

'Green' Schools Enhance Learning: 5 Tips On How To Green Your School

(NAPSA)—When it comes to education, where children learn can be as important as what they learn. Why? The physical condition of an actual school building affects the bottom line for every school. Money spent to heat or cool a poorly maintained school building is money that could instead be directed to student needs, such as more books or teachers.

The math doesn't add up. Take one example: California. It has the largest school system in the country and more than half of the state's school buildings are at least 30 years old. California school districts spend approximately \$700 million each year on energy.

It doesn't stop there. Studies also show that children are less distracted and more alert in classrooms with better acoustics and ventilation, more comfortable indoor temperatures and exposure to natural light.

Across the U.S., parents, teachers, and school administrators are joining a national "green schools" movement to improve the energy efficiency and "health" of the nation's public school facilities. At the forefront of this initiative is The Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) which is supported by United Technologies Corp. (UTC).

The Center for Green Schools is sponsoring two UTC Fellows to help drive sustainability efforts for the Sacramento City Unified School District and the Boston Public School System. Under the program, UTC Fellows Phoebe Beierle (Boston) and Farah McDill (Sacramento) are working full time for three years to provide expertise in building, operating and maintaining healthy and sustainable school buildings to fac-



Photo credit: The Center for Green Schools.

Schools all over the country are learning going green can mean spending less and helping students more.

ulty, administration and students. Both are working with their school districts to pinpoint areas where the school district can improve, such as increasing energy efficiency, often involving students in the planning and implementation.

This partnership is an important part of the company's long-term education and sustainability missions. Helping transform America's schools can make them better for the environment, less expensive to operate and healthier places to learn and work.

Want to get involved in the movement? Here are five tips to help you engage your school district:

1. Ready, set—how do we begin?

Start by making a list of potential changes that affect the school's indoor air quality and learning environments. Beierle suggests asking questions, such as: "What sort of policies are in place (green cleaning, integrated pest management, temperature set points) and so on and how are they being implemented? Which schools have the oldest heating and cooling equipment? What kind and how much waste does your school generate?" These issues show where improvements can be made and where money is

being wasted. Knowing these will help you pick a starting point.

2. Give the kids the reins.

"Once you pick a starting point, involve the students," says McDill of adding energy efficiency to the school curriculum. "Explain to them the reason you are trying to make changes, get their ideas and help them create 'green school' projects. Involving students can really help drive awareness of potential solutions."

3. Do the math.

Understand how and why a school building can hinder or help every student and teacher. "For instance," notes McDill. The Center for Green Schools has resources, research and statistics that can be used to develop the "business case" for the investment—and potential savings from green schools.

4. Turn off the lights.

One way to make a simple yet powerful change is by turning off the lights. Electricity accounts for more than 25 percent of a school's energy use. "Starting a school-wide lighting retrofit or a 'Turn Out the Lights' campaign can make an impact not only on the environment but also on the school's energy bills," notes Beierle.

5. Spread the word.

Education doesn't just happen in a classroom. Meet with school officials and board members to help them understand how 'greening' your school will have positive effects on your child's well-being as well as the school's budget. In the end, it benefits all—students and parents, as well as administration.

For more information on the Fellows program and to access the Center for Green Schools' resources, visit www.centerforgreenschools.org.