

Classrooms Are Growing Greener

It used to be that a “green classroom” referred to the color of paint on the wall. But today’s green classrooms are greener than that! New “green” classrooms help schools save money and provide clean environments where students learn better.



Many classrooms are going green by adding solar panels to their roofs. The solar panels collect energy from the sun and use it to power lights and computers. The panels help make green classrooms *grid-neutral*, which means the panels create at least as much electricity as the classrooms use. In addition, new lighting and air systems can be programmed to lower energy costs and water use.

Many new “green” classrooms are built using recycled materials. Some even use scraps of material from blue jeans to insulate walls and ceilings. The old-jean insulation cuts heat and air conditioning bills as it helps to soundproof classrooms too.

Green schools feature many other new ideas. Some classrooms are painted using special odor-free paints that help improve indoor air. Some use no glues or tiles that add chemical smells to the air. Others use triple-pane windows and skylights to help keep classrooms warm in cold weather and let in lots of natural daylight.

Experts say the benefits of building greener classrooms go beyond cost savings. Studies show that a healthful environment with good air quality can cut colds and flu by more than 50 percent. That means fewer sick days for students and teachers. Studies have shown that natural light and other green features improve student learning and test scores too.

NEWS WORD BOX

programmed idle
neutral benefit
insulate odor

CLEANING UP THE AIR OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

Students in Utah wanted cleaner air *outside* their school. They asked school-bus drivers and parents who pick up kids to turn off their engines when outside the school. Engines create pollution as they run, or *idle*, the students said. Now signs along the school driveway say “Turn Your Key, Be Idle-Free.” When students turned their school into an idle-free zone, nearby banks with drive-up windows followed their lead.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

Even if your school or classroom does not have new green features, there are plenty of things you can do to create a greener environment. What might you do to make your school “greener”?