability practices?

71. Create hallway and classroom signage encouraging energy conservation.
72. With students, create a visual demonstration of the amount of water and/or energy used every day per person at school.
73. Craft light switch plate stickers reminding people to turn off the lights when they aren't needed.
74. Paint a map of the watershed as a mural and have students write an explanation about its significance.

How can you get students to notice their current habits and actions?

75. Ask students to document their water usage for one day and discuss freshwater access around the world.
76. Have students create a home energy audit with ten steps to make their home greener and have students present the results to the class.
77. Engage older students in making presentations about sustainable living to younger students.
78. Compile a how-to book on sustainable living where each student in a class contributes one page of the book using recycled materials.
79. Take a class trip to a landfill, wastewater treatment facility, green energy production plant, or another place that makes a difference in sustainability for your community.
80. Draw a concept diagram showing where waste, recyclables, and compostables go when each group of materials is taken from campus.
81. Have students create a poster demonstrating how the composting process works.
82. Create a recycling game or relay race to educate fellow students about recycling.
83. Create a green (or get greener) scavenger hunt on campus.
84. Build a team of student "sustainability captains" in your class or school.
85. Develop a charter for a sustainability club at your school.
86. Have all students and teachers sign a pledge to avoid using disposable plastic water bottles.

How can you teach students new sustainability concepts?

87. Educate students about green building and the LEED rating system.
88. Read your favorite sustainability book as a class or whole-school project.
89. Build a sand landscape in a tub and use flowing water to learn about erosion and sedimentation.
90. Work with students to create or find the best spreadsheet, survey, or app for students to track their carbon footprints.

COMMUNICATE AND CELEBRATE

91. Help students get inspired by environmentalists, activists, educators, and more by attending TED events nationwide and/or watching them online at [ted.com](https://www.ted.com).
92. Host a movie night of environmental documentaries, or host an outdoor movie screening featuring an environment-themed movie
93. Teach parents and community members about an environmental initiative happening at school.
94. Ask school partners from the community to join you for Green Apple Day of Service.
95. Have students watch the USGBC YouTube Channel and write about & share what they learned.
96. Host short trainings for custodial and maintenance staff using online web trainings from the Center for Green Schools.
97. Develop a short presentation about opportunities to improve your school building and deliver it to campus and community leaders.
98. Research and write a "tip of the week" to be more environmentally responsible and create a timeline for each tip to be shared in announcements, emails, or social media.
99. Create a series of Facebook or Twitter posts with environmental facts, articles, or videos.

Project Planning Timeline

Need some help staying organized with your project planning? Use the handy timeline below as a guide and adapt it to fit your project and the time you have to work on it.

Months Out	Weeks Out	Date	Status	POC	Task
3	12				Finalize event goals and objectives
3	12				Establish planning meeting frequency and times
2.5	10				Draft written materials for potential sponsors or donors and schedule meetings
2.5	10				Determine project materials and services needed
2.5	10				Develop plan for outreach for potential volunteers and community fundraising
2.5	10				Develop a plan for outreach to local media
2.25	9				Ensure all approvals are in place to do the project at the school
2.25	9				If applicable, send save the dates
2.25	9				Ensure any contracts are in place if needed: Audio/visual, catering, photographer etc.
2.25	9				Schedule second meetings with potential sponsors or donors
2	8				Walk through the school using the site checklist to make sure you'll have what you need day-of
2	8				Create descriptions of volunteer roles on-site
1.75	7				Check back in on the project's goals and ensure you are making the impact you intended
1.75	7				Send project information to any organizations helping with volunteer outreach and fundraising
1.5	6				If any high-profile attendees are coming, gather a bio, logo, headshot, etc. for promotion

