



Changing Together

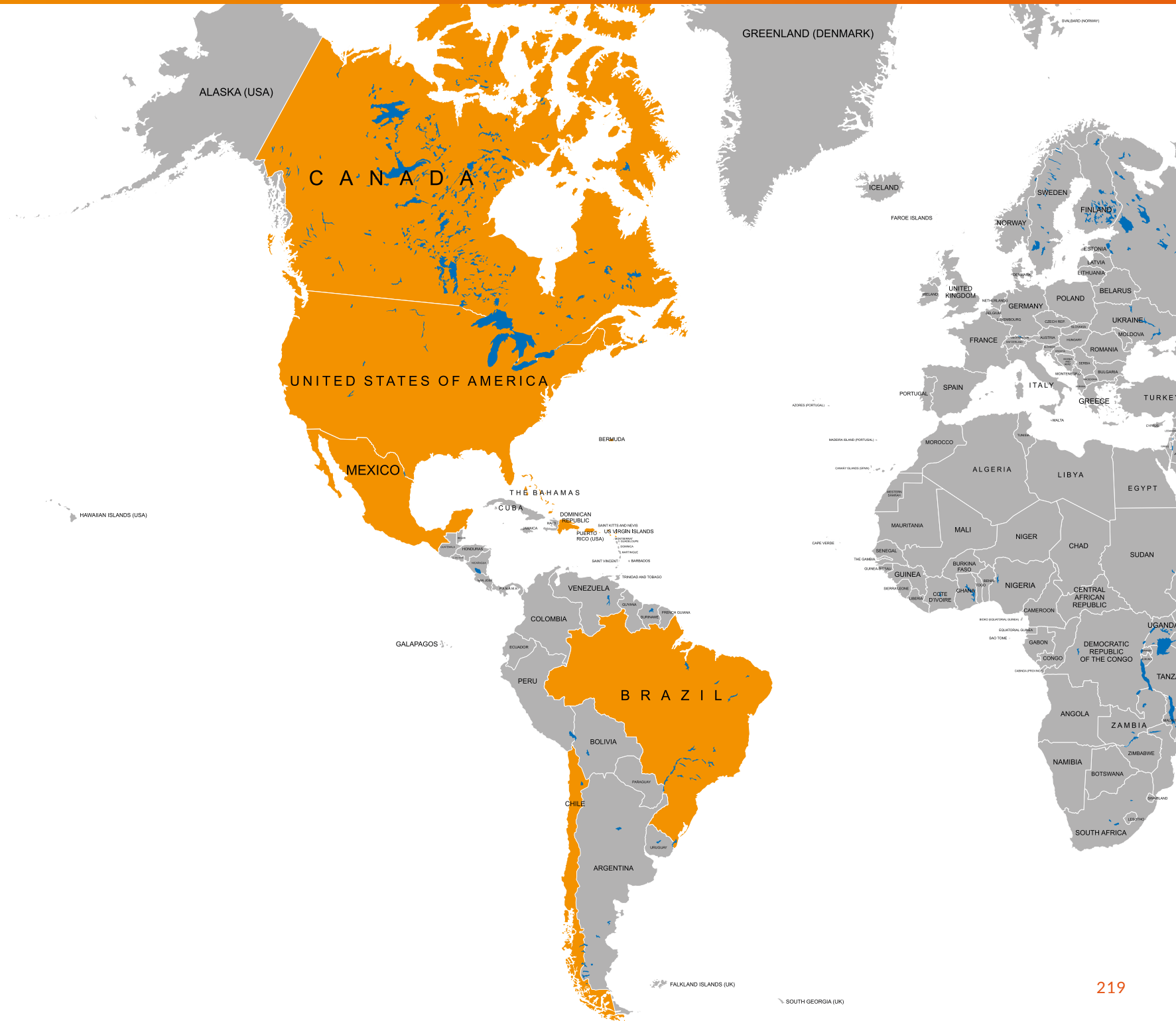
Eco-Schools 1994-2019





North & South America

Bahamas, Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands & United States of America





Bahamas

Bahamas Reef Environment Educational Foundation (BREEF)
National Operator: Kevin Ginton

Country size: 13,878 km²

Population: 351,461

National bird: Flamingo

National tree: Ligum vitae / Tree of Life

Joined Eco-Schools in 2009

Number of Eco-Schools: 31



National fish: Blue Marlin

The Blue Marlin (*Makaira nigricans*) is a majestic fish that is found in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, with reports of the largest sizes found in the latter.

Many people first encounter the fish in Ernest Hemingway's book "Old Man and the Sea." Hemingway was a frequent visitor to The Bahamas, especially the island of Bimini.

A powerful and aggressive fighter, the Blue Marlin can swim far or dive deep, and leap high into the air in a display of strength.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

The Bahamas does not have any formal national legislation or national mandate for Environmental Education (EE). However, there are a number of national policies that promote public awareness and EE. Some of those policies include; 1. The National Biodiversity Strategy, 2. The National Climate Change Policy, 3. The National Energy Policy and 4. The National Wetlands Policy.

The Bahamas Ministry of Education has also included EE in several guiding documents. “Vision 2030: A Shared Vision for Education in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas” notes that primary school students are “expected to have an appreciation of their physical environment and of society, and to understand their duty and responsibility to community;” and every secondary school student should (among other competencies) “embrace his/her roles as environmental steward.”

The Bahamas Teacher’s Handbook emphasises the importance of environmental stewardship and civic engagement, particularly for social studies.

K-12 Education

Presently, K-12 EE is structured around concepts outlined in the K-12 science and social science curricula and is supplemented by the work of several environmental conservation and educational organisations in the Bahamas, including BREEF. Additionally, many Bahamian schools maintain eco-clubs and other public and private sponsored programmes in an effort to expose students to environmental issues.

Professional Development

Since the late 1990s, BREEF has been hosting an annual summer training workshop for teachers that equip them with knowledge, skills and resources to transmit important environmental stewardship messages to successive generations of Bahamians. The annual summer workshop has grown to become the flagship teacher training programme for marine conservation in the country and achieved its goal of training one teacher in every school in The Bahamas in 2017.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

The Eco-Schools Bahamas programme was piloted in 2009 by BREEF after the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism and Aviation had expressed an interest in starting the FEE Blue Flag programme. With the financial support of the Ministry of Tourism and Aviation, BREEF was successful in identifying seven schools on the islands Eleuthera, Abaco and New Providence to accept the challenge of making environmental awareness and action a part of the life and curriculum of their schools. Casuarina McKinney-Lambert, Executive Director of BREEF was responsible for the overall management, communications and activities associated with piloting the new Eco-Schools Bahamas programme. Casuarina remains very passionate and supportive of the Eco-Schools Bahamas programme. She was assisted in the implementation and growth of the Eco-Schools programme by Charlene Carey, Environmental Educator, Projects & Office Manager at BREEF.

