

# Learn Green Schools Conference and Expo Recap

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On November 11, the [Learn Green Schools Conference and Expo](#) and Lessons Learned Workshop took place at the Dreyfoos School of the Arts, attracting over 900 attendees from all over the state of Florida and the country. There were 90 presenters, 88 exhibitors in addition to administrators, teachers, vendors, architects, engineers and others within the construction industry. The presenting sponsor for the event was the [Solid Waste Authority](#).

One of the highlights of the day was the keynote speech presented by Rachel Gutter, the director of the Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), who delivered a motivational and inspirational speech with the goal of putting every student into a green school within our generation. Rachel would like to see a “blueprint to a billion,” and spoke about needing a nuclear reaction in order to green every school in this generation. Rachel feels there is something in the green schools movement for everyone, and she said green schools are directly related to the, “triple bottom line:” people, planet and prosperity. Green schools save people, save the planet and help make us prosper in a variety of different ways.

*Joseph Sanches, Rachel Gutter, Linda Smithe and Audrey Dalton*

- Rachel announced some exciting developments regarding green schools initiatives in 2012: The [U.S. Department of Education](#) will initiate the [Green Ribbon Schools Program](#), an award that will recognize schools that save energy, reduce costs and feature environmentally sustainable learning spaces, as well as protect health, foster wellness and impact effective environmental education. The Green Ribbon award will acknowledge high levels of achievement in three areas: 1) environmental impact and energy efficiency; 2) healthy environment; and 3) environmental literacy. Florida has officially signed on as a state education system to be a part of this program.
- There will be a [Green Classroom Professional Certification Program](#), made available by USGBC in conjunction with the Green Building Construction Institute (GBCI) in 2012. With the Green Classroom Professional Certificate, the classroom will turn into a living laboratory, creating foundational awareness of greener lifestyles, energy savings and environmental health in students. The program is designed to provide pre-K-12 teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators with the knowledge and skills to: 1.) Identify features that support or impede environmentally healthy and sustainable learning spaces 2.) Recognize, adopt, and implement practices that promote health among students and school occupants

In Rachel’s speech she mentioned some fascinating statistics:

- There are over 133,000 K-12 Schools in the United States, and over 4,300 colleges and universities
- Over 15,000 of those schools have unbreathable air
- Asthma is the leading cause absenteeism in U.S. schools, and green schools have been proven to reduce the incidents of asthma in schools
- Millions of dollars are saved when schools are built to green/LEED standards due to energy cost savings through energy management

The conference as a whole was a great success, and I’m glad I had the opportunity to hear Rachel speak! I’m looking forward to what next year’s event has to bring.

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