

SOS Tidbit – Green School Initiatives

With all the programs and information out there these days in regards to being “green” what does this mean for our school environments and what where does your school need to start? Being green or sustainable can have different meanings depending upon your schools mission and goals. Being green could be as simple as reducing the amount of waste through recycling programs to reducing the overall “carbon footprint” of your school.

Below are some initiatives that your school could take to become a healthier and more sustainable learning environment:

- ✓ Integrated Pest Management, or *IPM*, is an approach to pest control that relies on a combination of common sense practices for preventing and controlling pests and minimizing unnecessary exposure of children to pesticides. In an IPM approach, considerable effort is put toward preventing pest problems by controlling conditions and practices of building occupants that may attract and support pests. Depending on the type of pest(s), condition of school facilities, resources, and commitment of the administration and staff, IPM plans take many forms – each unique to the setting, community and school’s needs and desires.
- ✓ Programs developed by the EPA such as the *IAQ Tools for Schools* Program are a comprehensive resource to help schools maintain a healthy environment in school buildings by identifying, correcting, and preventing IAQ problems. Poor indoor air quality can impact the comfort and health of students and staff, which, in turn, can affect concentration, attendance, and student performance. In addition, if schools fail to respond promptly to poor IAQ, students and staff are at an increased risk of short-term health problems, such as fatigue and nausea, as well as long-term problems like asthma.
- ✓ Identify your school waste streams and prepare an action / reduction plan. This may include setting up a scheme to recycle aluminum cans and recycle office paper. Part of this plan should focus on waste minimization. This waste reduction plan should look at all areas of your schools daily operations from waste cooking oils, custodial practices to science lab chemical usage.
- ✓ Compile your schools energy bills using a utility tracking software and perform a building energy audit. Use these findings and data to prioritize energy saving improvements and monitor your schools progress. Energy reducing strategies may include such tasks as; installing motion activated light switches in classrooms, having an HVAC energy management control system installed, preventative maintenance scheduling, building occupant education programs, facility usage & rental guidelines, and many other programs with the overall goal of reducing your schools energy consumption.
- ✓ Water reduction should be a high priority with the integration and use of low water consumption plumbing fixtures; including low consumption toilets, infrared faucet sensors, waterless urinals, low-flow showerheads, and low-flow faucets. Water conservation technologies and practices reduce operations costs. Landscape design has the potential to reduce your schools potable water consumption and significantly reduce and treat stormwater runoff. Having a computerized irrigation control system to ensure landscapes are only watered when necessary is another huge step towards water reduction as the majority of a schools water consumption is through irrigation programs. Careful consideration & planning of the plant species selected for your school grounds can potentially eliminate the need for a permanent irrigation system.

For additional information and resources your school can contact with steps your school can take to become more sustainable:

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