



Green Policy Recommendations for Schools

USGBC-STL Green Schools Task Force

June 10, 2008

Schools today, whether private or public, face tight budgets and demands for accountability of student performance. The buildings that students attend affect both budgets and the academic success of those students. The objectives of green school design and construction are to create a learning environment that is cost-effective, improves staff productivity and enhances student learning.

Most school construction, particularly public school construction, takes into account first costs only. This is due in part to the fact that the capital budget for construction and the operating budget for the utilities and maintenance of a building are completely separate. School districts planning new construction, expansion, or renovation of facilities rarely consider the embedded costs for the future operation and maintenance of buildings. Green school design creates a shared path for those who must build and those who must maintain and operate the buildings, enabling them to work together to design and create buildings that consider both capital costs and operating costs and also a learning environment that optimizes students' academic success.

Ever more present today is the pressure for us, as a nation, to become more self-reliant for our energy needs and reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy and, thus, the political pressures that accompany such consumption.

To that end, the St. Louis Regional Chapter of the United States Green Building Council (USGBC-STL) has created the Green Schools Task Force. Our mission is to assist schools and school districts as they evaluate green school construction. Knowing green construction may still be a new concept for some schools, the Chapter would like to provide school districts with a framework and policies that leaders can consider and adopt for the purpose of guiding their facilities improvement decisions. The USGBC-STL recommends that school districts consider the following actions:

- Adopt the LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System for Schools (LEED-S) for new construction and major renovations.
- Adopt the LEED Green Building Rating System for Existing Buildings (LEED-EB) for ongoing operations of new or existing buildings.
- Require that LEED Accredited Professionals (LEED AP) be members of contracting companies hired for new construction and major renovation projects, i.e., more than 10,000 sq. ft.
- Enact policy reallocating all or a portion of the estimated life-cycle cost/utility cost savings to the capital budget.
- Consider requiring a maximum 20 year life cycle related to construction costs.
- Develop a district sustainability plan that addresses:
 - Operations
 - Food Service
 - Purchasing & Procurement
 - Recycling & Solid Waste Reduction
 - Maintenance
 - Travel

U.S. Green Building Council
St. Louis Regional Chapter

3617 Grandel Square
St. Louis, MO 63108
314-577-0854
fax: 314-577-0298
usgbc-stl@robot.org
www.usgbc.org/chapters/stlouis



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- Assign responsibility for implementation, measurement and verification to a specific staff member, e.g., Director of Sustainability, who has or will secure LEED Accredited Professional certification.
- Incorporate education about sustainability into district curricula.

Research has demonstrated that implementing this holistic approach will improve the quality of the learning environment and student performance, in addition to minimizing energy costs and related environmental impacts.