Marcia Musgrove, Outreach Manager at BREEF served as the National Operator for Eco-Schools Bahamas until 2016. The first Green Flag awarded in the English-speaking Caribbean was Deep Creek Middle School (DCMS) of Eleuthera in 2010. In 2012, Hope Town Primary School, Abaco became the second school to receive the prestigious Green Flag Award.

The Commonwealth of The Bahamas is an archipelago of around 700 islands and more than 2,000 rocks and cays in the West Atlantic south-east of the coast of Florida, USA, and north-east of Cuba. Given the nature of our geography in The Bahamas and the increasing number of participating (and interested) schools, there is always a need for additional volunteers and partners to mentor schools through successful implementation of the Seven Step programme. To date, we’ve been very fortunate in identifying individuals and organisations to help meet this challenge. At the moment, efforts focus on locating mentor individuals and organisations to support the increasing numbers of interested Family Island schools.

KEY MILESTONES

In 2013, the Eco-Schools Bahamas Native Plant Biodiversity Project was implemented to promote native plant diversity and environmental sustainability. It included the development and publication of “The Native Plant Garden Manual for Schools”, which was designed to help schools and the wider community plan and implement and maintain native plant gardens.

In 2015, BREEF held the Eco-Schools Youth Environmental Leadership Summit, and in 2016-2018, it ran a project on Engaging Young People to Reduce Plastic Pollution in Landfills & the Ocean. A series of initiatives were developed, like the Designer Bag Challenge, the Reuse This Bag School Campaign, and School Recycling.

In 2019, BREEF counts 31 registered Eco-Schools on five islands of The Bahamas!



“It was a very important moment for the students of DCMS to be the first to receive a Green Flag certification in The Bahamas and the English-speaking Caribbean. For a community in one of the more remote areas of the Family Islands and one that is often under-served, the accomplishment and the leadership skills it gave the children was a real boost which translated into their academics and other areas of community life.”

Former DCMS principal, Dr Joanna Paul, Director of Development Lyford Cay International School, Nassau

“On behalf of the Keep Grand Bahama Clean (KGBC) Committee, we extend our heartiest congratulations to you on your 25th Anniversary. The dedication your organisation has shown to such a wonderful environmentally sustainable programme should be commended and we are elated to be a part of your vision. We wish you the most enjoyable celebration as you mark this milestone.”

Olethea Gardiner, Environmental Inspector, Building & Development Services, The Grand Bahama Port Authority, Limited. Freeport, Grand Bahama

“BREEF is proud to have served as the National Operator for Eco-Schools in The Bahamas for the last ten years. We have seen the positive social and academic impact that the programme has on young people. We look forward to many more years of helping students become environmental stewards through the Eco-Schools programme and extend our congratulations on the occasion of the 25th anniversary.”

Casuarina McKinney-Lambert, Bahamas Reef Environment Educational Foundation (BREEF) Executive Director



NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

The opportunity to interact and work on a daily basis with environmentally conscious students committed educators and Eco-Schools volunteers is priceless.



National Plant: Yellow Elder

The yellow elder was chosen to be the national flower of the Bahamas because it is native to the Bahama Islands, and it blooms throughout the year.

Bahamas Reef Environment Educational Foundation (BREEF)
#11 Caves Professional Centre, West Bay Street & Blake Road
P.O. Box CB-11005, New Providence

Bermuda



Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute (BUEI)
National Operator: Julie Steele

Country size: 53.2 km²

Population: 64,000

Highest mountain: Town Hill 76 m

National tree: Juniperus bermudiana/Bermuda cedar

Joined Eco-Schools in 2013

Number of Eco-Schools: 20

BUEI

National animal:

Pterodroma Cahow/Bermuda Petrel

For 300 years, the Pterodroma cahow was thought to be extinct, but in 1951, eighteen nesting pairs were rediscovered.

A national programme to preserve and restore the species has helped increase its numbers, but scientists are still working to enlarge its nesting habitat on the restored Nonsuch Island.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

Established in 2016, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is the result of an amalgamation between the Department of Conservation Services and the Department of Environmental Protection. DENR is the primary government agency responsible for ensuring the proper use of Bermuda's natural resources and the protection of the environment, within the framework of sustainable development. One of DENR's core objectives is to provide Environmental Education (EE) on Bermuda and other islands for visitors, locals and schools through engaging and entertaining exhibits at the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum and Zoo, for which DENR also provides both staff and facilities.

K-12 Education

NGOs including BUEI, Greenrock, BEST, Keep Bermuda Beautiful, and the Bermuda National Trust supports K-12 EE, offering informative talks and educational programmes island-wide.

Professional Development

Many of these programmes seek to engage educators through teacher professional development workshops that align with the curriculum.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

Until the Eco-Schools programme was introduced to Bermuda in 2013, the island did not have a recognised, integrated EE programme that promotes long-term, whole-school (students, teachers, parents, community) action for sustainability. Greenrock, a registered Bermudan charity organisation that strives to be catalysts for changing mindsets, so that sustainable use of resources is included in decision-making for individuals, government or businesses, led the charge for the Eco-Schools programme.

Greenrock was selected to represent Bermuda as a member of the Foundation for Environmental Education, establish a globally respected partnership and introduce Eco-Schools to the Bermudan society through roadshows and school outreach. Since then, there have been 22 schools with approximately 300 students participating in campus Eco-Clubs, leading the charge for sustainable practices within their broader school communities.

As of April 2019, the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute (BUEI) has become the official member organisation of the Foundation for Environmental Education and the National Operator for Eco-Schools Bermuda.



KEY MILESTONES

Since 2013, Eco-Schools Bermuda has grown to include over 20 schools on the island with six schools achieving Green Flag status and many others steadily moving along eight various pathways. In 2019, BUEI overtook the administration of this valuable sustainability programme and two new pathways will be open to schools across the island, with increased programme support available and networking opportunities for participating schools.

NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

A challenge has been to maintain continuity and momentum through staff changes and resource fluctuations both as an NGO and with the schools. This programme is new to BUEI, but we are looking forward to our journey with all of the schools, beginning this school year as the National Operator. The conversations with the current participants have been positive with many looking forward to the next steps in the coming year.





“After participating in today’s [professional development] workshop, I now have a better sense of how being in the garden or measuring the school’s trash can be integrated into my classroom teaching. I knew the concepts before, but now I have a practical approach and I wish more of my colleagues attended this session. We need all the help we can get and I can really see my students getting energised over some of these activity ideas.”

