

The Seven Step Framework

The Eco-Schools USA Seven Step framework is designed to be a flexible process and one that any school should be able to implement. You are encouraged within this framework to implement each of the Seven Steps in the way that suits your school and situation best. The steps involve a wide diversity of individuals from the school community - with students playing a primary role in the process. To help you get started, we've put together some **essential framing questions** on the next page for each of the Seven Steps.



TOOLS AND RESOURCES

[Eco-Schools USA Seven Steps](#)

Essential Framing

Questions

Eco-Schools USA

Seven Steps



Step 1

Does your team have a shared vision? How will your team communicate with each other?



Step 2

Will the students make their own audit or will you adapt the Eco-Schools USA audit? Who will take the audit? How and when will you disseminate the results?



Step 3

What are the root causes of the audit results? What strategies would effect change that is aligned with your vision? How will you know?



Step 4

How often and when will you evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of your action plan? Where will the data be collected and displayed?



Step 5

How will the students have the opportunity to discover information about the pathway topics?



Step 6

How will you spread project results out to the larger community? What media outlets will you access/invite? What steps do you have to take for an event to happen and by when?



Step 7

What thought do your students want to share with the larger school-community about what they value, believe and how they are acting in alignment with those values?





Step 1: Form an Eco-Action Team

The heartbeat of Eco-Schools action and learning

Leadership | Listening | Respect | Facilitation | Empathy | Cooperation | Negotiation

What is it?

The Eco-Action Team is the driving force behind Eco-Schools USA. Ideally, your Eco-Action Team should represent the whole school community - including people beyond your school walls, such as facilities staff, board members and community members. Keep in mind students should play a leading role on the team and represent the views of the entire student body.

How Does it Work?

The Eco-Action Team should meet formally a minimum of four times a year and informally as needed when conducting investigations and completing projects. Try to make sure at least one student from each grade level is on the committee. An Eco-Action team is supported and facilitated by an adult Eco-Coordinator, but led by students. Eco-Coordinator roles can be shared and it is actually a good idea to get several teaching staff involved if possible.

Award Criteria



The Eco-Action Team consists of students and adults | The team meets at least 4 times a year | Minutes are kept at each meeting | Decisions and actions are shared with the school community



The Eco-Action Team consists of students, staff and community members | The team meets at least 6 times a year | Students are integral in the decision making process and share responsibility for keeping minutes | Students are responsible for communicating team information to the school community



The Eco-Action Team consists of 50% students, and also includes, teachers, staff, and community members | The team meets at least 8 times a year | Students take significant responsibility for conducting the Eco-Action Team meetings and the team's decision-making process | Students share responsibility for keeping minutes for each meeting and communicating information to the whole school | Student representatives actively engage other students and collect suggestions from the greater student body

How can you help?

Use the [Eco-Action Team planning worksheet](#) to help you organize your group. You can attend meetings to help students develop their teamwork and collaboration skills. Provide inspiration. But remember, Eco-Schools is a student-led process, please try not to impose your project ideas and activities onto them, help them to find the project they want to do.



Step 2: Conduct an Environmental Audit

Investigating the schools environmental and sustainability performance

Inquiry | Independent Learning | Number Sense | Creativity | Reflection | Scientific Investigation

What is it?

The Environmental Audit is an essential tool for understanding the current environmental situation in your school. It will provide the basis for your Eco-Action Plan.

How Does it Work?

Completing the Environmental Review Checklist is a recommended first step before completing one of the more [in-depth pathway audits](#). The results from this checklist can help your Eco-Action Team focus on a specific pathway. The Environmental Review is optional, but highly recommended if you are just beginning your sustainability journey. The Environmental Audits should be led by students. All pathway audits are available for free on our website. Carry out surveys, monitor behaviors, use questionnaires, create graphs, take photographs and video and present the results to the school via announcements, information boards, social media and/or electronic communications.

Award Criteria



A formal or informal audit is conducted | Schools can develop their own criteria or use an Eco-Schools USA audit checklist.



Two formal audits are conducted using an Eco-Schools USA audit | Audit findings are documented | Students play an active role in conducting the audit | Results are shared with the whole school



A minimum of three formal and comprehensive audits are conducted using an Eco-Schools USA audit | Audit findings are documented | Students are actively involved in conducting the audit and engage resource specialists from the community | Results are shared with the whole school along with the wider community | Environmental audits are conducted yearly to evaluate overall progress

How can you help?

If you or another adult have detailed knowledge of one of the Eco-Schools USA pathways, you could offer to help the Eco-Action Team to do an in depth review in your area of expertise. Remember, it is the Eco-Action Team who will complete the Environmental Audit, but your expertise could offer additional insight and evidence.



