

Chapter Spotlight: Minnesota Green Schools Coalition Unites the State to Achieve Green Schools

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How can we facilitate major change in the way Minnesotans think about green schools? This was the question under discussion at USGBC Minnesota's Green Schools Committee meeting a year ago. The committee had been struggling with how to get the message about the benefits of healthy, cost effective, high performance schools to the large and varied group of people who affect the school environment. Looking to the Center for Green Schools as an example, we quickly saw the potential of bringing all of these individuals together to create a common goal for green schools in the state – one that we could all work together to achieve. The idea for the [Minnesota Green Schools Coalition](#) was born.

In April of 2011, the Committee began inviting key leaders from established organizations in the state serving professionals in K-12 schools to attend an informational meeting about the MN Green Schools Coalition. The response was tremendous. People from all areas and interests were curious to learn what USGBC was doing to green schools and to share ideas from their own organizations. Our first meeting included representatives from [Minnesota Association of School Administrators \(MASA\)](#), [Minnesota Association of School Business Officials \(MASBO\)](#), Minnesota Educational Facility Management Supervisors (MASMS), [Minnesota Schools Boards Association \(MSBA\)](#), [Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association \(MESPA\)](#), [Minnesota Parent Teacher Association \(PTA\)](#), [Minnesota Department of Education](#), [Minnesota Pollution Control Agency](#) and [Minnesota Association of Environmental Education](#).

From this meeting a need was identified – a one-stop shop for finding tools and resources, news and events, and to bring together all who are seeking to learn about green and healthy schools. The Coalition decided that this would be our first project – to create a website about green schools for the state. With funds from the Center for Green Schools' Innovation Grant and a donation from Hallberg Engineering, the [Minnesota Green Schools website](#) was created and is up and running. We are working with coalition member organizations to help them share the website with their members through links to their website newsletter articles and personal presentations to their members. The joint effort of these organizations has the power to reach tens of thousands of Minnesotans with a unified green schools message!

The Coalition has since selected an executive committee to provide leadership and created a common mission: to develop a collaboration of the state's leading advocates for students, advancing green school practices across Minnesota. We are now working to define future coalition initiatives. After building momentum with the website, our next goal is to create a face-to-face learning and networking opportunity and hope to host a Minnesota Green Schools Conference in 2013.

The Minnesota Green Schools Coalition is a great example of how bringing individuals together in a grass roots effort around a common goal can produce positive momentum in a short period of time.

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