Teacher, Francis Patton Primary School

“A strong foundation for the Eco-Schools programme has been laid by Greenrock in the last five years and places BUEI in a solid starting position to continue with this valuable programme”.

Tara Curtis, BUEI CEO

“Eco-Schools Bermuda began in 2013 with just 2 schools and it has now grown to be in 20 schools with more in the pipeline. Around 300 students participate directly, with many more benefitting simply from the programme presence in their school. The programme involves both public and private schools, ranging from pre-school right through to tertiary education, including one special education school. It is a wonderful programme that has a direct and measurable impact on the students and provides tangible and financial benefits to the participating schools. We believe it is a core component of helping ensure the sustainability of our island for future generations.”

Nick Campbell, Greenrock Director

Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute (BUEI)
40 Crow Lane
Pembroke





Brazil

Instituto Ambientes em Rede

National Operator: Ricardo Cerruti Oehling

National animal: Arara Azul (Hyacinth Macaw) and Onça Pintada (Jaguar)



Country size: 8.5 million km²

Population: 210 million

Longest river: Amazon river 6,400 km

Highest mountain: Pico da Neblina 2,994 m

National tree: Ipê Amarelo (Yellow Ipê)

Joined Eco-Schools in 2008

Number of Eco-Schools: 17



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

Brazil's federal law 9.795/99 - National Policy for Environmental Education (PNEA) states that Environmental Education (EE) must be present in both formal and nonformal education, at all kind of schools both public and private and at all levels of education, from K-12 to colleges and universities. Future work for the government includes creating an online tool for resource sharing, networking for EE professionals, public policy, actions and projects, and distance education courses. Additionally, the government is looking to begin a National Training Programme for Implementation Managers.

K-12 Education

In K-12 Education, Brazil has a "Sustainable Schools National Programme" developed by the Ministry of Education, which supports Brazilian schools in their transition process towards socio-environmental sustainability and turning into sustainable education settings and contributing to better life quality within the communities. The programme actions are implemented within the curriculum, management, facilities, and the school-community relationship, and are developed through five lines taken in steps, in a similar way as the seven steps in the Eco-Schools programme. Those five steps are:

- Learning processes and pedagogic practices
- Diagnoses and research
- Communication
- Management and Infrastructure
- Articulation and interface with other national policies

Professional Development

In terms of professional development, Brazil is working on providing online tools for resource sharing, distance education courses and networking, and is in the process of developing a national EE system to improve the scope and impact of its national EE policy.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

The Eco-Schools programme started in Brazil in 2008. IAR already worked with environmental projects and some actions included education for students. At that time, IAR had already been a FEE member for three years and that helped the organisation become more visible across Brazil. In April 2010, Escola da Colina received the first Green Flag in the country. In cities like Florianópolis, the programme is strengthening the partnership between IAR and the Municipality Educational Secretariat due to the interest that private schools show in the programme.

With HSCB and Eletrosul as sponsors for the programme, IAR has been able to increase its visibility as a National Operator all over the country and to pilot the programme in public schools.



Eco Committee meeting
EM Vereador Ary da Silva School, São Paulo, March 2019

<
Presidente Tancredo Neves Rural Family Home, school from Southern Bahia region with their students after receiving an Eco-Schools Pilot Certificate. Presidente Tancredo Neves, Bahia, October 2019

KEY MILESTONES

The Ministry of Environment has engaged in talks with IAR, working on the possibility to incorporate the Eco-Schools programme within its own national sustainable programme in order to strengthen it. IAR has created partnerships with local counties in order to engage more public schools. The programme in Brazil has been sponsored by entities such as HSBC, Eletrosul and Alcoa Foundation.

Another key moment was when a national website was launched with resources and material translated to Brazilian-Portuguese.



Escola da Colina, the first Brazilian school awarded with a Green Flag. Schools coordinators, IAR team and students celebrating their achievement, São José dos Pinhais, Paraná, April 2010

Instituto Ambientes em Rede (IAR)
Rua Tenente Silveira, 482 Sala 204
88010-301 Florianópolis



“We are proud to be part of the Eco-Schools programme! Through this work, we combine Environmental Education with Formal Education. Thus, we give a permanent character to the theme, making the process cyclical and evolutionary. In daily activities, students learn about the benefits of the environment and the need to preserve it. In these years as an Eco-School, we have shared experiences and multiplied actions in favour of the planet.”

Simone Aparecida Zanardini, Educational Coordinator, Escola da Colina

“When we got to know about the Eco-Schools programme in Brazil, we wanted to engage schools of the Southern Bahia, called ‘Rural Family Homes’ that are already working in the environmental field and are following all the principles that FEE stands for. From our contact and commitment in Brazil, coming to know the operation closely, each step to be followed, including the training of people, increased my engagement and thus the Rural Family Homes joined and will soon receive a Green Flag. In my last trip to Portugal, I was very impressed. Recently, when I saw a Green Flag at the Lisbon School of Nursing, I dreamed of the flags in those schools in Bahia, a school community recognised for the work they have done.

I see how young leaders are mobilising, see every step as an achievement, every action as a new challenge, and so, they continue to learn and understand the importance of our work connected to the SDGs and sustainability. This is an agenda that corroborates with our work in the Regional Coordination of PEA-UNESCO Network in Bahia. Congratulations on the 25th anniversary!”

Joana Maria Almeida, Regional Coordinator of PEA-UNESCO, Bahia

“Sustainability has been a primordial issue in all fields, each time more important. The Eco-Schools programme has been a fundamental tool to make students engaged and aware - the students who will be our future leaders. Local schools are always looking for new methodologies and subjects to introduce to their students and the programme simply achieves their expectations. It is a very organised and effective methodology that can guide students’ actions and learnings.”

Ricardo Cerruti Oehling, IAR Director



NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

The biggest challenge is to involve more schools in the programme, mainly public schools. Our country is abundant in natural resources and offers lots of opportunities for our students to be aware, to explore and learn about the environment. Our challenge is to find the resources to support those schools, which have brilliant and dedicated teachers, concerned about sustainability aligned with their disciplines.

In 2018, after 10 years of implementing the Eco-Schools programme, we could award the first public schools in Guarujá - before that, we only had private schools. It was a huge moment for them, as they were an example of engagement, commitment and mainly creativity since public schools have practically no resources. At the celebration ceremony, the city Mayor, the Environmental Secretary, the Educational Secretary, the Tourism Secretary and all school staff were present, as it was a very important moment.