Months Out	Weeks Out	Date	Status	POC	Task
1.25	5				Lock in sponsors or donors
1.25	5				Lock in volunteer group, and ensure that you have contact information for each
1.25	5				Consider hosting a pre-event volunteer training, if needed
0.5	2				Send an invitation or media alert to relevant local press
0.5	2				Final walkthrough of the project site to check if anything has changed
0.5	2				Check in with any vendors that will be serving the event
0.25	1				Send reminder email to volunteers
0.25	1				Purchase final project materials
0.25	1				Send press release about the event to local media
-0.25	-1				Follow-up email to volunteers
-0.25	-1				Follow-up email to sponsors and donors
-0.25	-1				Follow-up email to organizational partners
-0.5	-2				Share your project with the Center for Green Schools



Tips for Fundraising

Green Apple is all about local impact. Project leaders put local resources, networks, and creativity to work to get what they need for a successful day. Many projects do not cost money, but some costs will likely be associated with a project—from volunteer snacks to classroom supplies to building equipment. The key is to be clear about what is needed and not to be afraid to ask for help.

Fundraising events

With some planning, hosting a fundraiser early in the year for your project could serve double duty: building buzz for your event while raising money for the supplies you'll need. Ask parent groups, boosters, a garden club, or other community partners for materials or assistance in organizing a fundraiser. The more you talk about your plans, the easier it will be to find people eager to help you reach your school's goals.

DonorsChoose.org

Free for public and charter school educators, DonorsChoose.org is a crowdfunding platform to help raise funds for the classroom. Educators raise money through the website for supplies or equipment listed in DonorsChoose.org's extensive catalog. Once the fundraising is complete, DonorsChoose.org will order and ship supplies directly to the school. Use the phrase "Green Apple" in your description, and we will direct funding your way as available.

Local Funding Resources

The Center for Green Schools has curated a list of local and state fundraising resources for schools to use in their project funding search. This list is updated on an annual basis.

Visit greenapple.org/fundraising for the list of local resources.

Communications Guide

MEDIA OUTREACH

Got success stories and tangible results from your Green Apple project? Want to publicize your planned Green Apple project? Showcase your progress on your project by sharing results with your community, stakeholders, policymakers and more! Engaging the local media will help you reach your community and beyond.

Pitch Perfect

Want to announce big news about your service project? Draft up both a press release and a media alert. A press release is an announcement distributed to targeted media to communicate something newsworthy. It should go out immediately after an event on the day of the announcement. On the other hand, a media alert is a quick, at-a-glance summary of an event encompassing the 5Ws: who, what, when, where, and why. The intention of a media alert is to invite media to attend and cover the event. This should go out no more than two weeks before the event, with follow-up during the week leading up to the event and the morning of the event.

Take it a step further by directly calling journalists who cover education and/or the environment to "pitch" your story. Be concise - have quotes, interesting data, and links to share, and follow up with phone calls or emails that give the writer more information. In addition to local media, look for publications like your community newsletter or paper where you can make announcements and encourage your community members to join you.

A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words

Create a photo opportunity for the local media that shows your project in action. If you want media to attend or see your project, draft a media alert or invitation with the five “W’s” (who, what, where, when, and why) and let them know there will be photo and interview opportunities. Be sure to send this at least two weeks in advance and again the week of the event, so they have it on their calendars.

If you can't get the media to come to you, go to them: recruit a local photographer to take pictures of your group in action that you can send post-event to make the local paper's job easier. Post your event photos on Flickr, Facebook, Instagram and other social media outlets, and be sure to tag the school's social media accounts and those of any community leaders or well-known people who were involved in the project.

Is this a story?

Check out these ideas on how to make news in your community:

- Tie in with today's headline: Did your project make headway on a topic people are discussing right now?
- Create a data-rich case study on your service project and be sure to connect it directly to what impact it has had on the school's students.
- Join forces with another local or national organization.
- Create an award or contest: everyone loves to win, and the media love to write about winners.
- Invite a local celebrity or political leader, and ask them to join in a fun, high-energy project with students at the school.

Share with the Center for Green Schools

The Center for Green Schools team would love to see what you and your students are up to! Share your project with us on social media using #GreenAppleDay, tag us, or email us at schools@usgbc.org.



PHOTO BY PHOEBE BEIERLE