

MARYLAND GREEN SCHOOLS

Application Guidelines



MAEOE

Maryland Association for Environmental &
Outdoor Education

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Find all application guides & resources at marylandgreenschools.org.
Visit MAEOE.org to subscribe to our Green Schools Newsletter.

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This document outlines the acceptable requirements under each objective of the Maryland Green Schools application and can be used as a checklist as you prepare your application. Application guidelines & resources can be found at marylandgreenschools.org.
Questions? Email us at applications@maeoe.org



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OBJECTIVE 1: SYSTEMIC SUSTAINABILITY



Demonstrate that teachers and staff are integrating environmental literacy and sustainability into their curriculum, professional learning, and day-to-day practices.

1.1 Environmental Curriculum & Instruction

Documentation is not required for Application 5 and beyond.

Demonstrate that outdoor and environmental-based instruction is occurring through hands-on, authentic, inquiry-based lessons on environmental issues.

Elementary and middle schools must provide one example per grade level.

High schools must provide four different examples. These examples can be from any grade level but must show four distinct subject areas/classes (which may include multiple different sciences).

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
• Class name • Grade(s) • Date • Number of classes participating • Number of students participating • Lesson/activity name and description	• Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) • Lessons incorporating outdoor/schoolyard exploration and inquiry • Environmentally-focused field trips • Student writings or presentations on nature conservation, environmental justice, and climate-related subjects • Student debates on environmental policies • Outdoor/nature-themed arts education	• Photos/videos of students participating in activities • Examples of completed student work
	Non-Passing Examples	Non-Passing Documentation
	• Action projects without lesson content (e.g., sorting recyclables, creating outdoor artwork, trash pickups, removing invasive plants, installing bird boxes, etc.) • Lessons that do not demonstrate an environmental connection	• Lesson plans alone (although they may supplement other documentation) • Blank student worksheets

OBJECTIVE 1: SYSTEMIC SUSTAINABILITY



1.2 Green School Awareness

Demonstrate that everyone in your school is aware of the Maryland Green School application process and that you celebrate your commitment to being a Green School.

1.2.1 Staff Awareness

Demonstrate that **ALL** school personnel are aware of your school's Green School status and application.

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
- Date of meeting - Number of staff in attendance (should be all staff!) - Description of how your staff were made aware of your school's Green School application	- Workshop led by a MAEOE Green Center or MAEOE Green Leader - Showing the video presentation "What it Means to be a Maryland Green School" at an all-staff meeting (found at marylandgreenschools.org) - Staff brainstorming session on meeting the application requirements	- Staff meeting agenda with date and clear description - Staff sign-in sheet - Photo of all staff watching presentation
	Non-Passing Examples	Non-Passing Documentation
	- Email correspondence with no additional action or follow-up - Meetings or workshops without all teachers present	Photos showing only a small fraction of teachers engaging in the meeting

1.2.2 Schoolwide Celebration

Demonstrate how your school celebrates being a Green School by hosting a school-wide, environmentally-focused event open to all students.

Objective 1.2.2 is not required for Application 5 and beyond.

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
- Grades - Date of event - Celebration/event title - Detailed description of the event's environmental activities and how all grades participated	- School-wide Earth Day celebration highlighting Green School accomplishments - Whole school shutting off lights for Earth Hour - Whole-school celebrations of Walk to School Day, America Recycles Day, Great Backyard Bird Count, World Water Day, Arbor Day, etc. - Week-long morning announcements reminding students of Green School status and green actions	- Photos of students participating in activities - Newsletters or social media highlighting the event - Detailed event agendas
	Non-Passing Examples	Non-Passing Documentation
	- Activities that are not available to all students - Activities that do not acknowledge the Green Schools program	- Partner logos/websites - Staff headshots - Web images

OBJECTIVE 1: SYSTEMIC SUSTAINABILITY



1.3 Environmental Professional Development for Teachers

Demonstrate that **10% of instructional staff** have completed some environmental professional development (PD). Instructional staff is defined as any staff that manages a gradebook.

- **New schools** must have all PD completed **within the past 2 years**.
- **Renewing schools** must have all PD completed **within the past 4 years**.

NOTE: A teacher who has participated in multiple workshops may only be counted once.