Students from EM Lucia Flora (Public School) at National Celebration of Brazil Independence Day, proud to show their Green Flag Guarujá, São Paulo, September 2018



Canada

EcoSchools Canada

National Operator: Lindsay Bunce and Theresa Ramirez

NCDSB - Outdoor Classroom

National animal: Beaver



Country size: 9.9 million km²

Population: 37 million

Longest river: Mackenzie River 4,000 km

Highest mountain: Mount Logan 5,959 m

National tree: Sugar Maple Tree

Joined Eco-Schools in 2019

Number of Eco-Schools: 718



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

In Canada, direct federal government involvement in formal Environmental Education (EE) is quite limited because the constitutional authority for education sits at the provincial and territorial level. The federal government plays an important role however, by fostering partnerships, funding for non-profit organisations, supporting national initiatives, and facilitating working groups.

K-12 Education

The focus on EE varies across provincial and territorial curricula, with some regions having formal courses centred on environmental learning and others embedding EE across all curriculum strands. School boards and districts are responsible for implementing the provincial or territorial curriculum and make decisions around the budget allocated to EE, as well as which external environmental programmes are available to school communities. Some school boards in Ontario have included

the Eco-Schools certification as a component of their board's sustainability action plan and as such, encourage participation through a system-wide approach.

Professional Development

Professional development opportunities for teachers, administrators, caretakers, and support staff influences the success and impact of EE efforts across Canada. This is typically carried out through regional initiatives directed by non-profit environmental organisations, university faculties of education, and provincial or territorial Ministries of Education.

The Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication (EECOM) facilitates a national annual EE conference. In October 2020, EcoSchools Canada will be co-chairing the EECOM conference with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, and the Dr Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study Laboratory School.



KEY MILESTONES

EcoSchools Canada (formerly Ontario EcoSchools) has been certifying schools across Ontario in environmental learning and climate action since 2005. In the last 15 years, EcoSchools Canada has certified over 3,000 schools.

The programme has received generous support from the Ontario Ministry of Education, Ontario Ministry of Energy, Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks and Employment and Social Development Canada.

In 2015, EcoSchools Canada received the Minister's Award for Environmental Excellence from the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, and in 2019, the organisation was nominated for the UN Global Compact Network Canada SDG Leadership Award.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

EcoSchools Canada began as Ontario EcoSchools. The development of the programme started in 1999 and was the result of the amalgamation of six smaller municipal school boards forming one large school board currently known as the Toronto District School Board (TDSB).

The programme was at the time only available to schools in the TDSB, was also partially modelled after the ISO 14001, which is focused on environmental management systems and underpins the international Foundation for Environmental Education Eco-Schools programme from which EcoSchools Canada also drew inspiration.

Based on the initial success of the programme, Richard Christie, now Senior Manager of Sustainability at TDSB, approached the York Environmental Education Consortium (YEEC) in 2005 about expanding the initiative in Ontario. The YEEC was made up of like-minded school boards that had created a regional learning community through sharing EE resources and troubleshooting challenges. Under the guidance of Catherine Mahler, who was working with the TDSB at the time, the consortium was able to secure funding to begin a province-wide initiative that was incubated within York University's Faculty of Environmental Studies.

The YEEC transitioned to become the Ontario EcoSchools Steering Committee comprised of seven school boards and two community partners who championed uptake of the programme in new regions. The school boards included: Durham District School Board, Halton District School Board, Halton Catholic District School Board, Thames Valley District School Board, Toronto District School Board, Waterloo Region District School Board, York Region District School Board, Toronto Region Conservation Authority and York University. These partners continue to support programme delivery as the Eco-Schools Programme Advisory Committee.

Ontario EcoSchools incorporated as EcoSchools Canada in 2017 with a vision of delivering the programme to schools across the country. In 2019, when EcoSchools Canada became an affiliate member of FEE, the first Green Flag was awarded to Cousteau School in Vancouver. EcoSchools Canada is now in the process of mapping FEE's Eco-Schools programme to fit with the already existing programme and is delivering a pilot programme outside Ontario from September 2019. EcoSchools Canada's goal is to open certification to all schools across the country and reach 2 million students by 2022.



Outdoor Classroom



“When I was in grade nine, I saw a poster for my school’s environmental activism team, the EcoNinjas, and thinking it would be a good way to get involved in my new school, I went to the first meeting. To put it simply, that decision changed my life. That day, I walked into a classroom full of students who were passionate about the environment, who weren’t afraid to stand up for what they believed in, who challenged each other to do better and were full of wonderful ideas. If you truly want to make a change, it’s these types of people that you need to surround yourself with. You don’t have to possess a certain list of traits, be a specific type of person or dedicate your life to the environment to be a changemaker; you just have to care and be willing to do something about it. One of your first steps towards action can be getting certified as an Eco-School. This voluntary programme recognises environmental action and has a vision of certifying every school in the province. My school is at the Gold level right now, but I’m determined it will be Platinum by the time I graduate. At the end of the day, what matters most is your passion to leave the world in better shape than how you found it. Complacency is the environment’s greatest enemy. It’s the moment you pick up the pop can on the trail instead of walking by it that change starts to take hold. When you put your heart into it, others will notice, get inspired, and follow your lead.”

**Emmalee Frketich, Student at Westmount Secondary School,
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board**

“As an organisation that lives and breathes sustainability and is focused on the next generation, it was a privilege to work with such inspirational students. The dialogue between our team and these change agents was eye-opening and left me confident that the future of our earth is in great hands.”

Mikhael Metauro, Director of Supply Development, Cascades Recovery+, speaking about working with student EcoTeams at the EcoSchools Youth Conference

