

Get Inspired



ONTARIO
ecoschools
écoécoles
de l'ONTARIO

10
YEARS • ANS

Ontario EcoSchools proudly celebrates ten years of eco-literacy

Ontario EcoSchools is the only voluntary certification program in Ontario that recognizes schools for their environmental learning and actions. This year, we are celebrating a decade of success: growing from 108 certified schools in 2005 to 1,745 certified schools in 2015.

Over the last ten years, we have seen an array of inspiring initiatives. This book showcases the hard work and creativity of the thousands of students and educators who bring the Ontario EcoSchools program to life.

Read this book from cover to cover or open to any page for a quick spark of inspiration and to get a sense of the actions implemented in all six sections. Schools can then choose which initiatives best fit their program.

We encourage you to share this book with all members of your school community to motivate even more people to get on board. Most importantly, get inspired!

TEAMWORK AND LEADERSHIP



STUDENT LEADERSHIP • COMMUNICATION • VISIBILITY • ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT • WORKSHOPS SKILL BUILDING

Go Green, EcoTeam!

Build a strong EcoTeam

At the core of a strong EcoSchool is an active group of students and adults. A range of grades makes for a well-rounded team, and involving school principals, teachers, parents, and custodial staff gives students the support they need to succeed.

TIPS:

- Invite students to join your school EcoTeam early in the school year, and plan fun team building games so students can get to know one another.
- Have meetings at regular intervals (weekly, biweekly) so students can lead, plan, and organize events and actions.
- Consider developing an application process and leadership training for the EcoTeam members to add value to their participation.
- Consider team succession and plan to have a range of grades and backgrounds on your team so that students grow into leadership roles over the course of years.



EcoReps and Roles

Build a strong EcoTeam

Defining roles and representation in your EcoTeam can help students understand their responsibilities as well as spread the word about your actions quickly and effectively.

TIPS:

- EcoReps can be from each classroom or divided into subcommittees.
- EcoReps can be assigned to specific tasks in the classroom as well as attend EcoTeam meetings, communicate EcoActions, and monitor for areas of improvement and success.
- Elect a minister of the environment as part of your school's student council.
- If you have a small EcoTeam, consider focusing on one section at a time throughout the year (e.g. waste minimization in the fall, energy conservation in the winter).



Green Mentors

Build a strong EcoTeam

Both elementary and secondary EcoTeams can benefit from mentorship throughout the school year. It builds strong student leadership, capacity, and a succession plan for future years.

TIPS:

- Have green mentors conduct energy and waste monitoring together to support the training of new members.
- Create a reading-buddies program that focuses on environmental books, or have older students plan and facilitate an event, with fun activities for younger students.
- Secondary-school mentoring can be a great way to teach EcoSchools tasks, such as mulching trees or recycling.
- School-to-school mentorship is an excellent way for seasoned EcoSchools to share EcoTeam tips and program ideas with other schools.

Building Skills

Build a strong EcoTeam

Workshops, webinars, and whole school presentations are invaluable ways to add skills and knowledge to your EcoSchools program. Invite both students and staff to participate.

TIPS:

- Check out local organizations that can host workshops on green topics or outdoor teaching techniques.
- Invite an environmental organization to give a whole school presentation on an environmental issue. As a follow-up, ask students to write reflections, make pledges, or take action on that issue.
- Webinars are a great way for your entire EcoTeam to get expert information. Watch them live and participate, or watch a recording to get your team informed about local and global environmental actions.



Thanks for helping to make
our school green.



Miss Bergourin's class

Staff Appreciation

Build a strong EcoTeam

It's important to acknowledge the great efforts of school staff. This can build support for EcoTeam activities, maintain goodwill, and recognize all the work that staff do to support your EcoSchools program.

TIPS:

- Give monthly green teacher awards to recognize eco-achievements.
- Have teacher appreciation days; for example, bring staff fair-trade coffee or organic treats in thanks for their efforts.
- Host a lunch for your caretaker, teachers, and administration. This will give students an opportunity to ask questions and say thanks.

Make a Plan

Organization for a successful year

Once your EcoTeam is established, brainstorm your actions for the year. Start small and build on your success: select one or two key initiatives that your EcoTeam wants to address and then make an action plan.

TIPS:

- Use the EcoSchools Yearly Planner to map out your EcoTeam goals and activities.
- Link EcoSchool events to national or international environmental events to bring more attention to your cause.
- Consider your long-term EcoTeam goals and work toward them. Think about what support and resources you will need and ask for in advance.



It's All in a Name

Raising your EcoTeam's profile

EcoHeroes, Earth Eagles, EcoPatrol, GreenDreams: these are examples of fun, catchy names that will capture your mission and distinguish your EcoTeam.

TIPS:

- Many EcoTeams divide up tasks in their group. One idea is to have fun names associated with each task - for example, Green Bin Gators, Recycle Rangers, EcoMonitors.
- Make buttons, reuse old T-shirts, and create costumes that highlight your EcoTeam name. This is a great way to be visible in your school.
- Make sure your EcoTeam name is on all communications to create your own unique "brand."
- Write an EcoSchools Mission for your school. This can help solidify your long-term vision, give direction to your actions, and communicate your overall goal to your entire school. Post it somewhere prominent or announce it in your school newsletter to get the word out.



EcoMascots

Raising your EcoTeam's profile

Mascots are a fun and visible way to represent your EcoTeam. One French language school had an eco-superhero named Mme. Lumière as its energy conservation mascot.

TIPS:

- Green your school mascot: for example, if your mascot is an eagle, paint the eagle a shade of green or add leaves to its wings.
- Keep your mascot in a visible area, or use it as part of EcoTeam announcements and assemblies.
- Run an EcoTeam mascot contest: students can create mascots out of recycled materials or submit design ideas on GOOS (good on one side) paper. Invite students to vote for their favourite.



Announce Yourself!

Effective whole school communication

Regular school announcements are a wonderful way to connect with the whole school and keep everyone updated on EcoTeam actions. Let your creativity soar by incorporating skits, jingles, songs, and tag lines to hook your audience into participating.

TIPS:

- Use music: repurpose popular songs to share green messages or get budding musicians to create a tune.
- Share regular green facts and tips: consider connecting your facts to your local community for personal connection and world statistics for a global perspective.



Get Visual

Effective whole school communication

Indoor displays can let everyone know you're an EcoSchool and showcase initiatives throughout the year. The most successful displays are student-created, posted in high-traffic locations, vibrant, and updated regularly.