Step 3: Create an Eco-Action Plan

Come up with ideas for what to do based on the results of the audit(s)

Critical Thinking | Planning | Creativity | Time Management | Teamwork | Reflection | Goal Setting

What is it?

The Eco-Action Plan follows from the results of your **Environmental Audit** and sets forth a series of goals and a structured timetable for achieving environmental improvements.

How Does it Work?

The Environmental Audit will have sparked a lot of ideas for potential projects. The Eco-Action Team now needs to draw up a workable plan with details of the projects they want to take action on. It will include lists of tasks, supplies/equipment needed, people to involve for each project and who is responsible for each action. The Eco-Action Team will also outline a time table and a budget if there are costs associated with implementation. Copies of the Eco-Action plan should be made available for the whole school to see; the more people are aware of what the Eco-Action Team is trying to do, the more likely they are to get involved and take action. Click here for an example of a [sample Biodiversity Eco-Action Plan](#). You'll find samples and a blank Eco-Action Plan worksheet on the Resource page for each pathway.

Award Criteria



Create a basic action plan based on the results of the Environmental Audit focused on one Eco-Schools USA Pathway | Share the Action Plan with the whole school community | Schoolwide action is taken to mitigate environmental problems, focusing on the selected pathway



Create a detailed action plan that addresses at least two Eco-Schools USA Pathways | Include specific quantifiable targets along with a timeframe for completion | Plan a range of actions covering more than one aspect of environmental management | Results are shared with whole school along with the wider community



Create a detailed action plan based on the results of a formal comprehensive Environmental Audit | Include specific quantifiable targets along with a timeframe for completion | Plan a range of actions which addresses at least three Eco-Schools USA Pathways | Action plan prioritizes targets | Action plan provides cost-benefit information for each action

How can you help?

Give advice on how to break down a big goal into smaller, more manageable goals. Share examples of Action Plans that you have worked on in the past. Help students think systematically about the broader impacts their projects might have at a local, national, and global level.



Step 4: Monitor and Evaluate Progress

Measuring change, analyzing what's working and making changes where needed

Number Sense | Design | Inquiry | Reflection | Teamwork | Photography & Video | Accuracy | Revision

What is it?

The process of actively engaging in the monitoring and evaluation of the Eco-Action Plan are important tools to help you check your progress, adjust your plan for greater success and provide validation for your project or initiative.

How Does it Work?

In making any project successful it is important to monitor whether things are changing or have changed. Ideally you want to identify how you will monitor and evaluate your progress as a part of the Eco-Action Plan. There are lots of different ways to monitor and evaluate change:

Before and after photos | analysis of electricity and water bills | biodiversity surveys | knowledge and attitude questionnaires | transportation surveys | post-audits | meter readings | litter counts

Award Criteria



The Eco-Action Team identifies and monitors progress of Eco-Action plan | Successes and challenges are noted in the formal record and archived for use when applying for the Green Flag award



The Eco-Action Team identifies and monitors progress of the Eco-Action plan against initial timeframe and targets | School shows significant progress on one large scale project focused on two Eco-Schools USA pathways | Progress and challenges are communicated to whole school



The Eco-Action Team identifies and monitors progress of Eco-Action plan against initial timeframe and targets | Students are engaged in monitoring and evaluation | Data is used in some curriculum work | School shows significant progress on several large scale projects addressing at least three Eco-Schools USA pathways | Progress and challenges are communicated to whole school and wider community

How can you help?

Help students design questionnaires, surveys and data analysis techniques. Offer help on how to use a camera to collect accurate before and after images. Explain how post audits can be used and how to analyze utility bills effectively. Help students focus on what it is that's most important to measure.



Step 5: Link to Existing Curriculum

Educating for sustainability in the classroom and as citizens of the community

STEM | Literacy | Inquiry | Systems Thinking | Reflection | Critical Thinking | Design | Collaboration

What is it?

It is important that your Eco-Schools USA program become an integrated part of your overall curriculum and not another “add on” to an already busy academic schedule. The principle behind Eco-Schools USA is that the topics you are teaching in the classroom should have an influence on how your school environment operates. Use the school building and grounds as a learning laboratory capable of transporting students through a sustainability journey that is rigorous, experiential and fun.

How Does it Work?

Student-led projects to improve the school’s sustainability performance are a great example of action learning, but learning for sustainability can happen in a variety of ways at a school. Eco-Schools are able to demonstrate how the learning going on in class is helping students develop sustainability knowledge and skills. Teachers review the school’s current curriculum and see where sustainability topics are being taught and suggest ways to further integrate environment-based instruction. Teachers should also be able to identify where skills like critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and communication are being developed; these all contribute to education for sustainability. Encourage colleagues to take advantage of their Eco-Schools work too; real-life projects can bring just about any subject to life.