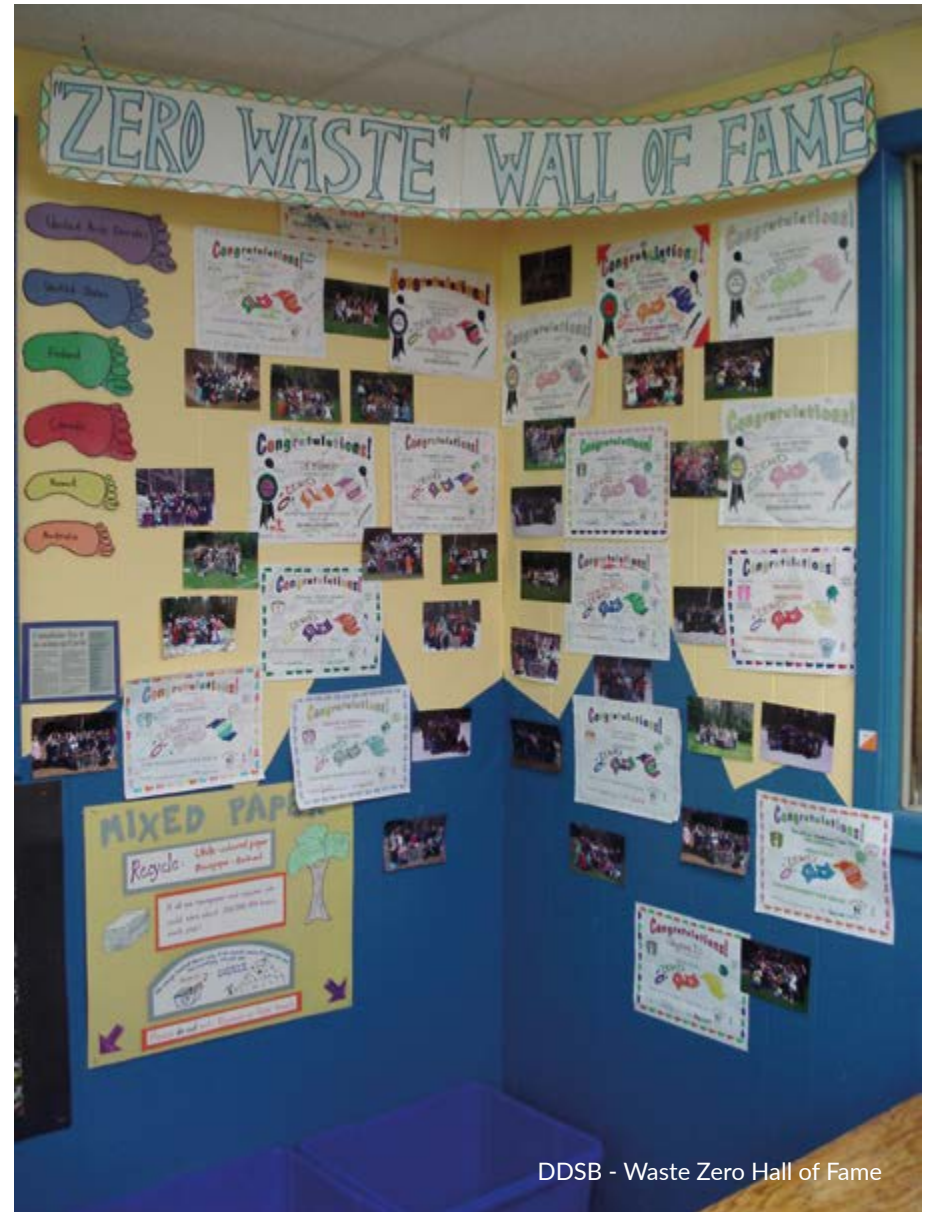
“Eco-Schools continues to lay the foundation for building environmental leaders and bringing school communities together to reduce our collective impact on the earth. Through benchmarking, creativity, and innovation, our network of over 1,900 schools is inspiring positive, meaningful action across all levels of the education sector. We are so proud to celebrate and recognise their accomplishments. “

Lindsay Bunce, Executive Director, EcoSchools Canada



EcoSchools Canada

360 Dufferin Street, Unit 102 Toronto, Ontario,
Canada M6K 1Z8



DDSB - Waste Zero Hall of Fame

NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

EcoSchools Canada has only been part of the National Operator community for a few months so this is difficult to pinpoint one highlight moment. We are very excited to meet the other Eco-Schools leads from across the globe and learn more about how other countries have been delivering the programme.

As with many other environmental charities in Canada, securing financial support to continue to grow the programme can be a challenge.



Chile



Fundación Educarse

National Operator: Antonio Hirane

Activity with students from Eco-Schools Latvia

Country size: 743,532 km²

Population: 18.3 million

Longest river: El Loa 440 km

Highest mountain: Ojos del Salado 6,891 m

Joined Eco-Schools in 2018

Number of Eco-Schools: 1

National animal: Huemul and Condor

The national emblem has a motto that says “By reason or force” and each animal represents one of these concepts.

The Huemul, an original deer from Chile, represents the “reason” referring to the ability of human beings to reflect, deduce or think.

The condor, the biggest bird flying in our skies, standing at the right side of the emblem represents the “force”.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

The trajectory of Environmental Education (EE) in Chile has been to collect and integrate trends worldwide. In 2009, Chile's government approved the National Educational Policy for Sustainable Development. With the return to democracy, the civil society was able to organise itself around environmental protection interests, thus developing initiatives to promote formal and non-formal EE.

Along with this, the legislation initiated a progressive incorporation of the environmental dimension, with the enactment of the Environmental Bases Law (1994) specifically, and with the Education, Law Reform initiated in 1996. These legislations opened a space for the insertion of environmental issues by allowing educational establishments to define their own plans, study-programmes and complementary contents since the new contents were proposed as Fundamental Objectives and Minimum Contents. Since then, formal education has been incorporating more space to strengthen EE within educational establishments.

EE is described in Law 19.300 of General Bases of the Environment (Article 2) as a "permanent interdisciplinary process, aimed at the education of citizenships that recognises values, clarifies concepts, and develops skills and attitudes necessary for a harmonious coexistence between human beings, their culture and their surrounding biophysical environment".

The same Law, modified by Law 20.417, considers EE as an instrument of environmental management, and states that it must be oriented towards "the understanding and awareness of environmental problems, and must incorporate integration of values and the development of habits and behaviours that tend to prevent and solve them".

K-12 Education

There is a National System of Environmental Certification for Educational Establishments (SNCAE), which gives certification to K-12 schools that develop methodologies and strategies for EE practices. This national system (SNCAE) seeks to be a comprehensive strategy to address EE for sustainability in kindergartens and educational establishments of basic and secondary education, special-differential and professional technicians.

This system integrates, in an interrelated way, EE into three areas:

- Curriculum scope: its objective is to highlight the existing environmental subjects in the curriculum, plans and study programmes of the establishment, seeking that the educational contents are consistent with the local environmental reality, in order

for the establishment to address the actions in a transversal and interdisciplinary manner.

- Management scope: seeks to incorporate environmental practices in the management of its resources such as water, energy, waste, etc. and in the educational tasks of the establishment (Institutional Educational Project IEP, Coexistence Regulation, etc.)
- Scope relations with the environment: this area emphasises the interaction of the educational establishment with its immediate environment (economic, social and environmental dimension), resulting in the establishment of being a proactive actor, a member of cooperation networks for local territorial intervention. In addition, the establishment develops educational processes relevant and contextualised to the local and global reality, generating significant learning processes.

However, EE is not explicitly included in the K-12 curriculum, the SNCAE System is voluntary, and EE is a concept developed by the Ministry of Environment, but which it is not very integrated into the work of the Ministry of Education.

