

Project Green Brings \$5 Million to Sacramento Schools

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One of the many reasons Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) was selected as one of two districts to receive a Center for Green Schools UTC Fellow was the development of Project Green. The District needed support to develop, manage and implement the program, and I was brought on to help. During the Earth Day celebrations in April 2011, Superintendent Raymond announced Project Green with little more than a rough outline. The idea consisted of student-led audits, presenting recommendations to a blue-ribbon panel, and implementing the projects. It was my job to fill in all the details to develop a successful program that could be replicated in other districts and sustained for years to come.

I spent the first three months of the school year meeting with principals recruiting green teams to perform the student-led audits. I also worked throughout the year closely with our advisors, providing them audit information, connecting them with local experts and resources and meeting monthly to check on progress and answer any questions. I helped each team get the resources they needed to develop a well thought out proposal. By the end of March, teams were working with local professionals to put the finishing touches on their recommendations.

In April, the teams were ready to present their recommendations at the Project Green event that was held at the MET High School to showcase SCUSD's first sustainably designed school. Throughout the school, teams set up their presentations and prepared for the blue-ribbon panel. Local organizations were also invited to showcase some of their green education and sustainability work, and panel members circulated through the event watching brief presentations from each school. The entire event was abuzz with excitement! Each team did an exceptional job presenting to the panel and their professionalism proved they understood the importance of the projects.

The next phase was working with the panel members to allocate the funding. This was not an easy task, however it was decided that blocks of funding would be given to schools based on their scoring placement.

An awards ceremony took place at Rosemont High School, in honor of their Green Academy, on June 7, 2012. The team from Washington Elementary School scored highest for its presentation and report, which included a rationale for providing the school with automatic hand dryers, chicken coops, rain barrels, a "restorative justice circle," upgraded irrigation, upgraded air conditioning and upgraded heating. In all, the 15 presentations were allocated \$5 million in bond funding.

The first year of Project Green at SCUSD had some lessons learned, however it was an extremely successful program. Moving forward, the student and teachers will continue to see how their research is changing their school. It is a very powerful hands-on learning project that will affect these students in the years to come. SCUSD is committed to the continuation of Project Green and I look forward to making next year bigger and better!

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