

8.8 Earn a Green Schools Designation

5 – 60 Points

Action Updates

This action was added in 2026.

Objective

Earn a green schools program designation, either in the Connecticut Outdoor & Environmental Education Association (COEEA) [Connecticut Green LEAF Schools program](#) or the U.S. Department of Education [Green Ribbon Schools](#) program.

Complementary Actions:

- [Engage with Youth on Community Sustainability](#)

What to Do

1. Participate in the [COEEA Connecticut Green LEAF School program](#). Schools may participate individually, or whole school districts may participate. Public schools serving a single municipality or serving a regional district are eligible for credit; private schools are not eligible. Points are awarded as follows:
 - Acorn (Level 1): **5 points**
 - Sapling (Level 2): **15 points**
 - Oak Tree (Level 3): **20 points**

Submit: Documentation of at least one public school in your municipality or regional school district participating in Green LEAF Schools. You may submit your certificate from COEEA as your documentation.

2. Receive a U.S. Department of Education [Green Ribbon School](#) designation for a public school in your municipality or regional school district. **(20 points per school, up to 2 schools or 40 points)**

Note: Should this program become inactive, Sustainable CT will continue to recognize and award points to municipalities that have earned the Green Ribbon designation in the past.

Submit: Documentation of a public school in your municipality or regional school district being recognized as a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School.

Engaging Partners

Sustainable CT encourages regional collaboration and other forms of partnership. For every action, please complete the “partners” box in your submission, indicating the name(s) of any municipalities and/or organizations you partnered with (if any) and a brief description of your municipality’s role. For additional information, please see the [“Partners Guidance Document”](#).

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

Potential collaborators for this action include the municipal Board of Education, the Connecticut Outdoor and Environmental Education Association, and local parent teacher associations.

Funding

If available, below are potential funding sources specific to this Action. For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions, please visit the [Sustainable CT Grants Portal](#), which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the [Support for Your Town](#) page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents

- Connecticut Outdoor and Environmental Education Association, [Green Leaf Schools](#)
- North American Association for Environmental Education, [The Benefits of Environmental Education for K-12 Students](#) - U.S. Green Buildings Council, [School Health Research Library](#)
- Environmental Protection Agency, [Healthy School Environments](#)
- Environmental Protection Agency, [Environmental Education](#)
- CT Department of Energy and Environmental Education, [Pollution Prevention \(P2\) Opportunities for Schools and Universities](#)

Organizations and Relevant Programs

- [Connecticut Outdoor and Environmental Education Association](#)
- US Department of Education, [Green Ribbon Schools](#)
- [North American Association for Environmental Education](#)
- [Project Green Schools](#)

Why This Matters

Creating and supporting green schools helps communities invest in both their students and their environment. Green schools improve student learning and well-being, save energy and resources, and cultivate the next generation of environmental stewards. Integrating sustainability and environmental literacy into school culture fosters critical thinking, problem solving, and civic engagement - skills that extend beyond the classroom. When schools model sustainable practices, they also inspire families and local governments to adopt greener, more resilient community habits.

Benefits

Green school programs offer measurable and long-lasting benefits for students, schools, and communities. According to the U.S. Department of Education, green schools can lead to:

- Cost savings through reduced energy and resource use
- Healthier learning environments that improve student and staff well-being
- Higher student engagement and achievement, supported by hands-on, real-world learning
- Stronger community connections through school and municipal collaboration
- Preparation for the green economy, developing workforce skills for sustainability-related careers