Professional Development

In terms of professional development, Alberto Hurtado University offers a four-month EE diploma, and USACH offers a diploma in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The Adriana Hoffmann Academy of Environmental Formation offers several online and face-to-face courses for teachers in Chile. Training for environmental educators also exists, for example in Katalapi. Playa Ancha University offers the only Environmental Education Master's degree programme in the country.

Due to this limited status, it is an important task to continue developing EE at its different levels throughout the diversity and wide spaces of the country, for example, by formalising it in the curriculum of educational institutions.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

The Eco-Schools programme is currently in the implementation phase. Fundación Educarse has been developing resources, e.g. a website, handbook, themes, etc. and recruiting schools to join the programme since October 2018, when the organisation was accepted by FEE as National Operators for both the Eco-Schools and the Blue Flag programme.

Since then, Fundación Educarse has been coordinating and developing several meetings with relevant stakeholders in order to introduce the programme, invite schools to be part of it and receive financial support to implement it in public schools. To achieve the latter, the organisation has held meetings with mayors of different municipalities and presented the programme to the Ministerial Secretary of Education, and to several school principals with an invitation to be part of Eco-Schools Chile. All these presentations have been greatly received, and the programme is therefore launching in March 2020 when the school year begins.

KEY MILESTONES

In 2019, Fundación Educarse has had different opportunities to present the programme to local as well as national educational authorities. The programme has been very well received by ministerial representatives, which has opened up the path to include more schools in the programme. One of the most important milestones was presenting the programme to the Mayor of Concón in the region of Valparaíso. The Mayor has shown great interest in implementing the programme in public schools in this municipality by 2020. The Eco-Schools programme was also presented to headmasters from the Association of British Schools in Chile (ABSCH) in Valparaíso, who also received the information positively.

National tree: Araucaria

The Araucaria has been protected in Chile since ancient times by the indigenous people Mapuche and Pehuenche who consider it a sacred tree. It supported their livelihood by supplying edible pine nuts.

With the independence of the country, the tree continues to be protected in large areas. Due to its small distribution, it is protected in the Chilean National Parks of Conguillío, Tolhuaca Laguna del Laja, Huerquehue, Villarrica, and Nahuelbuta.



Alejandra Ríos receiving the FEE Membership Certificate from Lourdes Díaz



“Chile is going through a very delicate situation regarding environmental issues (lack of water, poor recycling systems, etc.), so there is a national need to make progress in environmental education, and Eco-Schools could be crucial in achieving this goal.”

Maria Antonia Muñoz, Director of the Private Co-Educational School of Quilpue & Member of Fundación Educarse

“Chile is a country that faces enormous challenges in educational and environmental matters. We strongly believe that the formation of a new generation sensitive to the importance of taking care of the environment will be a key step to guarantee the sustainable development of our country”.

Antonio Hirane Castaño, Fundación Educarse Director



NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

The main challenge so far, in our experience, is that Chileans are still not as receptive in regards to the urgency of incorporating sustainable attitudes and lifestyles. A second challenge is related to the availability of the public sector, private sector and citizens themselves, to allocate financial resources and efforts to implement a sustainable way of life.

However, it has been impressive to see how well the Eco-Schools programme has been received by the government and educational authorities, who see it as the means to improve environmental performance. We are also very impressed by the number of people who want to be part of the programme, even before its launch.

Another aspect that has proven relevant to the Chilean programme is its ability to adapt to the local reality and its simple and systematised implementation. All this adds to the strength of the programme and to the reason why it is widely successfully implemented in all parts of the world.



Eco-Schools Latvia with the flag of Chile at the FEE General Assembly 2018



Dominican Republic

Instituto de Derecho Ambiental de la República Dominicana (IDARD)

National Operator: Cesarina Aquino

Country size: 48,442 km²

Population: 10.7 million

Longest river: Yaque del Norte River 296 km

Highest mountain: Pico Duarte 3,098 m

National plant: Bayahibe

Joined Eco-Schools in 2007

Number of Eco-Schools: 39

National animal: Cigua Palmera

The Cigua Palmera (*Dulus Dominicus*) was declared the national bird on 14 January 1987.

It does not sing like the nightingale, nor is it as charismatic and colourful as the parrot.

Many people wondered why it was selected as the national bird. The reason is sought in its taxonomic uniqueness, and in the complexity of its reproductive behaviour.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

In 1977, the government instituted the Environment Department. Subsequently, the Ministry of Agriculture created the Department for Wildlife and an Environmental Education (EE) division in 1978 and 1979 respectively. In 1985, law No. 295 was proclaimed, which prescribed the teaching of EE in all public and private schools at all levels.

After the country's participation in the Rio Conference, law No. 300 was enacted in 1998. This law derogated law No. 295 and re-established the mandatory teaching of EE. Two years later, the Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources, now Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, was established through the regulatory framework No. 64-00 which records in detail all definitions and sanctions related to the protection and conservation of the environment in the Dominican Republic. In chapter VII, articles 56-58, EE is described as an essential element for the maintenance and preservation of the nation's natural resources.

The Senate approved the EE project and remitted it to the Chamber of Deputies on November 20th 2017. According to the said project, the development of ecological conscience is the essence and purpose of EE, so that the planet's health can be guaranteed in the broadest context of biodiversity.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

The Eco-Schools programme began through the coordination of Instituto de Derecho Ambiental de la República Dominicana (IDARD) with support of EGE HAINA, a wind-power generation company in the country, which sponsored four public schools for the academic year 2007-08, as part of the company's initiative for social responsibility. The schools were located in the communities of Higuey, San Pedro de Macoris and Barahona and through four follow-up visits, they were trained in the Seven Steps and the environmental issues they were addressing. In 2008, the first Green Flag in the Dominican Republic was awarded to La Punta Pescadora School.

Currently, in the academic year 2019-20, 58 public and private schools are participating in the programme, with the support of six sponsors.

Instituto de Derecho Ambiental de la Republica Dominicana (IDARD)
Fernando Manuel Castillo No. 6
Ensanche Miraflores, Santo Domingo



KEY MILESTONES

The programme and the constant training for students to raise awareness on issues of waste management, resource-saving, climate change and biodiversity have contributed to both the creation and maintenance of the school garden for the production of organic vegetables and the promotion of healthy food, as well as the reduction, reuse and recycling of usable materials generated in the activities. It has resulted in the reforestation of endemic trees, in waste reuse workshops such as fabrics, oils, paper, cardboard and plastic for the reduction of the carbon footprint and use of materials and in greater involvement and awareness of the surrounding community in common environmental problems.

All this has been made possible by the Eco-Schools teams in all the different schools that have been participants in the programme since 2007. This work for quality EE delivered by IDARD has been recognised by Fundación Propagas.