TIPS:

- Create bulletin boards for different sections of the program (Teamwork and Leadership, School Ground Greening). This is a great way to highlight key areas of action.
- Use signs to showcase results in the program (i.e. Waste Audit results) and upcoming events such as Earth Day.
- Indoor murals can also be a colourful way to celebrate your EcoSchools program. Outdoor murals are a beautiful addition to school grounds and gardens.
- If your school has video announcements, a newscast or Green Morning Show can be a creative way to share key actions.



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ



tiful murals depicting the Lynde Shores wetland.

g...network. We are working with each other to deepen our understand-

are the WILD.

WASTE FREE LUNCH CHALLENGE

Congratulations to Mrs. Campbell's class on their receipt of a reward for their efforts in the Waste Free Lunch Challenge. In the fall students worked for one week to reduce their lunch

waste from 20 grams per student to just 2.0 grams per student per day. Students learned to pack in reusable containers and not waste food. Each student will receive a stainless steel

reusable water bottle program was sponsored by the Recycling Council of Ontario and prizes were provided from Metro

Broadcast Your Best *Effective whole school communication*

Green actions are often newsworthy. Include EcoTeam goals and successes in your school's newsletter to engage more people in your EcoSchools program.

TIPS:

- Communicate online: start an EcoBlog, open a Twitter account, or create an EcoSchools page for your school website.
- Include eco-updates in a regular section in your school's monthly newsletter.
- Send a press release to local papers about your event. It may get you and your great actions in the news!

WINTER WALK TO SCHOOL DAY

It is wonderful to see all of the families who continue to walk to school in the winter weather. What a great way to stay fit and breathe fresh air. Today was Winter Walk to School Day. Students who walk to school on this day

will receive a sticker to recognize their efforts. Tuesday/Thursday Kindergarten students will receive their sticker on Thursday.



SAVING ENERGY IN OUR SCHOOL

Classes have started monitoring how often they remember to turn off lights and computers. Keeping school doors closed as

much as possible to keep heat in is also needed.



Eco-Assemblies

Effective whole school communication

Celebrate your environmental spirit as a school community and hold an assembly to inspire everyone for a great year.

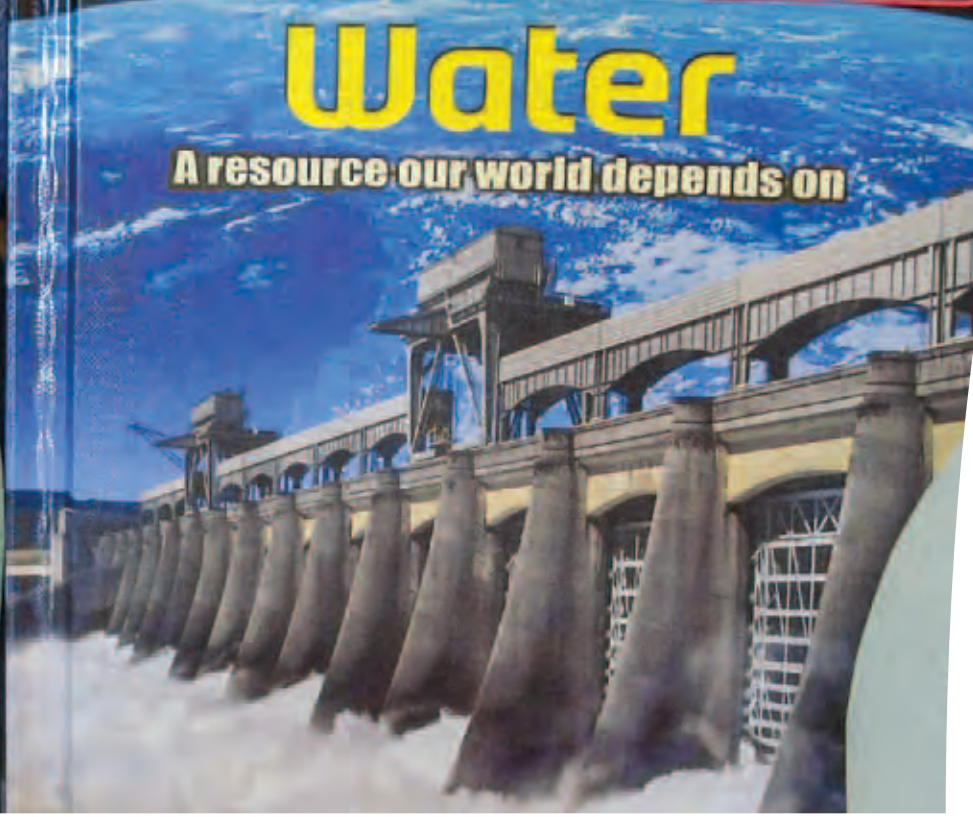
TIPS:

- Kick off the year with a whole school assembly where the EcoTeam shares annual goals and exciting actions.
- Invite outside speakers to present on environmental issues and connect it to a related eco-action for all students.
- Hold assemblies for environmental campaigns such as World Water Week, the Great Big Crunch, Sweater Day, and Earth Hour to create a sense of collective fun and purpose.
- Give out EcoAwards at assemblies to reward classroom or student efforts, and update students and staff on participation and successes throughout the year.



Water

A resource our world depends on



The average dishwasher uses over 100 litres per cycle.

Share Facts and Stats

Effective whole school communication

For long-term impact, it's important to "think green" by sharing interesting facts, inspiring quotes, and fun quizzes to keep your school engaged in the EcoSchools program.

TIPS:

- Share weekly green tips or facts through morning announcements.
- Edenbrook Hill in Peel created a "green dare" each day of the school year to encourage participation in turning off lights, recycling, and bringing waste-free lunches to school.
- Create a "green idea" bin where students can share potential actions they wish to take.
- Have quizzes or Jeopardy games where everyone participates in learning about the environment.

22.7% of our waste was food packaging! In one year, our school makes over **3200 lbs** of food packaging waste! If we pack our lunches using more reusable containers, we could make a lot less waste!

ENERGY CONSERVATION



CONSISTENT SIGNAGE • MONITORING • EVALUATION • STUDENT INQUIRY • CELEBRATION

Switch Off

Effective whole school communication

To get everyone on board, highlight energy conservation practices on prominent signage with clear and simple instructions.

TIPS:

- Encourage each classroom to create its own poster reminding people to turn off the lights and other electronics, and display the posters in highly visible areas.
- Have the EcoTeam put up “lights off” stickers throughout the school. Other reminders include eco door-hangers and dry-erase posters for tracking when and where lights haven’t been turned off.
- Keeping school doors open in winter or summer can lead to a large energy loss, so post signs that remind everyone to close the doors.
- Create an Energy EcoWall to provide tips and showcase results of energy conservation practices.



Energy Awards

Incentives to get everyone involved

There are many creative ways to highlight your school's eco-achievements. Giving awards to classrooms that are switching lights off can build momentum around energy conservation at your school.

