



Environmental Charter Schools

Green News

February 2020



Dear ECS Team:

Welcome to the new and improved ECS Green News.

As we launch this new version, it's my hope this newsletter will:

- Keep you apprised of our organizational efforts to be more green
- Increase content knowledge regarding Green Schools
- Talk about our successes and challenges
- Share resources

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any suggestions, questions or concerns.

Important Green Dates:

- February 22 Tree People & Generation Earth's NGSS Teacher Workshop hosted on ECHS campus
- February 28-30 Writers Workshop with David Sobel
- March 2-4 National Green Schools Conference
- March 9-12 South By Southwest Conference
- April 22, 2020 Earth Day

Linked Below please find info on the content of this first issue:

- [What is a Green School?](#)
- [Resources and Opportunities](#)

Thank you for your continued partnership and support.



WHAT IS A GREEN SCHOOL?

ECS was born on the heels of a research study entitled *Closing the Achievement Gap: Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning* (Lieberman, 1998). The study proved that using the environment as the integrating context for learning leads to improved student outcomes. So in 2000 when Environmental Charter Schools first began, it cited this research as evidence for our 4th best practice: environmental and experiential learning.



ECS Defines What It Means to Be a Green School

During our early years, without many other green school models, folks often wondered what it means to be an Environmental School? I would often say it's about getting kids to care about local issues and then supporting them to take action to make a measurable difference -- because when they care, they will learn the academic language necessary to be the change they want to see in the world. To more clearly articulate what it means to be a green school, ECS memorialized our commitment to being green in our mission, values, best practices rubric, and policies. We also created routines and practices aligned with our commitment.

- All students go on outdoor education field trips, take Green Ambassadors and participate in service-learning projects.
- ECHS hosts an annual Earth Carnival for K-8 grade students
- Our interdisciplinary projects (IBMs and Intersession) incorporate an environmental principal and concept.
- We take community-building seriously.
- We embrace the environmental movement as a social justice movement because environmental challenges unequally impact our most vulnerable communities.

JEDEDIAH BRITTON-PURDY stated "the environmental movement's mission is more than the technical science. It's a movement working to defend a living world that is under assault at every point, from the global climate to the most vulnerable communities. Economic power, racial inequality, and the struggles of indigenous peoples are not optional or supplemental. They are at the heart of the work." (*The Atlantic* 2016)

- Our built environments and operations incorporate solutions to current climate challenges. If we want students to solve tomorrow's problems, we must build schools that model our willingness to become a new kind of solutionary.
- Partners join us in the classroom or we join them to take action locally.

At the same time that we were developing clarity about what it means to be a green school, the state and nation were also engaging in this work. The Federal government created a Green Ribbon Program. California adopted *Environmental Principal and Concepts* and the *California Environment and the Education Initiative (EEI) Curriculum*. National non-profits like the *Green Schools National Network (GSSN)* and USGBC's *Center for Green Schools* and local non-profits like [TreePeople](#) and [Ten Strands](#) evolved to support the green school movement.

ECS' Successes

Being at the forefront of the work, ECS was recognized for our efforts. In 2007, we began receiving funding to share green practices with other schools. In 2010, we were the inaugural winner of the Green Ribbon Award and were featured in a [PBS](#)



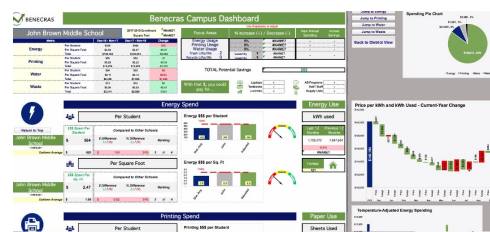
feature entitled, *Growing Greener Schools*. In 2014, we served on the state committee to review and provide feedback to the *EEI* curriculum. In 2018, ECS became a founding Catalyst Green School District with the GSNN.

As we look to the future, we are seeking to leverage partnerships to share our best practices with the larger educational community, because we know these practices work to close the achievement gap. 96% of our students are admitted to four-year colleges and universities, and last year we were recognized as a top LA County School for closing the achievement gap in under-resourced communities.

Current Green School Efforts: Updates & Next Steps

While our organization-wide focus is on Reading Apprenticeship, this year we chose a minor build around aligning our operations with our green policies. Listed below are recent and current efforts:

1. Changed our food vendor, reducing lunchtime waste by 50%.
2. Secured Prop 39 funds on each campus to install energy-efficient upgrades, including cool roofs, improved lighting, insulation and solar.
3. Host regular meetings with facility engineers to share successes, best practices, and challenges.
4. Collaborate with the Green School National Network (GSNN) to create an ECS-wide Carbon Footprint Scorecard that benchmarks current usage trends and helps us understand where we have room to improve. See example pictured right.
5. Develop measurable goals aimed at reducing our carbon footprint and include in our org-wide dashboard
6. Share a green school news newsletter with staff.



This newsletter is yet another foray into improving our efforts to ensure we don't lose track of the "E" in ECS. It will keep our community informed regarding our progress, share resources, and increase our content knowledge regarding the "E".

Resources and Opportunities

Green Schools Catalyst Quarterly (GSCQ)

GSCQ is the only comprehensive journal dedicated to the advancement of green, healthy, sustainable K-12 schools. It is a peer-reviewed, high-interest, digital magazine that highlights evidence-based practices for replication in green, healthy, sustainable schools. Click [here](#) to learn more/subscribe to the quarterly journal. This edition of the quarterly talks all about civic engagement. For example, one article states, "Today's youth are our leaders of tomorrow and their political perspectives are shaped by their unique experiences and realities. Therefore it is imperative for educators to create opportunities within their classrooms for students to form political identities and take action against social injustices, especially those that directly impact students." Learn more [here](#) about using hip-hop pedagogy as a form of civic engagement in the Winter edition of the *2020 Green Schools Catalyst Quarterly*.

Green Schools Annual Conference Portland Oregon March 2-4



Next month is the annual Green Schools [Conference](#) in Portland Oregon March 2-4. The Green Schools Conference & Expo is the only national event to bring together all the players involved in making green schools a reality: people who lead, operate, build and teach in U.S. schools. Three days of programming will offer inspiring keynote speakers, informative workshops and breakout sessions and the chance to network with colleagues from across the country. Prior to the conference, Tashanda Giles, Sarah Diaz and Bethany Acevedo will travel to Portland to participate in a writing workshop with author [David Sobel](#). These brave leaders will write about ECS' Green Ambassador Program and Senior Thesis Project and their work will be memorialized in David's next book.

NEXT EDITION

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/coronaviruses-are-they-here-stay>

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/what-the-world-looks-like-when-humans-stay-home>