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
• Teacher name • Date of training • Description of PD and how it relates to the teacher's environmental education practices	• Any MAEOE trainings or recommended PD listed on www.MAEOE.org under Professional Learning • Environmental PD provided by school district • Projects WET/WILD/Learning Tree workshops • MWEE 101/201 online workshops by NOAA • MAEOE Conference attendance • Master Naturalist/Gardener certification • College degrees in an environmental field received in the last 2 years (for new schools) or 4 years (for reapplying schools) • MAEOE Environmental Educator Certification (see www.MAEOE.org for information and requirements)	• Certificate of completion • Screenshot of registration confirmation email • Training agenda • Photos of teachers attending their training
	Non-Passing Examples	Non-Passing Documentation
	• Workshops taking place more than 2 years prior (for new schools) or 4 years prior (for reapplying schools) • Workshops not demonstrating a clear environmental connection • Activities conducted as part of student programming • Personal field trips or vacations	• Photos of training that do not show the designated teachers or environmental activities • Promotional flyers or emails

OBJECTIVE 1: SYSTEMIC SUSTAINABILITY

1.4 Sustainable School Practices

Demonstrate the steps your school and staff are taking to be sustainable.

Objective 1.4.2 is not required for Application 5 and beyond.

1.4.1 Schoolwide Staff Sustainability

Demonstrate the sustainability practices your **teachers, staff, and other school personnel** have implemented schoolwide to make your school green. *Any actions involving students belong under Objective 2.*

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
Detailed description of practices being implemented by teachers/staff/personnel	- Reducing paper use via double-sided copying, electronic communications, etc. - Using natural light or task lamps at desks instead of overhead lights - Reducing waste in staff lounge - Incentivizing carpooling/public transportation for staff - Installing sustainability features at your school such as solar panels, geothermal heating, energy-efficient bulbs, motion-sensitive lights, water bottle refilling stations, conservation landscaping, etc.	- Photos of practices being implemented by staff - Policy documents - Blueprints - Email or other correspondence
	Non-Passing Examples	Non-Passing Documentation
	Practices being implemented by students	Photos of students

1.4.2 Systemic Partnership

Demonstrate at least one partnership with a central office or board **within the school system** that supports part of the Maryland Green Schools Program. *Any partnerships outside of your school system belong under Objective 3.*

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
Detailed description of the partnership and how it supports an aspect of the Green Schools program	- Managing food waste reduction with your district's food and nutrition office - Managing energy efficiency or school ground plantings with your district's facilities services - Monitoring recycling with your district's recycling office - Conducting programming with your district's Outdoor Education Department - Independent schools may partner with their board of trustees, parish office/archdiocese, or funders	- Photos of practices being implemented - Completed program or funding applications - Sustainability plan submitted to district - Letters/emails with your district partner addressing plans
	Non-Passing Examples	Non-Passing Documentation
	Partnerships outside of the school system for public schools	- Partner logos/websites - Staff headshots - Web images

OBJECTIVE 2: STUDENT ACTION

2.1-2.8: Student Action

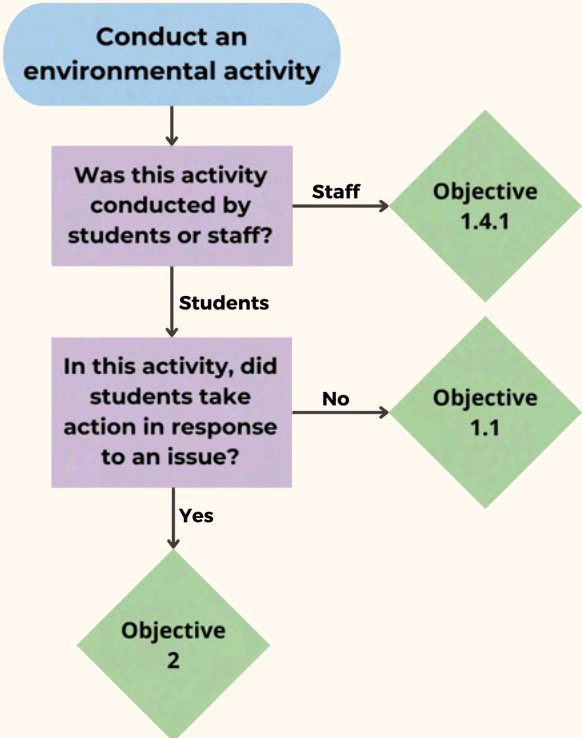
Demonstrate that students are taking a step beyond instruction and responding to environmental issues by planning, implementing, leading, and/or participating in sustainable practices that benefit the school or community.