Award Criteria



Students have the opportunity at most grade levels and across disciplines to integrate environmental issues into the classroom, on school site or in local community



Students have the opportunity at most grade levels and across disciplines to integrate environmental issues into the classroom, on school site or in local community | Students’ experiences are integrated into curriculum and are inquiry based



Students at all grade levels have the opportunity to integrate environmental issues into the classroom, on school site or in local community | Students’ experiences are integrated into curriculum and are inquiry based | School staff are provided with professional development and training on best practices, knowledge and skills for environmental education

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Help colleagues see how they are already contributing to education for sustainability and simple ways they can incorporate environment-based topics as a part of their pedagogy rather than separate from it. Remember to stress a student’s Pre-K-12 experience is about educating the whole child, mind, body, and spirit and sustainability is one way to develop youth’s skills, values, and knowledge.



Step 6: Involve the Community

Let the whole school and wider community know what the Eco-Action Team is doing and how they can help make a difference

Information, Media & Technology Skills | Public Speaking | Design | Leadership | Teamwork | Facilitation | Information, Communications and Technology Literacy

What is it?

Involving the community is about two things – one, the diversity of members who take part in the Eco-Action Team and two, the diversity of school, family and community members the Eco-Action Team works to engage as a part of their sustainability work. Work together to find out the interests and needs of your community and then work together to make where you live, work and play a happier, healthier place to be.

How Does it Work?

To spread the impact of the Eco-Schools USA work, the Eco-Action Team will need to get as many people involved as possible. They might also want to get involved with sustainability projects that are happening nearby. The Eco-Action Team can let people know about their Eco-Schools USA work by having a prominent and eye-catching display, giving assemblies and class presentations, school announcements, social media and by organizing some fun events. They could exercise their fellow students' artistic side by designing posters too. By involving the wider community in diverse sustainability initiatives the Eco-Action Team will be engaging even more people in the learning and practices of sustainability.



Step 6: Involve the Community (continued)

Award Criteria



The school uses a prominent, designated way such as a newsletter, bulletin board or website, to communicate Eco-Schools USA activities with staff and students along with the greater community



The school uses a prominent, designated ways such as, a newsletter, bulletin board and website, to communicate Eco-Schools USA activities with staff and students along with the greater community | The whole school, along with community volunteers, engage in a number of Eco-Schools USA activities



The school uses a prominent, designated way such as a newsletter, bulletin board or website, to communicate Eco-Schools USA activities with staff and students along with the greater community | The whole school, along with community volunteers, engage in a number of Eco-Schools USA activities | The school develops a day of action or other event that engages the greater community in learning about and helping with Eco-Schools projects | Students write about Eco-Schools USA projects for local papers and magazines | The school uses the Eco-Schools USA website and other communication tools to share its projects with other schools in US and with the global community

How can you help?

Help students to develop their public speaking skills as well as their professional media and communication skills. Practice negotiation scenarios, through role play, acting as the “critical friend.” Give advice on writing press releases and contacting the media. Show your support by promoting events and activities through your own channels, online, in print and in person.



Step 7: Create Your Eco-Code

Creating a call to action that the whole school can get behind

Communication | Design | Information, Communications & Technology Literacy | Empathy | Teamwork | Creativity | Persuasion | Critical Thinking

What is it?

The Eco-Code is the Eco-Action Team's mission statement. It should demonstrate – in a positive, clear and imaginative way - the whole school's commitment to improving their environmental performance. The Eco-Code should be reflective of your Eco-Action Plan, curriculum and student experiences.

How Does it Work?

The Eco-Code is a great way to get people thinking about the work members of the Eco-Action Team are trying to do and why they are trying to do it. The Eco-Action Team could create a song, statement, poem, rap, acronym, acrostic, limerick, or something even more creative! The creation of the Eco-Code is student-driven and should be reviewed and updated every two years. The Eco-Code should be prominently displayed in a variety of locations around the school.



Step 7: Create Your Eco-Code (continued)

Award Criteria



The Eco-Action Team gathers input on a school-wide basis and develops an Eco-Code which is then agreed upon and adopted



The Eco-Action Team gathers input on a school-wide basis and develops an Eco-Code which is then agreed upon, adopted and displayed



The whole school and greater community is given the opportunity to make suggestions on developing (or refining and enhancing) the Eco-Code | The Eco-Action Team takes suggestions, refines the Eco-Code and takes to full school for adoption | The Eco-Code is prominently displayed for all to see as they enter the school | The Eco-Code is reviewed every year to ensure relevancy

How can you help?

When an Eco-Action Team is trying to come up with an Eco-Code it is a good chance for them to think about the wider environmental and sustainability issues impacting their city, state, nation and globe. Help students to develop their critical and systems thinking skills. If you are artistic, this is a great opportunity to help students develop their poetic, lyrical and artistic skills. This is also a great opportunity to get the school community involved, through Eco-Code development contests.