TIPS:

- Award participants with golden light bulbs, flashlights, lamps, or energy meters created out of reusable items.
- Feature student-created awards that can be posted to doors.
- On a weekly or monthly basis, recognize classrooms or students for their hard work or celebrate them at a whole school assembly.



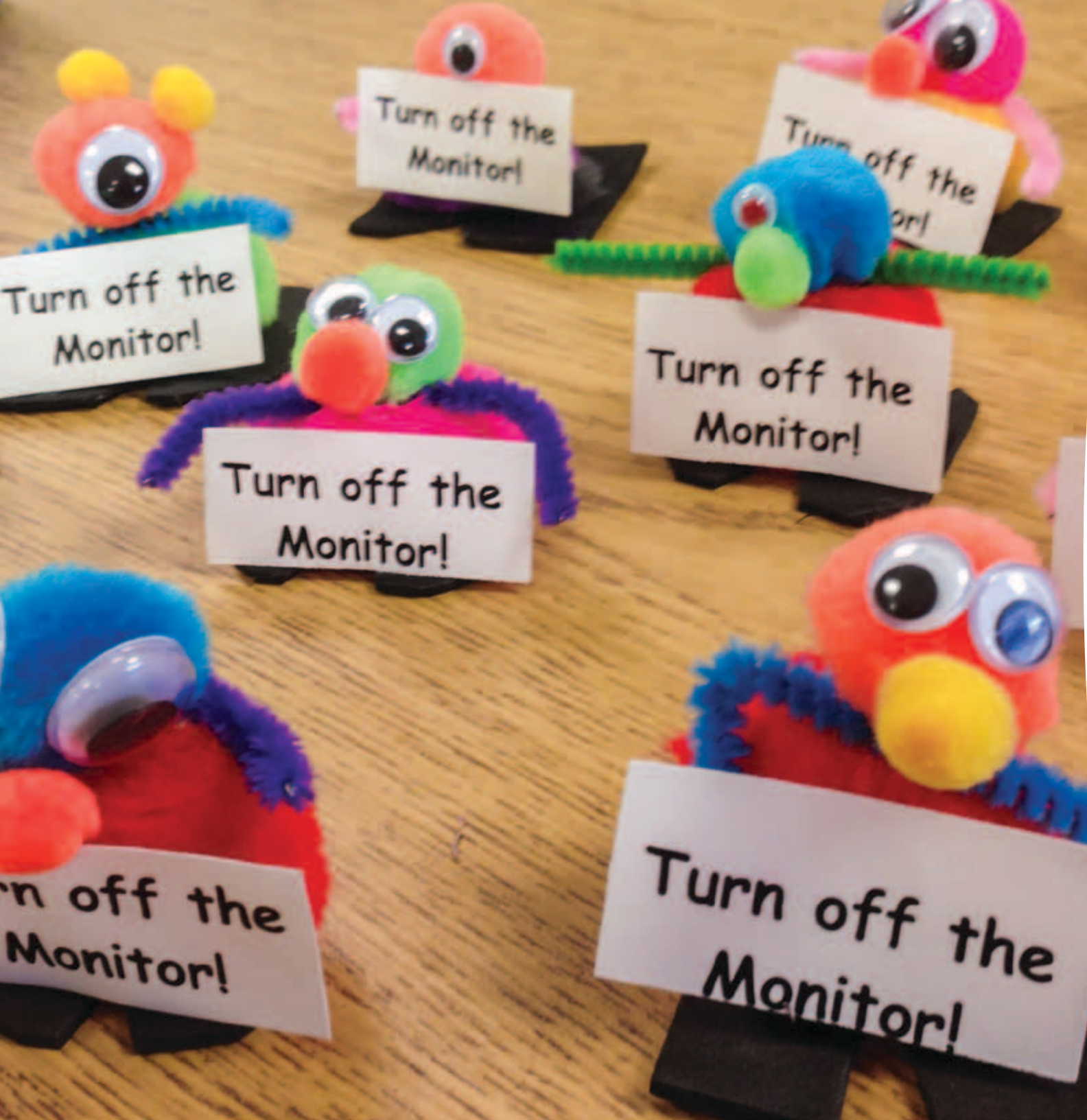
Computer Monitor Monsters

Incentives to get everyone involved

Made out of pompoms and googly eyes, these friendly “monsters” can be left in libraries and computer labs to remind users to turn off monitors when they leave.

TIPS:

- Another option is a laminated monster cut-out that is attached by Velcro to a computer monitor. When the monitor is in use, the monster is stuck on the computer. When the monitor is turned off, the monster is removed.
- Make large and colourful posters for the front wall of the computer lab that reminds users to shut down their monitors before leaving the room.



Energy Hog

Incentives to get everyone involved

Many schools use “energy hogs” as playful reminders to classrooms when their lights and devices have been left on.

TIPS:

- Come up with an energy hog mascot that is unique to your school. For one school, “Energy Eddie” is the energy hog. Students leave Energy Eddie on a classroom desk if lights are left on when the room is empty. To get rid of Energy Eddie, that class must find another classroom that has left their lights on.
- For a fun take on encouraging energy conservation at the secondary level, ask prominent members of the school community to pose as energy hogs for posters.



Energy EcoTrackers

Monitor, evaluate, and celebrate

Enlist both students and adults in school-wide energy consumption monitoring.

TIPS:

- Create an EcoTracker team, identified by T-shirts or badges, that monitors lights and other electronics (computer monitors, smartboards, LCD projectors) to ensure everything is turned off when not in use.
- Keep track and report back: checklists, report cards, green points, stickers, and stars can track habits and celebrate change.
- Investigate energy use: use Ontario EcoSchools' Classroom Lighting Assessment or School Energy Consumption Assessment to investigate the impact of everyday energy use in your school. Share your results for a larger impact.



Caretakers & Custodial Staff, VIP

Monitor, evaluate, and celebrate

School caretakers and custodians are integral to your EcoSchool program success. Be sure to meet and talk with them about new initiatives to get project buy-in and support.

TIPS:

- Work with your custodian to set and monitor the energy used by the HVAC system (heating and cooling for your school).
- Discuss ways the EcoTeam can help monitor and track potential leaks in the water system and a good method of communicating them in a timely manner.
- One school board held a “Stewardship of Creation Award” where schools nominated their custodians for their environmental leadership.



Keep It Clear, Clean, Closed

Make an even larger impact

Use awareness of heating and cooling systems to augment your energy savings and reduce your school's ecological footprint.

TIPS:

- In the winter, close blinds at the end of the day to keep the heat in. In warmer months, close blinds in the afternoon to keep your classroom cool.
- To make sure your system has proper cold-air return, keep school vents clear. Watch for books covering window vents and posters blocking wall vents.
- Air flow within a building can affect how much energy is needed to heat it and keep it cool. Keeping outside doors closed as much as possible can ensure your school energy levels stay consistent.