Required Information	Passing Documentation
- Date of activity - Activity title - Grade level(s) - Detailed description of the activity and how students are taking action	- Photos/videos of students conducting action - Completed student projects - Screenshots of social media posts
	Non-Passing Documentation - Field trips or lessons without a clear student action component - Photos without students or student projects - Receipts of materials purchases - Logos or web images

Schools must document 8 total actions that address at least 3 of the listed sustainability practices. Not all eight practices are required; however, each action must be distinctly different and can only count for one practice. A variety of ages and grades should be represented.

For Application 5 and beyond, schools need only describe 4 total actions that address 4 sustainability practices. Documentation is not required .

Note that these are student actions, not curriculum or staff actions. Student actions should be conducted in the school building, on the school campus, or as part of a school-organized activity. Field trips or instruction without an incorporated student action project belong in Objective 1.1. If you’re unsure if an activity belongs under Objective 2, use the figure to the right to help you determine where to place that activity.



OBJECTIVE 2: STUDENT ACTION



Acceptable examples are listed below for the eight different categories; please refer to the chart on Page 7 and email applications@maeoe.org for verification if you are unsure if an action that is not listed here would count. Remember that these are actions taken by students. Student actions should be conducted in the school building, on the school campus, or as part of a school-organized activity. Field trips or instruction without an incorporated student action project belong in Objective 1.1.

- For Applications 1-3, schools must document 8 total actions that address at least 3 categories.
- For Applications 5 & above, schools must describe 4 total actions in 4 categories. Documentation is not required for Applications 5 & above!

Sustainable Practice	Passing Examples of <u>Student</u> Actions	Non-Passing Examples
2.1 Water Conservation/ Pollution Prevention Addresses indoor and outdoor water use, erosion control, stormwater management, trash cleanups, and water quality	• Conducting a stream cleanup or schoolyard litter cleanup to prevent watershed pollution • Creating signs to turn off faucets in bathrooms • Stenciling storm drains • Advocating for and/or installing a rain garden, no-mow zone, or riparian buffer zone • Advocating for water bottle filling stations or promoting their use through signage	• Conducting water quality testing without applying or sharing the findings • Investigating the levels of erosion at a site without performing mitigation • Simply using existing water bottle filling stations
2.2 Energy Conservation Addresses energy and electronics use and strategies to reduce carbon footprints	• Performing classroom jobs to reduce energy use (turning off lights, closing blinds, etc.) • Labeling light switches throughout the school with reminders to turn off lights • Conducting an energy audit of the school and presenting findings to school administration • Sharing energy-saving tips over morning announcements	• Determining one's own carbon footprint • Conducting an energy audit without sharing the findings • Staff installing energy-efficient lightbulbs • Simply pointing to existing light labels
2.3 Solid Waste Reduction Addresses resource use, waste disposal, and waste management	• Performing classroom jobs to reduce waste such as monitoring recycling bins or sorting breakfast waste • Participating in no-waste lunches/composting • Creating a share table at lunch • Repurposing used materials for art projects or maker spaces • Conducting and advocating for composting and waste reduction programs at school	• Staff adding more recycling bins • Installing water bottle refill stations without student involvement

