



# MICHIGAN GREEN SCHOOLS

## Options for “Other Green Activities”

The following activities have been approved by County Coordinators as “Other Green Activities” in past years of the MI Green Schools Program. Please still confirm eligibility of “other” activities with your individual County Coordinator by December 1 of the academic year you plan to apply.

**This list is not exhaustive – There are many other activities that may qualify toward your Michigan Green School certification. Please check with your County Coordinator to verify eligibility for any “other” activities you decide to pursue.**

### Contents

Recycling Activities.....	1
Energy Activities.....	4
Environmental Protection Activities .....	6
Miscellaneous Activities.....	7

---

### Recycling Activities

- Expand your recycling programs beyond the typical materials to help recycle materials commonly thrown in the trash. Examples include:
  - Participate in TerraCycle to expand the options for recycling beyond what curbside will take.
  - Host a collection event for shoes and/or clothing to collect items for textile recycling.
  - Design posters or flyers showing where to recycle used motor oil. Some schools held a logo contest and used the winning design on flyers that were posted (with permission) at local gas station, auto shops, and recycling centers.
  - Have school staff coordinate with local health departments to provide red disposal bins at community events to safely collect unused prescriptions to avoid contamination through the water system.
  - Collect used light strings at the holidays and recycle them in the appropriate recycling program.



## Michigan Green Schools: Options for “Other Green Activities”

- One school implemented a 'Steel for Steel' program, where steel recyclables were brought to Padnos to fund the school's strength and conditioning program.
- Participate in an annual tire recycling project in the community.
- Collect and donate aluminum cans and/or pop tabs to local charities.
- Encourage the reuse of clothing, shoes, and household goods through special events. Examples include:
  - The school and PTO coordinated a Mom2Mom sale at the school to encourage resale of child and baby clothes, toys, and other gear.
  - Hold a “used school supply drive” to reduce the amount of new school supplies that families need to purchase.
  - Coordinate exchanges or donation of gently used clothing to donate to local charities.
  - Establish an “Upcycling/Repurposing”-focused School Store run by the students.
- Have students use upcycled materials for homework assignments or club projects. Examples include:
  - Students used materials found around the house to create large scale 3D models of cells in science class.
  - A robotics team uses leftover computer packing materials to create various robotic parts.
  - Create art – in class or as part of a school-wide or community event – using recycled, reused, or upcycled materials.
- Teach an educational unit on recycling, composting, or other ways to reduce waste (see [Sustainable Materials Management](#)).
  - As part of that unit, take a field trip to a recycling center or landfill to learn how communities process recycling and other waste.
- Reduce overall paper use. Examples include:
  - Eliminate the use of paper enrollment forms and weekly newsletters. Instead, use entirely electronic communication.
  - Use online textbooks instead of print.
- Assemble volunteer teams of students to clean up trash on the playground and school grounds during recess and breaks. Or, participate in an Adopt a Highway program or other community litter cleanup event.
- Host a school assembly to learn about recycling and waste management. Examples include:
  - Schools hosted “Dumpster Doug,” who taught students what it means to reduce, reuse, and recycle and what some of the most common items found in dumpsters are.



## Michigan Green Schools: Options for “Other Green Activities”

- Reduce waste through implementing activities that promote reusing materials. Examples include:
  - Install water filling stations to encourage reusable water bottles at school.
  - Reuse books and magazines that school/classroom libraries are finished with by letting students take home free books from book vending machines or Little Free Libraries.
  - Use rags instead of paper towels. Classrooms have bins of old t-shirts and towels torn up to use as rags.
  - Use scrap wood from a local lumber company for Wood Shop projects, saving both money and resources.
  - Collect paper towel rolls and other items that local zoos can use for enrichment.
  - Use old t-shirts to make dog toys that are donated to a local animal shelter.
- Implement a purchasing program to purchase schoolbooks and supplies from verified green companies (sustainable forest institute) and/or with reduced packaging:
  - A drama teacher purchased a stage curtain made entirely of recycled water bottles.
- Reduce food waste by donating leftover food from the lunchroom when possible. Examples include:
  - Donate leftover food to local gleaner programs or after school clubs.
  - Donate unopened, packaged items from their lunches to the food pantry after lunch so somebody else can eat that item, and it does not go to waste.
  - Establish a “share table” where students can share unopened, packaged items from their lunches with other students.
- Implement activities that educate other students, families, and the broader community about sustainable waste management. Examples include:
  - Students create flyers educating families on how to recycle at home (what can go in bins, how to recycle things that can’t go into bins).
  - Develop a recycling game for a STEAM night event.
  - Host an all-school recycling training: Train all students and staff on how to reduce landfill contributions. Practice by sorting items into landfill, Terracycle, paper recycling, or regular recycling.
- Commit to reducing system-wide waste production through activities such as:
  - Making school hosted events zero-waste with SORT stations (sort out recycling and trash).
  - Recycling and reusing construction waste as much as possible during school construction projects.



