

USGBC Chapters Talk Green Schools with Teachers, Parents and Facility Managers

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With territories ranked in the top-10 nationally for LEED-certified buildings, USGBC's [National Capital Region](#) and [Maryland](#) Chapters recently sought to accelerate their impact in schools, where nationally \$542 billion will be required over the next 10 years to modernize pre-K through 12th grade infrastructure. □□

The chapters collaboratively conceived of a forum for building professionals, policymakers, educators and parents to engage with one another about the needs and opportunities of educational facilities in their regions. The DC, NoVA, MD Green School Summit, would bring together over 175 people from Washington D.C., Maryland and Virginia for a day of sharing best practices at American University. □□

To bring the concept to fruition, the chapters applied for a 2012 [USGBC Chapters Green Schools Grant](#), which they were awarded. Through the grant funding and sponsors' contributions, the chapters were able to offer scholarships equivalent to \$10,700 for 93 attendees, including teachers and other school district employees, thus ensuring a balanced discussion. Attendees ranged from building owners and architects to teachers and facility managers.

Topics included daylighting, how to implement sustainability programs in K-12 schools, behavior modification, energy-efficient retrofits, building performance management, and lessons learned from university sustainability directors. Attendees heard from a number of great speakers, including Austin Brown, Senior Analyst, National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL); Sam Brooks, Sustainability & Energy Division Lead, Department of General Services; and Ryan M. Colker, Director of the Consultative Council and Presidential Advisor, National Institute of Building Sciences. □□

The summit's inspiring keynote speaker was [Stephen Ritz](#), New York teacher and founder of the Green Bronx Machine, which gives new opportunities to disadvantaged students through the growing of garden plots known as "green walls." Steve's students have been able to earn wages by selling the produce grown and by installing green walls for private organizations.

"Hearing Mr. Ritz ... leads me to believe we can do it in our own cities and school districts," said one attendee.

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The event concluded with tours of Sidwell Friends School, the first LEED Platinum school in the world, and Stoddert Elementary School and Community Center, a LEED for Schools Gold building, with DC's first fully "geothermal" system.

The summit was such a success that attendees agreed it should become an annual event. One attendee concluded, "The Green Schools event was really fantastic: good speakers, informative content, and it was great to experience Stephen Ritz." □□

To see photos from the event, visit the USGBC - National Capital Region Chapter's [Facebook page](#).

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