OBJECTIVE 2: STUDENT ACTION



Sustainable Practice	Passing Examples of <u>Student</u> Actions	Non-Passing Examples
2.4 Habitat Restoration Addresses native plant and animal habitat, strengthening local ecosystems, and invasive species removal	- Raising native species (such as terrapins or sunfish) in the classroom for release - Actively planting native trees, shrubs, pollinator plants, or bay grasses - Removing invasive plants - Building and installing bird boxes - Implementing bird-safe measures on windows	- Planting introduced/ invasive trees, shrubs, or other plants - Staff planting trees or other plants on behalf of students
2.5 Outdoor Learning Structures Addresses students helping to install structures, signage, or artwork that encourages the use of nature in learning	- Installing interpretive signage on school grounds - Creating or maintaining an outdoor classroom space - Building raised beds for gardens - Installing outdoor artwork - Planting or maintaining an edible garden	- Installing an outdoor classroom without student involvement - Students using an outdoor classroom for lessons
2.6 Responsible Transportation Addresses sustainable options for school transportation and fossil fuels reduction	- Installing signs to designate a no-idle zone - Handing out fliers to advocate for no idling or carpooling - Advocating to the district for electric buses, bike racks, or other means to promote sustainable transportation options - Participating in walking field trips or walking school bus events	- Riding the bus - Riding electric vehicles
2.7 Healthy Indoor Environments Addresses measures to promote a healthy indoor environment	- Creating and using non-toxic cleaning products - Caring for indoor plants to improve air quality - Harvesting produce to be used in lunches - Monitoring air quality and sharing results	- Monitoring air quality without sharing or acting upon the findings - Making healthy food choices in the cafeteria
2.8 Participatory Science Addresses student participation in scientific research via submissions to GLOBE, iNaturalist, eBird, or other online databases	- Conducting a bird count with eBird - Participating in a bioblitz and submitting observations to iNaturalist - Collecting water quality data for the Chesapeake Water Watch Project or Salt Watch - Training and collecting atmospheric or hydraulic data to submit to GLOBE	Gathering data without submitting it to an online database

OBJECTIVE 3: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Demonstrate that your school is forming long-term partnerships to foster environmental stewardship and cultivate community wellness through real-world connections.

3.1 Community Partners

Documentation is not required for Application 5 and beyond.

Demonstrate collaborations with outside organizations to support environmental education and sustainable practices. The same partner may be used in both Objectives 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 but should be different from the systemic partner documented for Objective 1.4.2.

3.1.1 School Active in the Community

Describe at least one environmentally-focused partnership in which your school is working to benefit your community through an environmental service project.

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
• Date of activity • Partner name • Detailed description of how your school partnered with an organization to benefit your local community	• Conducting environmental service projects in an off-campus public space (including trash clean-ups, native plantings, invasive species removals, community garden maintenance, etc.) • Harvesting produce from a farm to be donated to a local food bank • Holding a reoccurring used clothing drive for a local church/charity • Visiting another school for students to teach other students about an environmental issue	• Photos of students participating in activities • Newsletters or social media highlighting the event • Detailed event agendas
	Non-Passing Examples • Field trips that do not demonstrate students benefitting their community • Holding a canned food drive or other food drive that does not improve sustainability practices • Service projects without an environmental connection	Non-Passing Documentation • Partner logos/websites • Headshots • Photos without students or student projects present

OBJECTIVE 3: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

3.1 Community Partners

3.1.2 Community Active in the School

Describe at least one partnership in which a community partner (different from the systemic partner listed in 1.4.2) is providing any type of Green School services to the school that occur within the classrooms, school building, or on school grounds.

Required Information	Passing Examples	Passing Documentation
• Date of activity • Partner name • Detailed description of how your school partnered with an organization to benefit your school	• A business providing funding or in-kind donations for an environmental activity • Organizations delivering classroom presentations or assemblies on environmental topics • Organizations assisting with school campus projects (such as tree/garden plantings, bird box installations, rain garden installations, etc.)	• Photos of students participating in activities • Newsletters or social media highlighting the event • Detailed event agendas
	Non-Passing Examples • Field trips • Organizations providing services without an environmental connection • Organizations providing services away from the school building and grounds	Non-Passing Documentation • Partner logos/websites • Headshots • Photos without students or student projects present

3.2 Additional Achievements (optional)

Share any environmentally-related awards, special recognition, certifications, or other achievements that your school, staff, or students have accomplished.

Required Information	Examples	Documentation
• Date of activity • Achievement title • Description of the achievement	• Community Wildlife Habitat Award from NWF • County awards • Measurable energy savings awards • Green Ribbon School award • LEED Certification • Environmental professional development received more than 4 years ago • Students or teachers recognized for green efforts	• Photos of the award or a special recognition event • Newspaper/newsletter articles • Copy of certificate/award

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS AND SURVEY



ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

Complete the following items at the end of your application.

Legal Permissions

Acknowledge your school's permission to upload your chosen documents and that the provided information is accurate. You may choose to give MAEOE permission to use the provided photographs in our promotional materials. Finally, for your application to be submitted, your school's principal must sign and date the application. .

Green Team

List the teachers, students, and/or other personnel who assisted with compiling your school's application.