Sunsational Schools

Make an even larger impact

Use natural light on sunny days to conserve energy. This does not mean learning in the dark - it just means looking for opportunities to reduce energy use when sufficient light is available.

TIPS:

- If you have natural light in your classroom, use half-bank or full natural light to make an impact.
- Make an announcement on sunny days to encourage participation, such as "Today's nice and bright; consider turning off a light."
- Get a team together and sit down with your custodian and school administration to assess areas in the school that could benefit from half-bank lighting. Are there bright hallways with windows? Does your library have a skylight?





Lights Out Lunch

Make an even larger impact

A great practice is to turn off lights in areas of the school where there is enough natural sunlight during lunchtime.

TIPS:

- Hold a regular Lights Out Lunch - once a month, weekly, or even every day. Track which classrooms take part and celebrate the classes that participate the most at the end of the week.
- Ask teachers to use half-bank lighting on bright, sunny days to conserve even more energy.
- At the secondary level, consider hosting a lunchtime event where cafeteria lights are dimmed or turned off when possible. It could be a romantic theme or a spooky theme - whatever works to get students engaged.

Inquiring on Impact

Enhance learning through inquiry

Learn about your school's energy use through Ontario EcoSchools resources and student-led investigation.

TIPS:

- The Classroom Lighting Assessment and School Energy Consumption Assessment are both great places to begin the inquiry, and you can find them at ontarioecoschools.org.
- Go one step further and research energy dashboards, look into your Hydro provider, and do energy calculations in the classroom. Share the results and numbers with the rest of your school.




Phantom-Load Ghost Busters

Enhance learning through inquiry

When devices are left plugged in or on, they use “phantom energy.” Take action to reduce this often unseen energy waste.

TIPS:

- Knowledge is power: do a classroom audit to see what’s left plugged in, and use a watt meter to see how much energy is being used. Multiply this by the days in the year to determine the total impact. Ontario EcoSchools’ Appliance Audit Worksheet can guide you through this investigation.
- Cooperate on solutions: once you have estimated the impact of phantom power in your school, communicate your findings and implement an action plan to minimize energy waste.



Use a power bar for TVs, VCRs, DVD players and satellite receivers. They use phantom energy. If you never turn them on all year this phantom energy will cost you as much as powering your refrigerator all year.

WASTE MINIMIZATION



CONSISTENT SIGNAGE • MONITORING • EVALUATION • STUDENT INQUIRY • CELEBRATION

Share What Goes Where

Create effective systems

Make waste reduction a visible part of your school community. Create clear and colourful signage to let students know what to put where and help build everyday habits.

TIPS:

- Improve waste-sorting practices by posting signage directly above paired waste and recycling bins.
- Have the EcoTeam research what items can be recycled, and share that information through signage and announcements.
- Make 3-D signs with examples of recyclable items – it's both practical and creative.
- Launch your waste reduction efforts with a recycling relay, where students race to put waste items in the correct bin.



One-Stop Waste Stations

Create effective systems

One-stop waste stations make it easy for students to sort their recycling, garbage, and organics into the right categories. Place bins together in convenient areas of the school to cut down on contamination.

TIPS:

- To ensure adequate space, put sorting stations in wide hallways or other common areas, such as the school cafeteria or library.
- Added value: students can also make “recycling centres” for items that can be reused or recycled but are not included in regular collection, including light bulbs, ink cartridges, cell phones, and eyeglasses.



Waste-Free Lunch

Create effective systems

Cutting back on food waste and packaging can have a big impact on the environment. Support and motivate weekly or daily waste-free and boomerang lunches by creating a reward system.

TIPS:

- Make it positive and voluntary: have students present their waste-free lunches to lunchroom monitors to be entered into a monthly prize draw.
- Create a “got it, need it” bin: students with extra reusable containers can place them in the bin for students who might need them. Place the bin in the office or library for easy access.
- Celebrate the classrooms who’ve worked hard at being waste free. Get creative: share a waste-free snack like popcorn or ice cream or award a golden lunch box.



GOOS Bin It

Create effective systems

Save paper and save trees by having a GOOS paper (good on one side) bin in all classrooms, offices, and printer rooms in your school.

TIPS:

- Get the EcoTeam or classrooms to decorate their own GOOS bins. Have a contest and award a prize for the most creative.
- Post instructions on how to use GOOS bin paper on the printer so it's easy for teachers and staff to get in the habit.
- Share tips on how teachers and students can use GOOS paper for draft work, quizzes, notes, and more.
- Fundraise for EcoSchools projects by creating GOOS paper notebooks, and sell them to the school community.




Reusable Dishware

Create effective systems


Reduce waste at school by introducing reusable dishware for cafeteria meals and school events.

TIPS:

- Work with your school cafeteria to have reusable containers accepted for lunches and snacks.
- Keep reusable utensils or plates in your classroom or a set that can be signed out at the office.
- Collect dishes to use in the staff room, and provide water jugs instead of bottled water at events and meetings.
- Did you bring your own mug? Receive free hot chocolate or coffee at school events.



EcoTeam Reuseable cups and bowls



EcoTeam Reuseable cups and bowls

Target Contamination

Monitor, evaluate, and celebrate

Conduct a waste audit and identify target items to reduce contamination. Approximately one-third of all recycling ends up in landfill due to contamination.

TIPS:

- Based on the results of your waste audit, create a whole school targeted campaign to make sure items that are causing contamination are ending up in the correct waste stream.
- Common items include single-use water bottles, disposable coffee cups, juice jammers, and yogurt cups.



Show Off Your Audit

Monitor, evaluate, and celebrate

Have you done something to be proud of? Celebrate and motivate your school through a visual display of waste minimization results.

TIPS:

- Share your Walkabout, EcoReview, and waste audit results in a well-trafficked area on colourful posters.
- In secondary schools, use social media to share your results and celebrations. Tweet it! Post it! Pin it!
- Include lots of high-impact visuals – such as photos, easy-to-understand graphs, and reusable items found in the garbage.
- Invite people to come and visit during your audit with an informed EcoTeam host to highlight the worst offenders (i.e. the most mis-sorted items).



Celebrate With Gold

Incentives to get everyone involved

There are many creative ways to highlight your school's eco-achievements. One winning idea in waste minimization is to paint an object gold and award it to those who've made exceptional efforts.

