

# Greenbuild is Behind Us...What's Next for Green Schools?

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Last week was USGBC's annual [Greenbuild Conference Expo](#). Held in Toronto, Greenbuild brought together 23,000 builders, architects, manufacturers, policy makers, educators, advocates and environmental leaders. The Center for Green Schools at USGBC played off of this year's Greenbuild theme, focusing on "what's next" in the green schools movement. I wanted to share a few of my highlights with you:

On Monday evening, before Greenbuild was in full swing, I delivered the keynote at the World Green Building Gala. In the beautiful Corus Entertainment building with stunning views of Lake Ontario and a tubular white slide that spans three stories, before a room of green building leaders from more than 20 countries, I had the opportunity to talk about the work of the Center and share the story of how I got to USGBC. One point that I emphasized in my speech is that green schools are about more than transforming educational facilities; they are an opportunity to open up a dialogue with everyone and anyone. As we say at the Center, "everyone likes a healthy, high-performing kid."

On Tuesday night we hosted a private reception with a handful of potential partners to preview the Green Apple brand that the Center will launch next September. Stay tuned for more details!

I started Wednesday off with an interview at the [McGraw Hill booth](#) for [GreenSource](#) magazine's "Essential Toronto" series. The booth had a giant screen that could be seen throughout the expo hall floor. I spoke about the Center team's ambition to introduce green schools to a mainstream audience in 2012.

The Center, along with our founding sponsor, [United Technologies Corp.](#), held a [press conference](#) later that day to announce what I think are some incredibly exciting [results](#) from an independent survey of more than 1,000 people commissioned by UTC and the Center the week before Greenbuild. The results showed that one in three of those surveyed said that the majority of U.S. schools are in "poor shape" and ninety percent of respondents said the condition of U.S. schools are adequate at best.

That same poll shed light on a sentiment that might surprise some, especially in the halls of Congress: Americans see school modernization as a high-priority investment. A full 73 percent of Americans support federal investments in school building improvements.

With these results, the Center for Green Schools is more confident than ever that green schools are an important part of the national conversation and the time to green America's schools is now.

At the press conference, I also talked about the significant strides that the Center and our partners have made over the past year in improving the places where our children spend their days. As I mentioned before, one of the most important milestones, and what I consider to be the biggest thing to happen to the green schools movement to date, is the Department of Education's recent launch of the [Green Ribbon Schools program](#), the first ever comprehensive green school initiative to come from the federal government and a landmark collaboration across agencies and NGOs.

I also announced a handful of new initiatives the Center will kick off in 2012:

- We will host the first ever green schools international day of service. On a designated day this spring, volunteers from across the world will partake in acts of service like planting schoolyard gardens, building rainwater harvesting sculptures and educating students, teachers and communities on how they can take steps to green their schools.
- We will launch a program to support green campus initiatives at community colleges and under-resourced institutions and help these schools equip a diverse group of graduates for success in the green economy.
- Over the next three years we will expand our [USGBC Students Program](#) to 500 campuses across the country by supporting, equipping and training more than 15,000 students as they work toward sustainable campuses and communities.

My remarks were followed by a [panel discussion](#) on the [Center for Green Schools Fellowship Program](#) moderated by Jenna McKnight of Architectural Record with Fellows Manager [Anisa Baldwin Metzger](#), UTC Boston Fellow [Phoebe Beierle](#) and UTC's Sandy Diehl.

On Friday, I joined my colleagues Scot Horst, Andre Poremski, Mahesh Ramanujam and Chris Pyke on stage for the [Closing Plenary](#) to present our visions for "what is beyond the horizon" for USGBC and our community. I implored the audience to take up the charge to fix the "where" in education by making green schools their legacy. Time to take this green building movement out of our offices and into our homes, our dinner parties, our PTA meetings and the sidelines of soccer games.

But for me, the best moments at this year's Greenbuild were the conversations that we had with so many green schools practitioners, champions and supporters. This year, our volunteers dedicated more than 208,718 total hours to advancing this movement. That equates to over 100 full time employees! As always, Greenbuild shows us first-hand the impact of the efforts we work so hard on the remaining 51 weeks of the year and reminds us that green schools are an opportunity for us to stop talking to ourselves and start talking to everyone else. That's what it is going to take to green every school – and every community - within *this* generation.

I'll see you [@Greenbuild 2012](#) in San Francisco!

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