



ECO-SCHOOLS AS A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

Since 1994 Eco-Schools has developed from a European to a global Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) programme. The Seven Step project-based learning framework is at the core of Eco-Schools. This whole-school methodology has stood the test of time, proving its applicability and adaptability across a range of diverse educational contexts in over 95 countries.

The Eco-Schools programme supports the four dimensions of the whole-school approach defined by UNESCO as essential elements of a Green School Accreditation:

School Governance

Teaching & Learning

Facilities & Operations

Community Partnerships



Greening Education Partnership

As a partner of the Greening Education Partnership led by UNESCO and coordinator of Pillar 1, the Foundation for Environmental Education is committed to supporting countries to reach ambitious goals by 2030.

“All countries will have adopted a green school accreditation scheme with at least 50% schools, colleges, and universities with green accreditation and operating sustainably”.

As the biggest and the most established network of schools actively integrating ESD, Eco-Schools provides a structured and recognised framework to help ensure that this goal is reached not only in quantity, but also in quality.



Eco-Schools Seven Steps

Using a Seven-Step framework and a whole-school approach, students engage in hands-on, project-based learning to drive solutions to address environmental challenges. The framework can be applied in any educational institution and adapted to their local context. The elected, student-led Eco-Committee coordinates the process with the stakeholders and ensures that each step is completed and improved upon every year.

Using a whole-school approach ensures that ESD is embedded across the curriculum, the institution, and beyond. As such, the school becomes a hub from which new environmental practices, behaviour, and culture develop. The key is that everyone in the school understands why environmental actions are carried out in order to support them actively.

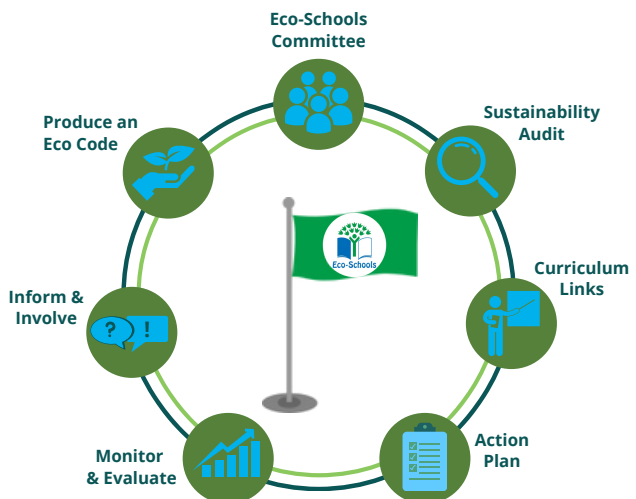
GREEN FLAG

Schools that have made significant progress through the Seven-Steps are awarded the prestigious Green Flag accreditation.

Key criteria ensure that activities:

- Are student-led
- Involve the whole school and local community in handprint actions
- Improve the environmental footprint and behaviours
- Lead to Quality Education

Ongoing assessments help accredited Eco-Schools continue to improve their ESD activities and enable new students to lead the process.



Eco-Schools Seven-Step Framework

School Governance

School Governance is required to lead effective ESD activities. This requires the allocation of critical resources, time and space for ESD. The **Eco Committee**, as a coordinating team, is central to ensuring a whole-school approach and leading a transformative educational process.

The Eco-Committee, with the support of school management, ensures student leadership and diverse representation to develop a shared vision and culture at the school by creating an **Eco-Code**.

Teaching & Learning

In Eco-Schools, it is essential that sustainability themes are **Linked to the Curriculum** across all subjects and grades. This ensures that students develop key competencies for sustainability (e.g., critical thinking, collaboration, and systems thinking) and that teachers are able to assess the students' progress.

Active pedagogies such as project-based learning are core to Eco-Schools and essential for quality education to prepare young adults for the complex realities of life.



Facilities & Operations

Eco-Schools recognise the importance of Walking the Talk. Every year, **Sustainability Audits** are carried out to measure and track improvements in a number of areas, such as waste, electricity, water, transportation, food, biodiversity and more.

The audit enables schools to set baselines and choose their priority areas for the year. In the **Action Plan**, they will set both environmental and educational objectives, which will be **Monitored and Evaluated** throughout the year. Monitoring of environmentally responsible behaviour is central to the process driving the change.

Community Partnerships

The importance of **Informing and Involving** the entire school and local community is clearly recognised in the Eco-Schools methodology as a separate yet cross-cutting step.

Students, teachers, and school staff raise awareness of sustainability issues outside the school grounds, work together with experts to solve issues, and put ideas into practice at home.

Private businesses, government institutions, and public spaces are all fantastic opportunities for students to learn and collaborate.



Eco-Schools is an example of how, through concrete action and collaboration between students, teachers, and the local community, a stimulating environment can be created that respects and preserves nature, develops tolerance, empathy, and critical thinking.

- Nevana Cabrilo, GEP Focal Point in Montenegro

FOUNDATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Established in 1981, the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) is one of the world's largest environmental education organisations, with over 100 member organisations in 81 countries.



FEE's strategy, GAIA 20:30, prioritises impactful action to address the threats of climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental pollution.



FEE Academy is an online learning platform which supports the capacity development needs of a range of stakeholders at no cost to the learners.

ECO-SCHOOLS & FEE ECOCAMPUS

FEE member organisations have the license to run the Eco-Schools and the FEE EcoCampus programmes on a national scale. FEE EcoCampus is specially adapted to tertiary education institutions. Member organisations provide ongoing support for registered schools, conduct teacher trainings and workshops, and carry out assessments for Green Flag accreditation.



Over 48.000 registered Eco-Schools in 95 countries.



More than 20 million students and 1 million teachers are involved globally.



Over 50% of national governments support the Eco-Schools programme in countries with FEE member organisations.



The Greening Education Partnership is an independent and inclusive community of practice on the role of education in tackling climate change. It is led by national governments, intergovernmental organizations, youth, civil society organizations, and the private sector, among others.

The Secretariat is hosted by UNESCO's Headquarters in Paris. For more information, please contact gep@unesco.org.