Top 5 Accomplishments

Provide one sentence for each of the five accomplishments your school is most proud of. These statements will be shared during the awards ceremony at the Youth Summit. You may also list any Green Centers or MAEOE Green Leaders you received assistance from.

Goals (Applications 4 and Beyond Only)

Schools completing Application 4 are being considered for sustainable status, which means they must set goals for themselves for the next 4, 8, and 12 years. Sustainable schools, or schools completing Application 5 and beyond, will also provide written reflections on these goals and set goals for themselves for another 4, 8, and 12 years.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS AND SURVEY



SCHOOL METRICS SURVEY

The purpose of the School Metrics Survey is to quantify the impact of the green actions taken by your school to support sustainability and improve the environment.

Schools are not expected to have an impact in every quantifier. This survey simply helps MAEOE document the collective impact of the Maryland Green Schools program and will not count against the school's application.

Due to the nature of the survey, MAEOE recommends completing this part of the application last.

Do your best to self-report, and ask school system facilities leaders for guidance. You can download a complete list of the survey questions at maryandgreenschools.org under the Resources Tab.

Below is an example of the cumulative impact of Maryland Green Schools in 2026:

2,913,574 Gallons of Water Saved
2,946,273 kWh of Energy Saved
4,575,361 lbs of Materials Recycled
293 Outdoor Classrooms
39,100 sq ft of Rain Gardens
85,170 sq ft of Erosion Control Projects
41,803 ft of Streams Cleaned
579,465 sq ft of No-Mow Zones

271,311 sq ft of Native Habitat Plantings
246,335 lbs of Food Waste Diverted
426 Bird House Installations
3,500 Native Trees and Shrubs Planted
145,215 sq ft of Invasive Plants Removed
73,561 sq ft of Edible Gardens
58,450 Bags of Litter Collected
46 No-Idling Zones



DOCUMENTATION GUIDE

For Applications 1-4, documentation is required for all activities listed in the application. Keep in mind that professionals who do not know your school will be reviewing the application, so **please include detailed descriptions** for all activities. Documentation is NOT required for Applications 5 and beyond.

Strong Documentation	Documentation to Avoid
Photos, videos, or other media of students in action	Photos with no students present
Completed student assignments, projects, worksheets	Lesson plans and blank student worksheets*
Workshop registration emails, certificates of completion, or sign-in sheets	Promotional fliers and emails
Screenshots of email correspondence between staff and partners, including the date	Staff headshots or partner organization logos
Links to public-facing websites	Links to websites without public access
Agendas describing plans for a near future event	*While lesson plans would not pass as stand-alone documentation, they may supplement the examples listed on the left.
Photos or screenshots of news articles or social media posts about your activities	

Before submitting documentation, double check that your files have first been downloaded to your desktop. **Files that are uploaded directly from school servers will be blocked.**

DO NOT SUBMIT the following file formats:

- HEIC images
- ZIP files
- Google Drive files
- OneDrive files
- Links to school servers
- Websites without public access

Recommended file formats:

- PDF files
- JPG images
- PNG images
- MP4 videos
- MOV videos
- Links to public-facing websites (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo, etc.)



APPLICATION CYCLES

All schools, including Sustainable Schools, must reapply every four years to maintain their Green School Award. For new applicants, activities and programs from the past two academic years are eligible as application evidence. All subsequent applications may utilize activities and programs from the four years between awards. Applications are accepted every year.

Check your school's status by viewing the Green Schools map at www.maeoe.org/greenschools

Application Number	Eligible Activities	Application Type	Award Type
New (1st Application)	Activities occurring two academic years prior to submission (years 1-2)	Regular	Regular
2nd Application	Activities occurring after Application 1 (years 3-6)	Regular	Regular
3rd Application	Activities occurring after Application 2 (years 7-10)	Regular	Regular
4th Application	Activities occurring after Application 3 (years 11-14)	Regular with 4-year goals	Sustainable
5th Application	Activities occurring after Application 4 (years 15-18)	Sustainable	Sustainable Bronze
6th Application	Activities occurring after Application 5 (years 19-22)	Sustainable	Sustainable Silver
7th Application	Activities occurring after Application 6 (years 23-26)	Sustainable	Sustainable Gold
8th Application & In Perpetuity	Activities occurring after Application 7 (years 27+)	Sustainable	Sustainable Evergreen



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**Questions? Email us at
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