

Project Spotlight: Erie High Charter School Celebrates LEED Gold As Students Use the School as an Environmental Learning Lab

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This month, Erie High Charter students, educators and the building and design team celebrated the school's designation as the first LEED Gold certified high school in the state of Kansas.

Thanks to close collaboration between the local design/construction team and the students of the school, the students were instrumental in doing much of the work to obtain LEED Gold. PBA Architects, Crossland Construction and high-performance building system designers Henderson Engineers worked directly with the students who continue to use the school itself as an environmental learning lab.

From flood to new environmental opportunities

The new school has reinvigorated the small rural community hard hit by a flood in 2007. After the disaster, community leaders urged Erie's residents to build a new high school that would keep families from leaving the town. The community also agreed to institute project-based learning, an innovative teaching style that requires students to meet learning objectives through projects that explore a problem or challenge, in the new school. The design of the school features flexible workspace and an open floor plan to accommodate the new learning style.

The building site itself was selected for its environmental opportunities, located out of the flood plain in previously developed field with several ponds. Nature trails are being added to the property. The school's envelope and building systems were designed to reduce overall energy in the building to more than 50 percent below a conventional building. The heating and air conditioning system includes a geexchange heat pump consisting of well fields that provide a heat source/heat sink for water-to-air heat pumps located throughout the building and the adjacent Vocational Building.

Green Dream Team goes for the Gold

As the design and construction was completed, Erie High students formed a Green Dream Team, a project-based learning group that did much of the work to complete the prerequisites and credits for LEED Gold certification. The students established a tobacco-free policy for the school, got involved in the onsite implementation of recycling, and created a set of signs to educate other students about the school's green features. Students also advocated for native landscaping and researched native grasses for planting. They continue to help test such things as satisfaction with heating and cooling in the building and the building's energy usage.

For more information visit [PBA Architects](#) or [EHCS Green Team](#).

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