

How Can You Get Involved?

Register Your School: NWF's Eco-Schools USA is a free program. Please register your school at www.ecoschoolsusa.org or contact **Jennifer Dowd at 908-766-5787 x42 or ecoschools@njudubon.org.**

Become a Volunteer: We need volunteers of all kinds to help support schools across NJ to become more sustainable. We welcome individuals and groups. **Contact Jennifer Dowd at 908-766-5787 x42 or ecoschools@njudubon.org.**

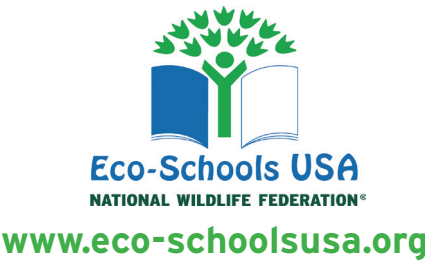
Become a Supporter: Financial support for the Eco-Schools USA program ensures that we can continue to help create sustainable schools and cultivate generations of knowledgeable conservation leaders. Please consider a donation today. **Contact Chris Parker at ParkerC@nwf.org or (646) 502-7097 for more information.**

New Jersey Audubon is a statewide conservation organization with a mission to connect people with nature and steward the nature of today for the people of tomorrow. For over 100 years, New Jersey Audubon has been directly involved in land stewardship, environmental advocacy, wildlife research and environmental education.



"Our students are learning that they are an important part of the world, and that they can be part of the solution."

— Principal Chris Turnbull,
Ben Franklin Elementary



NWF's NJ Eco-Schools
www.eco-schoolsusa.org



Connecting NJ Kids to Nature

Educators across the country and around the world are bringing the internationally acclaimed Eco-Schools program into their classrooms. Teachers and students are using this dynamic academic framework to integrate real world, environmentally sustainable practices and curricula into their schools and communities.

A nationally recognized leader in environmental education for over four decades, National Wildlife Federation (NWF) works with teachers and parents to develop programs and publications that connect kids to nature, such as the award-winning Ranger Rick magazine. We are advancing this effort as the host of the United Nations-recognized NWF Eco-Schools USA program.



NWF's NJ Eco-Schools: Helping Create a More Sustainable New Jersey

Powered by students, teachers, and principals, NWF's NJ Eco-Schools program helps schools improve academic performance, save money, and conserve resources. Students use math, science, language arts, and other academic skills to gain hands-on experience that leads to on-the-ground results. Among their many achievements, Eco-Schools have decreased their energy use, grown food gardens on their campuses, and created neighborhood wildlife habitats. And students have the opportunity to share their learning and achievements with Eco-Schools nationally and internationally.



"It is essential for students to understand how earth systems and human activities interconnect. We applaud all programs, like Eco-Schools USA, that empower students to take self-directed action while also learning content and practicing crucial skills for success. A sustainable New Jersey must eventually be maintained by our young people and we need to prepare them for this charge."

— Tanya Oznowich,
Environmental Education Supervisor,
NJ Department of Environmental Protection

How NWF's Eco-Schools USA Works

This free voluntary program serves public, charter, and private schools and provides a roadmap to sustainability through resources, guidance, and recognition.

Students are the driving force behind each stage of the Eco-Schools process. Every step offers a wealth of real-world opportunities that achieve measureable sustainability results and student learning.

SEVEN STEPS – NWF’s Eco-Schools USA program offers valuable resources and networks to inspire and assist schools in achieving their sustainability goals. This free program integrates within the existing school curriculum through a series of seven steps:

- 1. Establish an Eco-Action Team
- 2. Perform an Environmental Audit
- 3. Develop an Eco-Action Plan
- 4. Monitor and evaluate the Plan
- 5. Link the activities to school curriculum
- 6. Engage with the entire school and community
- 7. Create an Eco-Code

PATHWAYS – The program lays out multiple focus areas, or pathways to sustainability. Schools may choose to explore one or several pathways, to engage students in real world, project-based learning!

AWARDS – Once a school has worked through the seven-step process, it can apply for an Eco-School award. This three-tiered award program recognizes and celebrates the achievements of the school community.



Eco-Schools USA Primary Pathways



The Benefits of Being an NWF Eco-School

The benefits that flow from being an NWF Eco-School are many. Schools shrink their environmental footprints as their students grow their academic achievements. Students engage in active citizenship, build critical thinking abilities, strengthen their skills in math and science, and acquire a sound environmental ethic. At the same time, schools conserve resources and reduce waste, resulting in financial savings.



“The program opens doors for discussion and gives us a forum to work with students in a variety of areas that support our mission of sustainability. From my perspective we have just scratched the surface – there is so much potential and so much we can learn from other Eco-schools that will allow us to work toward a common goal of caring for our planet.”

– Becky Rubenstein, Parent/Board member, Unity Charter School

“The Eco-Schools framework gives kids a way to take action.”

Of over 2,400 registered Eco-Schools in the USA, less than 15 have received the program’s highest honor, the Green Flag award – and two of them are in New Jersey! The first NJ school to receive the Green Flag was Unity Charter School in Morristown. The school addressed nine of the ten possible pathways laid out in the Eco-Schools program – more than any other school in the whole U.S.!

Unity Charter opened in 1998 with a unique mission: to teach the importance of protecting and improving the environment by educating students on the principles of sustainability, ecology, and diversity in a way that celebrates and honors this planet and all its inhabitants. In the fall of 2011, a board member came across the Eco-Schools program and was excited about the possibility of bringing it to Unity. She thought becoming an Eco-School might be a great way to provide continued support to teachers and students who were interested in learning about and implementing sustainability initiatives.

“Kids are exposed to so much information about the environment that is negative and scary,” says Mindy Quirk, a Unity Charter board member and parent. “The Eco-Schools framework gives kids a way to take action that has real, positive results for the planet that they can measure and see. It makes it easy for our faculty to teach about sustainability in ways that are exciting, fun, and relevant for the students.”



Photos (left & far left): Mindy Quirk