## Michigan Green Schools: Options for “Other Green Activities”

- Using whiteboards for group projects, brainstorming, and other times when you might otherwise use note paper.
- Use biodegradable or reusable materials for staff meetings (plates, silverware, napkins, cups).
- Build a worm bin and use it to compost classroom food scraps.
- Install a hoophouse or school garden to grow food for the cafeteria. Or grow food in the classroom with a hydroponic system. Learn about the energy, water, and resources conserved by hydroponics.

### Energy Activities

- Implement activities that educate other students, families, and the broader community about energy efficiency and “green” energy options. For example:
  - Have a poster campaign to stop car-idling in the parking and unloading areas.
  - Host a “Screen buster” challenge to stay off devices that use light to save energy.
  - Run an “Unplug it” campaign to encourage families to unplug electronics before they go on vacation.
  - Unplug student chromebooks when not in use.
  - Create digital posters/presentations to display around home and school to promote conserving energy.
  - Hosting an annual “Lights out” day in honor of Earth Day to encourage students to turn off lights and save energy.
- Implement energy efficiency practices within the school building, including:
  - Installing LED lighting on timers that only turn on when the room is occupied.
  - Installing motion activated sinks to save water.
  - Updating heating and cooling systems, windows, insulation, etc. for energy efficiency and conservation.
  - Regularly changing out air filters in HVAC units to improve efficiency.
  - Testing school water fixtures and replacing with low flow fixtures.
  - Passing a resolution that commits the school district to clean energy and/or energy efficiency goals.
  - Using aquaponics, drip irrigation, and other water efficient ways of watering in agriscience or horticulture programs.
  - Benchmarking all building utility usage to identify and mitigate energy usage spikes.
  - Using lower emission landscaping equipment for outdoor maintenance.



## Michigan Green Schools: Options for “Other Green Activities”

- Promote the use of alternative transportation methods that reduce air pollution and climate change impact. Examples include:
  - Host an annual Walk or Bike to School event.
  - The school or district purchases electric school buses to replace older diesel models.
  - Install an EV charging station in the school parking lot.
  - School facilitates a carpooling program to help lower fuel use and reduce emissions.
  - Using public transportation/buses rather than school buses when possible for field trips.
  - Hold “Carbon free field trips” – take walking field trips nearby school to reduce emissions from school bus use.
- Learn about energy sources that are alternatives to fossil fuels and study the impact of switching to lower-emissions fuel sources.
  - Teach a lesson on energy efficiency with vehicles.
  - Have the Green Team prepare a presentation for the school on “Earth Hour”.
  - Invite your local energy utility to give a presentation at a school assembly or classroom.
  - Older students can try an Eco House project: Students design and build a house that would minimize heat loss with insulated materials. Students then measure and track temperature changes in the house over time.
  - Participate in activities such as the “Solar Sprint” challenge to create solar cars out of Legos to explore benefits of solar energy.
  - Work with local community org/business to learn about alternative fuels for planes (how fuels have changed and how they might change in the future).
  - Students research and report on alternative energy, renewable fuels or specialized energy-efficient technology that could be used in school operations.
  - Robotics team participates in a renewable energy competition.
  - Learn about advantages and disadvantages of electric cars, then build a car and race.
- Have the district or building commit to sourcing power from renewable energy sources.
  - Add solar panels on building to generate electricity and earn carbon credits.
  - Purchase electricity from renewable sources if solar panels or wind aren’t an option.