The biggest challenge for the programme is the resources for its implementation, as well as the limited support from government institutions.



“The Eco-Schools programme has been an opportunity to develop environmental and citizenship competencies in the educational community, promoting environmental awareness to improve the reality of the educational centre and the community.”

Evelyn Valera Portes, Principal, La Punta Pescadora School

“On behalf of the Ministry of Education, we consider this programme impressive because it will strengthen all of the national educational work in environmental education”.

Jose Amando Rodriguez, Director of the Department of Environmental Education of the Ministry of Education

“Eco-Schools is the best tool to teach young people to take actions in favour of the environment, realistic concrete actions adapted to the needs of educational centres.”

Cesarina Aquino, IDARD Director





The Cigua Palmera belongs to a monospecific family (Dulidae), which means that it is the sole species in its family (Dulus). There are no more than 10 monospecific families in the world, and the *Dulus Dominicus* is the only one endemic in the Antilles.

This playful little bird builds a massive nest in which every family has its own 'apartment' with its own entrance to ensure each couple's privacy. It only builds them on palm trees that are isolated from any other tree to ensure that neither rats, snakes or humans have easy access to it.

NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

The way in which the student community and the inhabitants close to the schools have radically changed their environmental practices, especially with waste management, which is an urgent problem in our country, gives us great pride. Also, to see how through the programme, the children and young people of tomorrow are more aware of how we should treat our planet, gives us the satisfaction of duty fulfilled. To experience these things has been very special for me.

Mexico



FEE Mexico

National Operator: Joaquín Díaz / Rebeca Sánchez

Country Size: 1.9 million km²

Population: 123.5 million

Longest river: Rio Conchos 9,034 km

Highest mountain: Pico Orizaba 5,634 m

National flower: Dalia flower

National tree: Ahuehuete

Joined Eco-Schools in 2012

Number of Eco-Schools 38



National animal: Golden Eagle

Mexico's Coat of Arms depicts a golden eagle perched on a prickly pear cactus, with a rattlesnake in its beak. The emblem refers to the legend of the Aztecs' arrival to the Valley of Mexico.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

In the national legislation, the Education Secretary has integrated Environmental Education (EE) as a main component of education, but only to a basic level in selected themes.

K-12 Education

In grades 4-12, the educational system has four academic training fields and EE is incorporated in Exploration and Understanding of the Natural and Social World. Between grades 4-5, there is a subject called Natural World, which is divided into three parts. Only one of these parts is concerned with the environment. In grades 6-9 there is no subject including EE as a main component, however, it is incorporated e.g. in the biodiversity subject. In grade 10, it is incorporated in the teaching of the ecosystem in the biology subjects. In grade 11, the environment is not a part of any subject or field, however, in grade 12, there are learning objectives related to contaminating substances and separation.

Professional Development

Center for Environmental Education and Communication (CICEANA) offers a number of professional learning opportunities, including workshops and support in the design of, e.g. school gardens. Beyond this there are, unfortunately, very limited professional development opportunities available for teachers and trainers working with EE.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

In 2012, the NGO Pronatura launched the implementation of the Eco-Schools programme. The first school to be awarded with a Green Flag was Colegio Contadero on 4 July 2014. In the school year 2016-2017 ten schools were running the programme and two of those received the Green Flag.

In September 2017, FEE Mexico took over the role as a National Operator. FEE Mexico made alliances with municipalities and stakeholders such as the Municipalities of Benito Juarez, Los Cabos, Puerto Morelos, Isla Mujeres and Zihuatanejo, as well as Reciclando Mexico and Honeywell, which have been essential to the development and expansion of the programme. By the end of the school year 2017-2018 there were 21 schools with 18,000 students working with the programme and within 2018-2019, 38 schools with 30,000 students were registered and active.



KEY MILESTONES

According to the Global Shapers Survey 2018, developed by the World Economic Forum, 48.8% of 31,495 young students who were interviewed around the globe, believe that the biggest global issue is climate change and the destruction of nature. 1,661 young Mexican students were interviewed using the same survey and 71.9% answered that the biggest issue was related to corruption.

It is an achievement that Eco-Schools in Mexico has grown 200% in the last 17 months from 18 schools in the centre of the country to 38 schools in 8 states. The 38 schools have almost 30,000 students, 450 teachers and are located in 8 states. The 38 Eco Committees consist of a mix of students, parents and school authorities, with 1,900 people in total. Since 2017, more than 44,000 students have been involved with Eco-Schools Mexico.

NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

The highlight moment was realising the impact that an Eco-School can make in a community. This month we had the Green Flag event in Mexico, a few days later, one of the school teachers of the Esc. Sec. Tec. 186 Adolfo Lopez Mateos called me and told me that the programme had a huge impact on the reduction of plastic waste. The collection and recycling in the school decreased by 50%. Also, during the arrival as well as when the event ended, we could see that the surrounding area of the school was clean - something amazing.

FEE Mexico

Francisco Javier Mina #112, Col. Morelos, Toluca





“With the involvement of teachers and students, but also families who have gradually joined, it’s very rewarding to recognise that children take this knowledge from school to their homes to transform the way things are. Our proposal is not only to teach students to respect the environment and their planet, but it is also to encourage families to participate in this process, recycle, but also to safeguard traditions and collaborate in collective efforts.”

Armando Salgado García, Principal of Escuela Secundaria Técnica 56 Enrique Ramírez y Ramírez

“The lesson given to us by these young people is the very important one of perseverance, but beyond that it requires will and love for the ecosystem, love for our country, love for our Earth. So, I will do nothing but congratulate and join that effort. We would have to begin at home, but here it is starting with the school and that is certainly to give an example and be congruent. Participants who today achieve a Green Flag: the challenge is greater for you now because, from this day, it is you who inspire other schools. Today you, students from these 11 schools, will help all the citizens of Los Cabos build a new and better story. How? By being the inspiration, getting that Green Flag as a badge in your school and inviting and setting an example that we can do it, united.”

Jesus Armida Castro Guzman, Mayor of Los Cabos, speech given during the Green Flag event in Los Cabos Municipality on 24 July 2019



“Implementing Eco-Schools in the country has been a huge challenge. More than 1.9 million square kilometres represent big difficulties. But our network is growing thanks to the changes in society. Eco-Schools gets involved with more and more positive change agents every day. We are now present in 20 municipalities and influencing more than 30,000 students. Finally, we are working under three main premises; Sensitisation. All anthropogenic activities have an impact on the environment. We have to know it! Responsibility. Individually or as a society we all have liabilities and we have to face it! Action. Every effort is important and has a positive impact. We have to make it happen!”