TIPS:

- Golden awards could include golden lunch boxes, garbage cans, or even dustpans.
- On a weekly or monthly basis, award the golden item to classrooms or students in recognition of their hard work or place it in a prominent area in your school as a reminder.
- Give Waste-Free Wednesday awards to students who use reusable containers for their lunch.
- One school created a Scooter the Skunk mascot, who sings, "You've been skunked, you've been skunked, and your recycling is full of junk," to encourage proper sorting of waste items. They also awarded classrooms with minimal contamination a weekly Earth Angel award.



THE GOLDEN LUNCHBOX

Compost, Compost

Make an even larger impact

Composting helps reduce food scraps in the landfill and CO₂. There are many ways your school can begin to introduce composting.

TIPS:

- Look into municipal or city composting systems and see what requirements are needed for your school.
- Schools without clear composting guidelines can start small through classroom composting or boomerang lunches – just be sure to communicate clearly and early with parents.
- Introduce new life into the classroom by vermicomposting. Worm bins on wheels are a great way to share the responsibility between different classrooms.
- Talk with your custodial staff about compost and green bin options.
- Integrate composting as a project for your school ground greening: feed the earth with black gold.



SCHOOL GROUND GREENING



ENGAGE STUDENTS IN EVERY PHASE • INCREASE BIODIVERSITY • GET OUTSIDE

Master Plan

Plan with a purpose

Think ahead and dream big when planning your school ground greening project.

TIPS:

- Have students shape how their school grounds can look: take a survey or have a contest that invites students to share their dreams for their school grounds.
- Create a plan that can be implemented in stages. This way the overall vision is clear, so when materials and support becomes available you can implement your plan.
- Get expert advice: contact your board to see if your planned project is in the spot where future portables might be built; contact the city for development information; contact a landscape architect for design help - this could even be a parent from your community.



Mrs. Hunwicks,
Mrs Smith, Mrs Z
& Miss Addario's
FDK class
design the new
playground.

Take the Pulse

Engage students in all stages of the project

A great way to deeply engage the whole school in your greening project is to conduct a survey or run a design contest.

TIPS:

- Run a design contest: hand out design templates, introduce design options, and let student creativity go wild. Have your greening committee select the best ones to be displayed in a central location. At the secondary level, ask horticultural and tech classes to offer expert advice.
- Create a survey: keep it short and simple, and have members of the greening committee collect and analyze results. Surveys can be great for deciding between different greening options or species.
- Use technology: set up your survey online using a free software program like SurveyMonkey, and then encourage students and teachers to participate by offering an incentive.





Grassroots Fundraising

Support your greening project

Fundraising can help projects get off the ground or enhance existing green spaces. Involve students at every stage of development.

TIPS:

- Sell plants: grow plants in your school greenhouse, and then sell them at a Mother's Day or spring fundraiser.
- To raise money for a food garden, students can research locally grown foods and recipes to add to a school cookbook. Be sure to include the benefits of eating local!
- Get classrooms to choose photos of their favourite plants and flowers for a calendar that highlights garden dreams. Sell these to your school community during the holidays.



Community-Powered Greening

Support your greening project

Make your greening project a community affair by inviting members of the community to contribute their time and expertise.

TIPS:

- Ask for plants: one industrious kindergarten class sent handwritten letters to parents to ask for native seed or seedling donations for their greening project.
- Get donations: go to your local garden nursery or lumberyard and ask for in-kind donations. Consider asking a hardware store to donate essential gardening tools.
- Contact a local building developer and ask for scrap materials, or ask for trees from development lots to be relocated to the school ground.
- Ask for time: partner with community centres, summer camps, or seniors' residences to get help with gardening and summer maintenance.



Apply for Grants

Support your greening project

School ground greening is a very popular and widespread movement in Canada, and many grants exist for student projects.

TIPS:

- Let students lead the way. Encourage students to conduct the research, write the grants, and estimate budgets. Have a teacher or community member review the applications before submitting.
- Research online or visit ontarioecoschools.org for a list of possible school ground greening grants. Pay close attention to deadlines and plan ahead.
- Contact your local municipality for greening or tree planting programs.



Themed Gardens

Enhance biodiversity and rich learning spaces

If your greening project is a garden, it can have extra impact if you focus on one theme.

TIPS:

- Themed gardens can focus on colours (rainbow garden), smells and textures (sensory garden), a country or culture (First Nations garden), a time period (victory or pioneer garden), or a specific use (food garden).
- Plant a medicinal garden with herbs, flowers, and plants that have been used for healing throughout history.
- Alphabet gardens can have a plant for each letter of the alphabet as an aid to young readers. Food gardens connected to culinary-arts programs can give hands-on experience to secondary school students.



Create Shade

Enhance biodiversity and rich learning spaces

Planting a tree is a long-term commitment to a healthy earth: promoting shade, oxygen, and green space.

TIPS:

- Plant a tree on your school grounds and invite the entire school to take part. Invite a local dignitary, musician, and parents from the community to celebrate your event.
- Plant large native trees: trees with a large caliper (trunk diameter) tend to do better in high-traffic school grounds. Research trees that do well in your ecozone and that are hardy.
- Plan for tree care: before you break ground, organize a group committed to tree care. Consider tree protection and learn what tree cages are available from your board. Schedule regular watering and weeding sessions, and mulch your trees to minimize soil compaction.



Grow Local Species

Enhance biodiversity and rich learning spaces

Think local, grow local to cut down on carbon emissions and build biodiversity.

TIPS:

- Invite students to conduct a research project that investigates plants that are native to your school's specific ecozone. Focus on planting these on your school grounds.
- Plant a greening project that attracts and feeds local insect and bird species. A pollinator garden is a great way to support the struggling honey-bee population. Add milkweed for monarchs as well.





Milliken Mills PS Eco Garden

Nature Study Areas

Enhance biodiversity and rich learning spaces

Nature study areas (no-mow zones) are outdoor spaces that are left to grow into rich spaces that increase biodiversity over time.

TIPS:

- Nature study areas have low start-up costs and require little management outside of regular litter pickups. Invite students to watch the transformation from a mown area to a diverse ecosystem.
- Mark it: plan with your custodial staff and create visible signs or fencing for your outdoor nature study areas. Add native species seeds to enhance the succession process.



Invasive Plant I.D.

Caring for green school grounds

Invasive plants are non-native species that dominate native species in natural areas. Through education and action, students can help reduce the spread of these plants.

TIPS:

- Research and identify the common invasive species in your region, and educate your school community about them. Create “Most Wanted” posters of common invasives.
- Do your best to remove invasive plants on or near your school grounds, or volunteer to help out at local conservation areas.



Dog Strangling Vine



Garlic Mustard



White Mulberry Seedling



Common Buckthorn



Manitoba Maple Seedling

Mulch Is Magic

Caring for green school grounds

Planting a tree can add life, shade, and biodiversity to your school grounds. Set up your tree for success by planning for mulching, summer care, and tree protection before you break ground.

