


# Four Strategies to Ensure District Leadership Buy-in for Green School Practices

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November 30, 2022

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Becoming a green school or district is a multi-year process that requires planning, collaboration, and lots of hard work. The most important step in this process, by far, is securing buy-in from your district's leadership team. Their support and involvement are critical for ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of adopting green school practices, from making key policy decisions to allocating the necessary resources and funding. This step could be easy if your superintendent and other leadership team members are interested in sustainability. If they happen to be true sustainability newbies, have no fear! The following four strategies will help you make a case for becoming a green school or district and secure the support you need to move forward.

### Engage Community Allies

It often takes a village to adopt green school practices. Community allies can be a wealth of support, providing resources, expertise, and advocacy to move your efforts forward. Do some background work to better understand your community's interest in and concern for sustainability and climate-related impacts. Does your community have a sustainability plan? Has the community made a commitment to go net zero? Are there active student and/or

community groups pushing for environmental or climate justice? These indicators, among others, show that the community cares about and is invested in sustainability and will likely support district efforts to adopt green school practices. Seek out and connect with these sustainability-minded individuals and organizations. Secure their support for your efforts. You may even consider setting up a ‘meet and greet’ for district leaders so they can learn more about the community’s sustainability initiatives and how these individuals and organizations can be resources for the district.

### **Empower Board Members as Sustainability Champions**

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Support from your school board is critical when seeking buy-in from district leaders, especially when they show a vested interest in sustainability and demonstrate commitment through policy implementation. Start by identifying board members who are active in sustainability or climate initiatives. Engage with and empower them to serve as champions to help get your school or district’s sustainability work off the ground. They can interface with the community to understand what their needs are and inform district leaders about what is happening locally around sustainability.

Board members can also show their support for adopting green school practices by passing a formal board policy or resolution. Engaged members can be particularly helpful in getting a sustainability policy in front of the whole board for a vote. This policy should include some level of accountability to demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. For example, the policy could require the superintendent to report to the board on an annual basis regarding progress, successes, and challenges.

### **Assemble a District Sustainability Committee**

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A district sustainability committee is essential for overseeing the implementation of your sustainability action plan (see below). It also demonstrates to district leaders that there’s a committed group of people who are willing to take the lead in adopting and maintaining green school practices. The committee should include cross-departmental representation as well as educators and community members. Committee members are responsible for reporting on sustainability initiatives across all departments and aspects of the district – from facilities and operations and food service to curriculum and instruction. They are also responsible for gathering data and assembling annual progress reports to present to the board and district leaders.

### **Develop a Sustainability Action Plan**

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The sustainability action plan is your road map for implementing green school practices. Having such a plan in place shows district leaders that you have taken the time to articulate clearly what will be involved, how it will be implemented, and how it will be measured and funded. Your plan should identify specific strategies, practices, and initiatives and the people responsible for leading each; goals and measures to track progress; a timeline for

implementation; and a baseline budget to fund early work. The plan should also outline how the cost savings accrued from implementing green school practices can be leveraged to ensure continued funding of existing practices and new ones, as well as a full-time sustainability leader position.

Gaining the support of district leadership paves the way for schools and districts to go green. Exercising shared leadership is just as important. [Download the GreenPrint](#) and discover more best practices for healthy, equitable, and sustainable facilities and operations.