



Working with Facilities, Food Services, or Other Administrative Offices

An Eco-Schools U.S. Tip Sheet

To achieve goals and maximize impact, an Eco-School's action team should strive to be a good partner, collaborative, respectful, and accountable. Whether working with students and staff, families, administrative staff, or community members, approach the partnership with a growth mindset.

Use this tip sheet before taking actions that may impact school facilities' procedures, policies, infrastructure, and goals.

An administrative office below refers to energy management, facilities, grounds maintenance, food services, and operations.

It will be important not to overwhelm administrative offices. Work with them to develop a tool to receive and respond to collaboration requests and questions.

Build Relationships and Communicate Early

IDENTIFY KEY CONTACTS: Find out who manages sustainability efforts or oversees facilities, food services, energy operations, or grounds maintenance.

OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION: Invite individuals to join the action team. Initiate conversations early to introduce the team's plan, gather insights, and explore how you can work together. Ensure communication is clear, respectful, and focused on shared goals.

Understand the Department's Priorities and Constraints

RESEARCH AND ALIGN TO GOALS: What is the department's goals and priorities, such as energy efficiency, waste reduction, or infrastructure improvements. Are there places where the action team's goals align with an administrative office's goals?

BUDGET AND RESOURCES: What is the department's resource constraints? Propose feasible, cost-effective initiatives that can be incorporated into their existing work. How can you collaborate?

Present Data and Make Your Case

USE EVIDENCE: Bring data on savings, reductions, and or environmental impact that the team's initiatives can bring. This supports the case for collaboration.

HIGHLIGHT LONG-TERM BENEFITS: Emphasize how the plan will benefit the school and potentially other participating schools through financial savings, reduced maintenance, or improved community perception and engagement.

Create Practical, Actionable Steps

START SMALL: Propose a project that is easy to implement, then scale up at your school, across multiple schools, or the entire school district.

PROVIDE SOLUTIONS: Offer detailed, actionable solutions instead of just outlining problems. For example, suggest specific ways to reduce energy consumption or improve waste management.

Propose Collaborative Plans

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: Work with the department to clarify roles and responsibilities. Clearly outline what student will handle (e.g. awareness campaign) and what administrative staff will oversee (e.g. infrastructure improvements)

STUDENT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES: Explore how students can learn from administrative office staff through job shadowing, classroom/school presentations, and internships, fostering a learning experience while working toward goals.

Follow Policies and Procedures

UNDERSTAND DISTRICT REGULATIONS: Ensure the planned action adheres to school district policies, safety regulations, and any legal requirements.

PERMIT AND APPROVAL PROCESSES: Work with administrative staff to navigate necessary approvals, whether for new installations, retrofits, or other initiatives.

Demonstrate School-Wide Engagement

ENGAGE THE ENTIRE SCHOOL: Show the action has support from students, teachers, and school leadership. A plan with broad support is more likely to get buy-in from administrative staff.

RECOGNIZE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF: Acknowledge the critical role administrative staff play in sustainability. Highlight their contributions to the action plan's success and seek ways to publicly recognize their efforts in helping you reach your goals.