

# Greening Michigan Schools: A Program with Student Roots

The Michigan Green Schools program is a fantastic initiative that empowers PreK-12 schools to become environmental stewards. This program, now housed within the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), offers a pathway for schools to:

- **Protect the environment:** Schools implement practices that safeguard Michigan's air, land, water, and ecosystems.
- **Educate future generations:** Environmental education becomes an integral part of the school culture, fostering a sense of environmental stewardship in students.
- **Engage the community:** Schools can partner with their communities and promote positive ecological practices.

## From Student Idea to Statewide Program

What's most inspiring is the program's grassroots origins. Believe it or not, the idea for Michigan Green Schools sprouted in the fall of 2005 with students and teachers from the Hartland Consolidated School District! They proposed a plan with 20 points of achievable environmental activities. Schools achieving 10 points within a year would be recognized as Michigan Green Schools.

Their dedication didn't stop there. Students and teachers actively lobbied for their vision, presenting their proposal to legislators. In 2006, their hard work paid off! Public Act 146 of 2006 established the Michigan Green Schools program, and Governor Jennifer M. Granholm signed it into law. The program saw immediate success, with 18 schools participating in its first year.

Michigan Public Act 301 of 2010 further expanded the program. Now, schools can achieve multiple levels of recognition based on their environmental activities, and even propose their own creative initiatives!

In the 2023-2024 school year, 343 schools were certified as Michigan Green Schools with 106 earning Green School Designation, 81 earning Emerald School Designation, and 156 earning Evergreen School Designation!

## Participating in the MI Green Schools Program

The Michigan Green Schools program offers schools the opportunity to earn a designation as a Green, Emerald, or Evergreen School by engaging in environmental stewardship activities. These designations reflect the school's commitment to sustainability and environmental education. To participate, schools must complete a variety of activities from four key categories: Reduce/Reuse/Recycle, Energy, Environmental Protection, and Miscellaneous.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Green School: Complete at least 10 activities, including a minimum of two from each category.

- **Emerald School:** Complete at least 15 activities, including a minimum of two from each category.
- **Evergreen School:** Complete at least 20 activities, including a minimum of two from each category.

Each school must submit an annual application detailing their completed activities. Additionally, schools have the flexibility to propose unique initiatives, referred to as "Other Green Activities," which can also count towards their designation. However, any proposed alternate activities must be approved by the respective County Coordinator by December 1st of the year preceding the application deadline.

In an effort to make the application process as efficient as possible, schools are highly encouraged to track their progress throughout the school year using this [application activity tracking template](#).

### **Important Dates**

Mark your calendars for upcoming events and deadlines for the MI Green Schools 2024-2025 program.

- **MI Green School Informational Webinar:** October 29, 2024 (*virtual session*)
- **Approval of "Other Green Activities":** December 1, 2024 (*email your [county coordinator](#)*)
- **2024-2025 Application Window:** January 1 - March 9, 2025 (*apply online*)
- **MI Student Sustainability Summit:** May 20, 2025 (*attend in person in Lansing*)

To stay informed, sign up for the [Michigan Green Schools Newsletter](#), which is emailed approximately 5 times per school year with important information, dates, and resources!

### **Get Recognized!**

If your school is interested in becoming a Michigan Green School, head over to the program's website at [Michigan.gov/MIGreenSchools](https://Michigan.gov/MIGreenSchools) to learn more. If you have additional questions, please reach out to your [county coordinator](#), or the EGLE team at [EGLE-MI-Green-Schools@Michigan.gov](mailto:EGLE-MI-Green-Schools@Michigan.gov).

Schools striving to achieve these designations not only enhance their environmental practices but also inspire students to become active stewards of the environment. The Michigan Green Schools program is a valuable platform for fostering environmental awareness and action within school communities. Together, we can cultivate a generation of environmentally conscious individuals who will protect Michigan's beautiful lands and waters for years to come!