### Environmental Protection Activities

- Activities that establish, maintain, or enhance habitat for native Michigan species can include:
  - Plant a tree in the spring or early autumn.
  - Start a bird feeding station during the school year. Learn what bird seed(food) benefits Michigan species the most.
  - Grow native Michigan plants for school projects in a school greenhouse.
  - Designate a school forest!
  - Become a certified school wildlife habitat, Monarch Way Station, or K12 Tree campus.
  - Build bird houses, bat houses, or other homes to add to a native animal habitat.
  - Prevent and remove invasive plants from school grounds or in the community.
  - Plant and/or maintain a rain garden, bioswale, or other green infrastructure project.
  - Create habitat for native insect species that helps them overwinter.
- Train students and staff to complete activities that support the school’s sustainability commitment. For example:
  - Hold a staff professional development to train staff in the school’s environmental commitment. Cover topics like recycling, composting, green cleaning products, schoolyard habitat, and wetland protection.
  - Train all science teachers in proper waste management, removal, and storage, as well as MSDS knowledge; this ensures that chemicals are not improperly flushed down pipes into the watershed.
  - Educate maintenance staff by creating professional signs that say “Chemical Free Zone” with student drawings of native birds and insects. Hang these signs around pollinator gardens and wildlife corridors.
- Complete a Project-Based Learning experience around environmental topics. Examples could include:
  - Form a partnership with a local business to complete an environmental project. For example, one school partnered with Meijer, who provided funding for trash cans along a section of trail that had a lot of litter.
  - Sponsor a community garden on the school property.
  - Partner with a local lake association to provide educational content for their newsletters.
  - Have the woodworking program create raised beds for a school garden.



## Michigan Green Schools: Options for “Other Green Activities”

- One school completes a Green Student Challenge where students have to complete different numbers of activities to be honored as green(5), emerald(10), or evergreen(15+). Students are recognized for their commitments to the environment on a Wall of Fame as well as a special recognition ceremony on Earth Day. The surveys are conducted using Google Forms to reduce paper use.
- Activities to protect the health of the Great lakes can include:
  - Project based learning experiences as described above.
  - Install a filter that removes oil, debris, and other chemicals from school grounds storm drains.
  - Students mark and clean storm drains to raise awareness.
  - Irrigate school landscaping or gardens with water collected in rain barrels.
- Teaching educational units around Michigan’s environmental topics include:
  - Participate in the Salmon in the Classroom program to learn about Great Lakes water quality and Michigan fish.
  - Use the “skype a scientist” program to learn about science careers and environmental issues.
  - Choose an environmental topic for student persuasive writing assignments in ELA.
  - Learn about monarchs and participate in monarch tagging.
  - Create Wanted posters about invasive species in Michigan as part of a science or art class.
  - Attend a local water festival.
- Participate in Adopt a Highway
- Add ADA access to trails and natural areas so that all students can access nature.

### Miscellaneous Activities

(These activities are often outreach-related)

- Have students design outreach activities that can be shared with the community about Michigan environmental issues as well as native species.
  - Have students design endangered Michigan animal note cards. These can be done at home or at school and possibly used as a fundraiser.
  - Design and print trading cards featuring Michigan native and invasive species, as well as threatened and endangered species.
  - Students can record their own podcast about important environmental issues.
  - Create a “schools for clean water contest” and promote with school families.





## Michigan Green Schools: Options for “Other Green Activities”

- Students create PSAs about environmental topics that are shared with the community in various ways.
- Make a poster of overfished species that should be avoided to allow stock to recover. The Environmental Defense Fund posts the varieties at [seafood.edf.org](http://seafood.edf.org).
- Support the school's Green Team and give students a chance to have leadership in environmental outreach activities.
  - Incorporate environmental topics into your school's daily announcements. Allow the Green Team to lead these announcements.
  - Create and manage a website for your school's Green Team to share what they're working on with families and the community.
  - Have the Green Team give presentations on environmental topics to a local community group, the PTA, or your local school board.
  - Turn an unused room in your school into a Nature Lab including environmental books, garden towers, and materials for the school Green Team.
  - Hold a fundraiser for the Green Team by selling the compost your school creates.
  - Designate a student from the school to participate on a township Environmental Resources Committee as a youth liaison.
  - Students produce a monthly “climate newsletter” or newsletter on other environmental topics for the school.
- Have students research wildlife corridors. This can be a major step to protecting endangered species. Find ways to help these efforts locally.
- Participate in environmental education events. This might include:
  - An Agricultural Awareness Day event.
  - A career day where students can learn about Green Jobs.
  - EGLE's Earth Day Poster Contest or other Earth Day event.
  - Host virtual speakers on green issues.
- Install a Little Free Library or book vending machine with books about Michigan's environment.
- Pass a bond to install a STEM lab in your school.
- Have students participate in citizen/community science programs.
- Volunteer at a local environmental festival, Earth Day event, cleanup
- Create an outdoor classroom space at school so that all students can learn outdoors.

---

EGLE does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, age, national origin, color, marital status, disability, political beliefs, height, weight, genetic information, or sexual orientation in the administration of any of its programs or activities, and prohibits intimidation and retaliation, as required by applicable laws and regulations.

To request these materials in an alternate format, contact [EGLE-Accessibility@Michigan.gov](mailto:EGLE-Accessibility@Michigan.gov) or 800-662-9278.