TIPS:

- Bucket watering: when a tree is newly planted, it needs a lot of water to get established. Get some five-gallon buckets and drill small holes in the bottom, and have students take turns watering twice a week.
- Mulch helps protect trees from damage. Establish a mulching team, get the community involved, or have math classes calculate how much mulch is needed per tree.
- Adopt a tree: one elementary school planted a tree for each grade, so as students entered the next grade, they took care of a new native species.



Come One, Come All

*Encourage regular use
of outdoor space*

Invite families and community members into your garden oasis through creative outreach. This can be a great fundraiser as well.

TIPS:

- Students can plan a garden party or create a garden-tour brochure that fosters an engaging experience.
- Vibrant art projects or student-made signage can add educational elements and beauty to your greening area. Make welcome signs with information about your space and the species planted there.



Outdoor Classroom

*Encourage regular use
of outdoor space*

The outdoor classroom is an opportunity for classes to get outside in all weather.

TIPS:

- If you are an educator who feels comfortable taking your class outside, invite other educators into your classroom so they can build their skills.
- Purchase a set of portable chairs, build wooden benches, or make a set of class “sit-upons” (milk bag mats or cut-up foam pads) so it is easy to go outside. Some schools use old tree stumps for seats.
- Post an outdoor classroom sign-up sheet online or in a central location such as the library.

CURRICULUM



Nature Journal

*Student-directed learning
and reflection*

Students can use creative approaches to observe and record how nature changes around them.

TIPS:

- Ask students to record their personal experiences and then display the completed work in a central location or at a parent information night.
- For a classroom project such as a terrarium or growing seedlings, have students use their observation skills to record the growing process.
- In secondary schools or in specific classrooms, encourage creativity through multimedia: photography, Instagram, video, and blogging are all effective and evocative ways to journal.



Green Books

Student-directed learning and reflection

There are many great books across grade levels that teach and talk about the environment – dig in!

TIPS:

- Hold a book fair featuring environmental reading options.
- Create an eco-book display in the school library.
- Invite an author in to speak about an environmental book.
- Collect a reading list of eco-friendly books and share with teachers and students alike.



Get Handy

*Student-directed learning
and reflection*

Invest in big student-led projects that build the green infrastructure of your school.

TIPS:

- Construction technology classes can create seating from recycled material or weld protective tree cages for school ground greening projects.
- Transportation technology classes can conduct emission testing on cars and share facts on emissions with the whole school via graphs and facts.
- Going the extra mile: at one school, technological design classes gathered used solar panels and installed them on the school roof.

For the Birds

*Student-directed learning
and reflection*

Setting up a bird feeder can benefit local birds and students alike. Students can learn identification skills, collect sighting data, and develop their sense of place, whether inside or outside the classroom.

TIPS:

- Invite a local expert to take your class on a nature walk where students watch for birds and learn their calls.
- Technological design classes can make bird feeders for the school as part of their in-class work.
- Set up a bird feeder outside your classroom window and track visits and species on a chart.
- Collect and post pictures of native birds so students can identify who visits the feeder. Share this with the whole school.



Nature in the Classroom

Student-directed learning and reflection

Bring nature and environmental awareness into the classroom through creative projects.

TIPS:

- Create a tree poster or mural where students can post leaves with their personal green pledges.
- Make a visual forest in your classroom and invite students to add native species.
- Engage in a targeted nature-awareness campaign with your class and then share information with the whole school via announcements and posters.
- Build a terrarium, raise monarch butterflies, or start native plants for transplant in your classroom.

To Be Green or Not To Be Green

Raising environmental awareness

A great way to talk about environmental issues is through student skits, presentations, or productions. Get serious about being green by having a little fun!

TIPS:

- Videotape a classroom environmental play and share it with the whole school, or film prominent members of your school community doing EcoSchools actions and share it with the school as motivation.
- Live performances are a creative way to share green ideas, from puppet shows to teacher skits, to plays where the whole class is featured.
- If your school produces a musical or theatrical play each year, consider one that has an environmental theme.



Get Innovative

Raising environmental awareness

Challenge students to get innovative and explore environmental issues through cross-curricular projects that incorporate multiple classrooms.

TIPS:

- Create a school Dragons' Den: ask students to design a green product and have teachers determine whether it could receive funding. Make it a school-wide contest.
- Create a green city plan that explains what a sustainable city needs.
- In math class, figure out the waste generated by different products and redesign packaging to be more environmentally friendly.



Creative Non-Consumerism

Raising environmental awareness

Think outside the box and ask how you and your school can cut down on consumerism.

TIPS:

- Have your class participate in Buy Nothing Day: for instance, use class time for students to investigate their consumer habits and come up with green alternatives.
- Hold a swap or re-gifting party where students can bring in items to trade.
- Use old cards or calendars to decorate classrooms, or, as one class did, melt down old crayons to make new ones.

Cross-Disciplinary Learning

Raising environmental awareness

Dig deep into environmental education by making connections between subject areas and divisions.

TIPS:

- Create a whole school theme for environmental learning and have all grade levels teach a class linked to the theme – for example, water awareness, monarch butterfly conservation, or a climate change focus.
- Expand environmental learning into disciplines beyond science. Incorporate math, art, and languages, and cross-pollinate to create rich engagement.
- In secondary schools, work on cross-disciplinary planning and inter-departmental coordination to create strong learning opportunities.



Wonder Walks

Developing inquiry-based thinking skills

Fall, winter, and spring are fantastic times for students to get outdoors to learn and develop their observation skills. Have students take the lead for a new level of active learning.

TIPS:

- Get a classroom to plan a hike through a nearby nature area or through the neighbourhood, and have students write “tour guide” notes about local species.
- Secondary students can create brochures, guides, or species lists of the school grounds. Invite community members to explore the area with these new resources.
- Go on a field trip to a local conservation area to identify trees and animal tracks.
- Do a walking meditation where students pay attention to their five senses.

Biodiversity Survey

Developing inquiry-based thinking skills

As part of the curriculum, get out those magnifying glasses and do a close-to-home survey of your local ecosystem.

TIPS:

- Explore and survey the life in your schoolyard or in neighbouring parks, forests, and wetlands as a wonderful hands-on addition to science classes.
- Based on this survey, consider remediation measures to bolster biodiversity or share your information with your school in a display, featuring planting, soil enhancement, and clean-up activities.



Conservation Area Connections

Developing inquiry-based thinking skills

Your local conservation authority or provincial park can be a rich source of knowledge and access to natural areas.

TIPS:

- Classroom field trips: students can visit conservation areas and learn about local ecosystems.
- High school volunteer hours: many conservation authorities have programs that engage students in protecting and enhancing their conservation areas.
- Other opportunities to get active could be planting trees or maintaining trails.



ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP



ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING • ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION • WHOLE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Earth Week, Earth Month!

Global campaign, local impact

Earth Week in April is an excellent time to promote a school culture of environmental sustainability.

TIPS:

- Have specific focuses each day of the week: Meatless Monday, Tupperware Tuesday, Walking Wednesday, Thrift Thursday, Waste-Free Friday.
- Hold an eco-themed assembly or invite a local environmental organizer to share their cause.
- Embrace a whole month of eco-awareness. First week, consider waste awareness; second week, share information about endangered species; third week, get outside and walk to school; fourth week, raise awareness about a local environmental issue.



Celebrate Water

Global campaign, local impact

Celebrate water as an invaluable natural resource by hosting a water awareness campaign.

TIPS:

- World Water Week in March is a great time to teach about the importance of water.
- Focus on the value of safe, healthy tap water; keeping local waterways clean; or global water scarcity issues.
- Hold a Yellow Fish Road or Stream of Dreams campaign to raise awareness about local watersheds and chemicals added to water that have an impact on aquatic life.



Earth Hour

Global campaign, local impact

Earth Hour is an international movement in which people turn off lights for one hour to symbolically recognize the impact of energy use on the environment.

TIPS:

- Earth Hour takes place annually on the last Saturday in March. Schools and school boards usually participate on the Friday before the worldwide event.
- Bring attention to your event by asking students to wear school colours, dress up, or create flower-power hairstyles.
- Keep the momentum going all year long by having a weekly or monthly Earth Hour or Power Hour. Challenge your school to maintain a practice of turning off the lights to support energy conservation.



Ban the Bottle

Make an even larger impact

Single-use water bottles can take hundreds, if not thousands, of years to biodegrade. Consider running a Ban the Bottle campaign to reduce the use of these wasteful products.

TIPS:

- Create a display showing the number of water bottles your school uses in a week to increase awareness.
- Advocate to remove water bottles from vending machines and hold a water taste test to help students understand that tap water tastes great and is good for the environment.
- Consider holding a Great Big Gulp event, where every student takes a sip of tap water at the same time.
- Sell reusable water bottles for fundraisers, and fundraise for hydration stations.



Waste Reduction Week

Make an even larger impact

Celebrate Waste Reduction Week and follow it up with action plans that “upcycle” items that are not recyclable.

TIPS:

- Waste Reduction Week is in October. Make this a campaign by holding a week of waste reduction activities that track school progress and educate students about waste-minimization efforts.
- Work to remove (or upcycle) non-recyclable items from your garbage stream such as batteries, e-waste, and juice jammers. Research companies that will take these items, get the necessary equipment and permissions, then advertise and get everyone involved.
- Upcycling can be a potential fundraiser for your EcoTeam, but be sure you are not creating an unexpected demand for these items through your campaign.



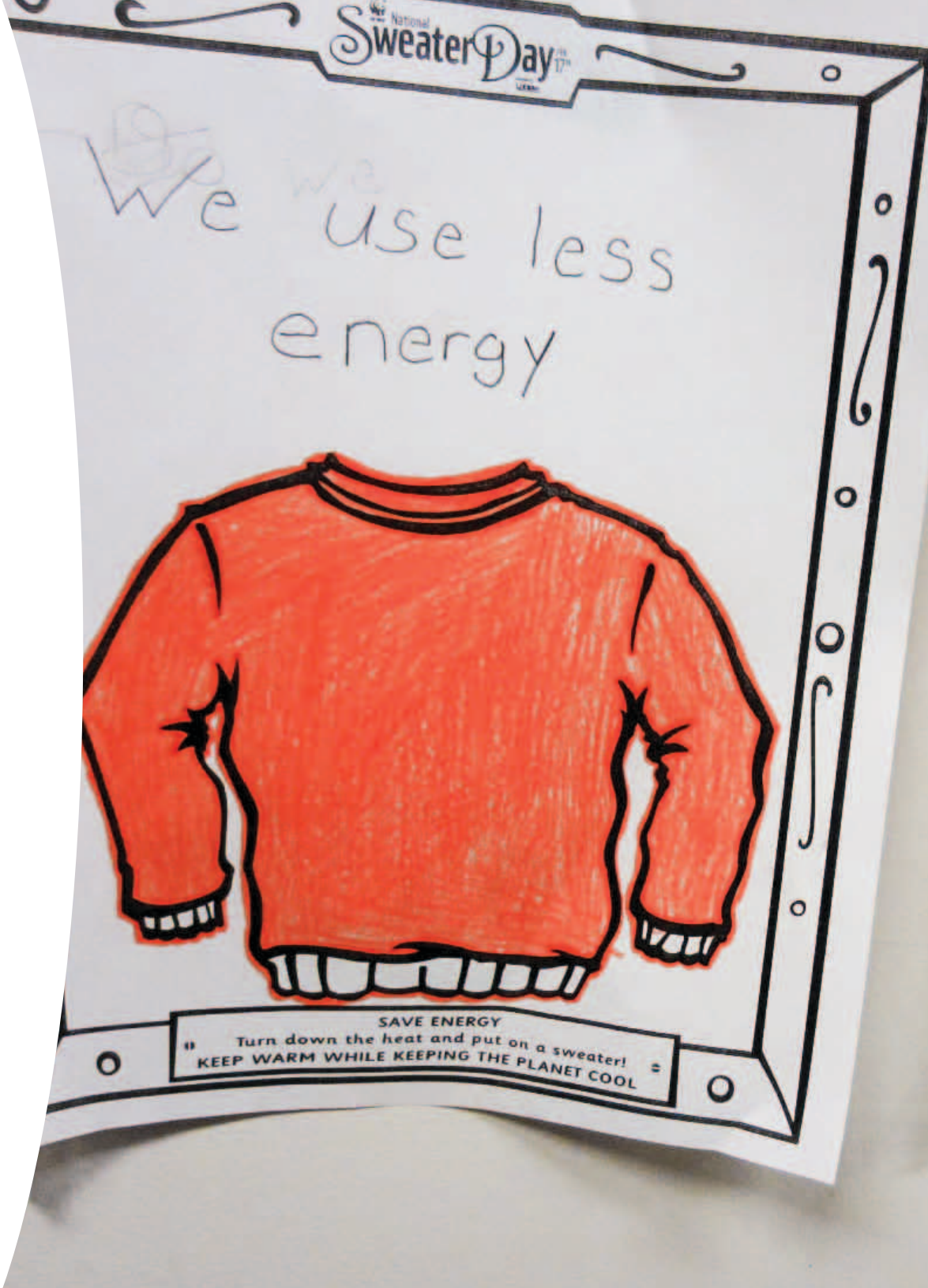
Sweater Stewardship

Make an even larger impact

Hold a campaign to embrace the cooler seasons: put on a sweater, celebrate winter solstice, or collect gently used cozy clothing to reduce your school's impact when the snow is on the ground.

