



NOTE TO SCHOOLS

E**NVIRONMENT AND** its protection have begun to take centre stage, and rightfully so, as more and more people realize that the rapid march of progress has brought us right to the brink. Humanity as a whole has come to understand that we have reached a stage where we can no longer afford to turn a blind eye if we are to survive as a species. This understanding has seeped into different sectors and walks of life. One of its vital ramifications has been a renewed focus on environment education in schools. Children are tomorrow's decision-makers and arming them with more knowledge and perspective on nature and civilization, environment and progress, will ensure that they make the right choices in the future.

In addition to making environment part of their curricula, schools organize rallies, collection drives and competitions, plant saplings, celebrate designated environment days such as Ozone Day, Earth Day, etc. These activities are undoubtedly meaningful and create awareness. The question is, is that enough? Or is it time to move the needle and, in addition to creating awareness, also conduct activities that have a direct and long-term impact on the resources in and around a school premises?

From its beginning, Centre for Science and Environment's Green School Programme (GSP) has stressed the need of 'doing' instead of merely engaging with textbooks and theories. It has helped schools conduct a 'green audit'—a self-assessment by students of the use of resources, and a mapping of consumption and wastage, under six heads, viz., air, energy, food, land, water and waste.

Over the years, hundreds of schools have participated in the GSP audit. It is clear that many of the participating schools are doing their bit to inculcate the best values and practices into students during the formative stage of their lives. These practices have the potential of providing huge benefits—environmental, social and economic.

Environmental benefits are reducing the carbon footprint, and creating a better environment by improving



air and water quality in the vicinity of a school. Social benefits include better health and well-being, becoming a positive contributor to the sustainability of the planet, and improving the quality of life for the future. Economic benefits are increased productivity; cost savings in energy, water and supplies; improved risk management and safety; and the opportunity to collaborate with other innovative set-ups.

The intelligence and resourcefulness demonstrated by some of the schools in conceiving and accomplishing these tasks is astounding, and bodes well for our collective future, since the students have been playing a major role, even leading, most of these initiatives.

How does a school deal with the problem of water logging? Does it raise the level of the plinth and make it somebody else's problem? No, it creates a rainwater harvesting system to store water for its own needs during the dry seasons, as well as to replenish the local aquifers. Does a school built 'on a sand dune' hope for rains or does it create a green paradise on the campus? Of course it does the latter. What happens when the compost pit of a school is infested with all kinds of pests and insects? Does the school give up or does it build an even better compost pit, one that can not only handle all the problems besetting its older version, but also more waste? No prizes for guessing the answer.

Some of the schools have started initiatives that are remarkable in another way as well. They do not necessarily provide the school any tangible, short-term benefits, but they are informed by the desire to do something positive for the environment, knowing that the benefits will ultimately return to you. For example, in an attempt to educate students about indoor air quality, a school ends up improving air quality for all.

Many of these practices are easily replicable in other schools; or learning about they might provide valuable food for thought.

This handbook curates some of these exemplary practices. It is hoped that it will be immensely useful to school administrators and teachers, supplying them positive examples and a basic toolkit to initiate similar activities in their own schools. This book will be even more useful to the students, serving as an inspiration to start being the change now.





WHAT IS THE GREEN SCHOOLS PROGRAMME?

A GREEN SCHOOL is a resource-efficient building—one that uses water efficiently, optimizes energy efficiency, minimizes waste generation, catches and recycles water and provides healthier space for its occupants as compared to a conventional building.

Why is it important to adopt the Green Schools Programme?

Adopting the Green Schools Programme (GSP) does not mean that the most complex technological and scientific problems that our planet faces today will be fixed instantly. It is too big a task. But it will:

- ☞ Spur the growth of a more environmentally aware and responsible generation of citizens
- ☞ Equip resourceful teachers to foster environmental literacy
- ☞ Help the school community understand the scope and significance of their role in the sustainable use of natural resources within the school campus
- ☞ Nudge everyone to get on with the job

Benefits of auditing

✎ GSP moves beyond words, jargon and intentions to practices that CSE believes in. It benchmarks a school's performance as environmental managers. The audit measures impact and motivates participants to work towards change.

✎ The monitoring process is participatory and transparent. It encourages teachers to convert audit tasks into assignments for students. The initiative-based tasks also test students' skills of communication and analysis.

✎ It helps schools record their available resources and trains students to collect information systematically to feed and ease up the analysis process.

✎ The analysis of post-audit information can be used by a network of schools or by city or state governments to do a comparative evaluation so that the best practices can be shared.

✎ The audit equips school managements skillfully manage their available resources for optimum utilization and become green schools.

Outcomes of the GSP

✎ Empowers students to use natural resources in a responsible and efficient manner and practise effective and sustainable methods that will become a way of life.

✎ Provides credible data for Central and state governments for long-term policy change in school infrastructure and curriculum to help schools deal with dwindling resources and become resource-efficient.

✎ Helps, with proper governance, all schools become green schools over a period of time.

Criteria for selecting schools

✎ A lot of thought went into developing the criteria on the basis of which schools would be selected. The GSP team focused on schools that demonstrated consistency in efforts to manage their resources efficiently and effectively





as well as inculcate sound environmental practices in students. The selected schools also encouraged their students to actively participate in green activities. It goes without saying that students are an integral part of the GSP and there is no better method to make them understand the impact of their decisions on the environment than participative action.



To be featured in the handbook, the criteria and requirements proposed were:

- ✎ Schools must have submitted the audit in 2018 or the previous two years.
- ✎ Schools must have been rated green at least once in the previous years.
- ✎ Schools must have done something entirely new and innovative that has reduced the ecological footprint. Such practices could be from any of the section of the GSP audit (air, food, energy, land, water and waste) but not restricted to them.
- ✎ There must have been a demonstrable change—either of infrastructure or practices—with the delivery of some concrete and tangible results.
- ✎ The changes must have increased participation of children in such activities.
- ✎ Simple methods and cost-efficient ways that are easy to replicate were rated higher than convoluted and costly methods and practices.
- ✎ There must be inclusion of green practices in classrooms or wider school curriculum, wherever possible.
- ✎ Schools could support information and data with photographs and other evidence.
- ✎ Schools must have provided consent for school visits to ascertain facts on the ground and answered queries, if any.