TIPS:

- Participate in National Sweater Day in February or host your own Ugly Sweater Day. Turn down the heat to conserve energy and make an impact. Hold a contest. Take photos.
- The winter solstice is the shortest day of the year. Celebrate the darkness with a power hour: make lanterns and turn off school lights to conserve energy.
- Raise awareness about the impact of buying new clothes, and then collect gently used clothing and coats to donate or share with your school community.



Enviro Film Festival

Greening school events

There are many great films that can inspire students and showcase environmental issues in a creative way.

TIPS:

- Invite a local environmental organization to introduce the film or speak about regional connections to the film's theme.
- Use your film viewing to engage everyone in the environmental topic and empower people to make a difference. This could be as simple as taking a pledge or bringing lunch in a reusable container.
- The Planet in Focus environmental film festival has a great roster of films. Check out their website for ideas.



Green-Themed Science Fair

Greening school events

If your school has an annual science fair, focus on environmental issues.

TIPS:

- Students can research and present ideas on topics such as climate change, the effects of chemicals on ecosystems, product life cycles, and biodegradable product claims.
- Elementary and intermediate schools can complete class projects that focus on environmental themes. Organize a day of sharing by inviting all classrooms to visit other classes' exhibits.



Walk, Roll, Ride to School

*Healthy schools,
healthy environment*

Get students active, healthy, and outdoors by launching a walk, roll, and ride-to-school campaign. Plan safe routes, offer bike-awareness workshops, and make space for scooter parking to enhance participation.

TIPS:

- Mark the beginning of your school's active transportation campaign with personal pledges, a fun assembly, or a welcome party at your school for participants.
- Fundraise for school bike racks to encourage cycling every day. Partner with a local bike shop for tune-up workshops or presentations on cycling skills and safety.
- Track the number of students getting active on their way to school and calculate the impact on the environment. Give participants rewards on arrival: hot chocolate on winter days or delicious lemonade on hot days.

Outdoor EcoOlympics

*Healthy schools,
healthy environment*

Plan a day of outdoor activities that connects environmental action with learning.

TIPS:

- Have different classrooms plan and lead eco-games (such as waste sorting challenges, biodiversity blitzes) during the day. This is an excellent way to establish peer-to-peer learning.
- Hold an environmental scavenger hunt or an all-school Jeopardy game where students test their knowledge or get to know the local environment.
- Get outside in winter, too: hold a class competition to build creative snow sculptures, learn about snowshoeing, and bring reusable mugs to warm up with hot chocolate.



Local Food Fun

*Healthy schools,
healthy environment*

Organize a local food awareness campaign by sharing information about the impact of our food system on the environment.

TIPS:

- As a part of your campaign, contact a nearby farmer or producer to supply your school with local food that students can bite into. Then as a whole school, take a “big crunch” bite.
- Track your food miles by looking at the difference between locally grown and imported food.
- Consider integrating local and organic food into events, meetings, and your cafeteria.

Swap Shop

*Make a difference with
a targeted campaign*

Focus on how what you wear affects the environment via a Swap Shop event, and host an EcoFashion show to get the message out.

TIPS:

- Involve the whole school community by getting students, teachers, staff, and parents to bring in gently used items to swap. You can swap books, gifts, clothes, and household items to raise awareness about consumer habits.
- Secondary Family Studies classes can get creative by repurposing old clothes to make funky new clothing. Organize a school fashion show and connect it with information on the environmental impact of clothing choices.
- Hold a Thrift Tuesday or Thursday where students wear their favourite items from used clothing stores – a great way to popularize buying second-hand.



EcoSummits

Impacting the community

Organize a day of environmental learning alongside hands-on activities. Focus on a theme such as water, climate change, or waste to delve into one specific area.

TIPS:

- Partner with nearby or feeder schools: experienced schools or high schools can lead the way and teach those new to the EcoSchools program.
- Invite local environmental organizations and community members to host mini-workshops for students to attend.



Clean It Up & Protect It Too!

Impacting the community

Participate in a school or community cleanup that teaches students about the impact of littering and waste.

TIPS:

- Get all students and staff involved in a schoolyard cleanup. One innovative school reused Subway sandwich bags, turning them into gloves for students to pick up trash.
- The Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, the 20-Minute Makeover, and Pitch In are all excellent initiatives that connect to a wider community. Cities and municipalities can provide the supplies you need to create a great event.



Connect With Your Community

Impacting the community

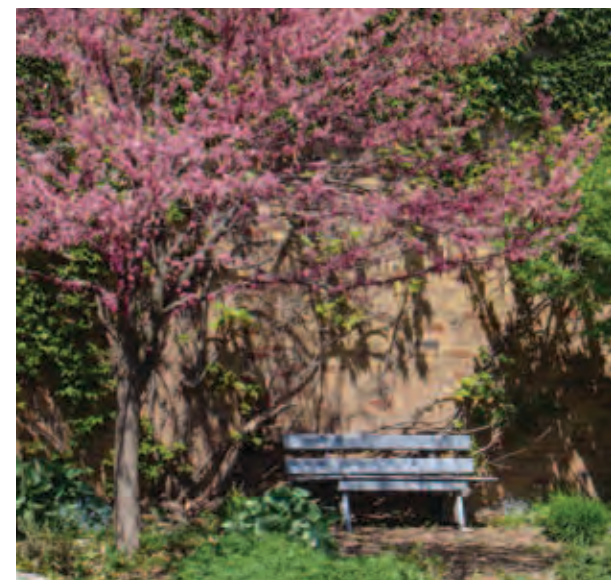
Make a difference close to home by taking your EcoSchools program out into the community.

TIPS:

- Adopt a local green space and enhance learning by inviting teachers to visit with their classes.
- Invite the community to participate in school events such as a clean-up day or garden harvest days.
- Involve your parent community in planning safe routes to school, and designate days where a welcoming group is there to celebrate participation.
- Partner with community members or local organizations. For instance, school ground greening can be enhanced by connecting with volunteer landscape designers or donating produce to nearby food banks.



Celebrating Ten Years of Ontario EcoSchools



Thank you to the students, teachers, and school staff who are making a difference for the environment every day.

"Small acts can have big impacts."

Grade Five EcoTeam member





Ontario EcoSchools is an environmental education and certification program for grades K-12 that helps school communities develop both ecological literacy and environmental practices to become environmentally responsible citizens and reduce the environmental footprint of schools.

www.ontarioecoschools.org

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