Joaquín Díaz, FEE Mexico Executive Director





Puerto Rico

Organization for Sustainable Environment (OPAS)
National Operator: Marisol M. Quinones

Country size: 9,104 km²

Population 3.1 million

Longest river: Río de la Plata 97 km

Highest mountain: Cerro Punta 1,338 m

National animal: Todus Portoricencis

Joined Eco-Schools in 2007

Number of Eco-Schools: 36

National plant: Flor de Maga

Although originally endemic to the humid mountains of limestone in the western and north-central portions of the Island, today it grows everywhere in Puerto Rico due to its extensive cultivation.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

In terms of Environmental Education (EE) in Puerto Rico, the initiatives are related to specific moments in the country's history. To date, there are countless environmental laws for the use of natural resources, planning and development, but it should be noted that Puerto Rico does not have a concerted environmental strategy or policy for EE. However, several government agencies subscribe to programmes resulting from federal laws of the United States, which are adapted to specific initiatives on the island.

K-12 Education

The curricular frameworks of the Department of Education of Puerto Rico have EE as one of the cross-cutting themes for all subjects within the school curriculum. For many years the science programmes have overviewed the development of materials, resources and training for the integration and teaching of environmental issues. As a result, EE is implemented in schools through the scientific lenses. This approach tends to be fragmented due to the lack of training and national integrative strategies that establish the guidelines for environmental learning/sustainable development education through all curricular subjects. In this regard, the Eco-Schools programme in Puerto Rico has served as a framework for promoting integrative educational processes towards sustainability education.

Professional Development

Professional development programmes in EE have been carried out mostly in university programmes and initiatives developed by non-profit organisations. In Puerto Rico, only one university offers a degree in EE at the graduate level, which is mainly focusing on teacher training. More than ten projects of environmental and didactic training in environmental issues and sustainability have come out of this faculty that have served more than 500 teachers. The rest of the initiatives have been specific training offered by the Department of Education of Puerto Rico, for teachers who teach science subjects and by non-profit organisations dedicated to EE on the island.



Darelis Flores, Eco-Schools Puerto Rico Coordinator, recognised by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for introducing climate change in preschool education in 2015

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

In 2007 and after several years of good results with the Blue Flag programme, OPAS decided to expand its services and to incorporate another FEE programme within its organisational platform. The administrators of OPAS, including Maylene Pérez, OPAS Founder and Executive Director at the time, and Mayrelis Narvárez, first Eco-Schools National Operator, had a special interest in EE initiatives due to their graduate formal academic qualifications in Environmental Affairs. At the time, there were several schools that participated in Blue Flag as collaborators and felt the interest to pursue a serious commitment to the environmental management of their school. With the support of these school communities, the Eco-Schools network started to take form and in 2008, School of San Juan and Basilio Millán School in Toa Baja became the first two schools in the programme to receive the Green Flag award.

In 2014, OPAS received the award for EE performance granted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the trajectory and performance in EE. During the 2014-2015 academic year, two of the coordinators of the Green Flag schools were recognised for their leadership in the programme by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Association of Science Teachers of Puerto Rico and The White House.



KEY MILESTONES

OPAS' main achievement with Eco-Schools has been the development of the programme for thirteen consecutive years, with a gradual increase of participating schools without any recurrent government or private sector funding for the organisation. The organisation also gained support from two municipalities on the island for several schools within the programme.

In addition, a relationship has been developed with the International Earth Charter initiative by participating in the first education forum and the publication of several environmental lessons designed by the coordinator of one of the participating schools. In February 2017, three Eco-Schools supported the House of Representatives in presenting a paper in the public hearings to derogate or amend the 2015-274 law that prohibited single use of plastic bags, which resulted in the amendment of the law to no derogation.

OPAS is continuously focusing efforts on the search for funds to maintain the operationalisation of the programme.

NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

As a National Operator in the Eco-Schools programme in Puerto Rico, it has been a great personal and professional satisfaction to see the programme grow and see initiatives developed in schools. One of the initiatives established with very positive results has been the creation of the Eco-Schools Academy. This two-day workshop gives school coordinators the opportunity to share content, learn more on innovative strategies and establish working links with other schools within the programme.

After the Hurricanes Maria and Irma arrived on the island with their devastating effects on both the social and natural systems, it was a need we had to address to provide space for resilience and adaptation to climate change. A programme called My Resilient Eco-School was created, which seeks to educate school communities and prepare them to face natural disasters. This programme was presented at the Global Clinton Initiatives Conference held on the island of St. Thomas in June 2019.



“As a growing Eco-School, our learning community is aware of how to positively impact our environment. The Eco-Schools programme has allowed us to nourish a culture of peace, a consciousness of everything that surrounds us. We have left old habits behind to re-learn a new way of living that goes hand in hand with our planet and its inhabitants.”

Darelis Flores, Teacher and Coordinator, School of San Juan - one of the first two Eco-Schools awarded in Puerto Rico and recipient of the EPA Environmental Education award 2014

“When I think about the experiences of the Eco-Schools programme in Puerto Rico during these past thirteen years, almost all of them are characterised by hard work, collaborative actions, a resilient attitude and a consistent commitment to promote sustainable actions in our schools and communities. Although the educational model that has emerged for our context has taught us about the importance of democratic participation, an ethic of care, inclusion and EE, perhaps the most powerful learning we have had is related to the need of a shared vision that fosters a holistic education for a sustainable culture. That is why, in our country, the Eco-Schools programme is equivalent of a shared vision towards sustainability, hope, empowerment and resilience - fundamentals to transform our society into a more just and peaceful one.”

Dr María de Los Ángeles Vilches-Norat, Faculty at Earth Charter International Costa Rica and Ana G. Méndez University

“The Eco-Schools programme in Puerto Rico is not only an environmental programme, it is a methodology that supports sustainability in the community in an organised manner to maintain long-term change. It is a process that draws on the efforts of student educators and administrators who are committed to the development of sustainable practices in the school. Every day, we at OPAS, work to offer our participants the best resources and development opportunities in their schools. We work tirelessly to continue growing and strengthening the programmes within our institution. We recognise the commitment of our schools and the indisputable achievements they have had over time. We firmly believe that one of the areas of change towards sustainability lies in education and therefore we will continue to develop initiatives that contribute to the transformation towards sustainability on our island.”

Ruz I. Deliz, OPAS Executive Director

Organization for Sustainable Environment (OPAS)
P.O. BOX 9300845 San Juan, P.R. 00928

“From my perspective, the most important impact of Eco-schools in Puerto Rico is the change in behaviour in a very short period of time. This does not only take place for the students who participate, but also for teachers, parents, administrators and custodial personnel who are part of the school community. Traditionally, teachers do not have the opportunity to see how young people develop and become more aware of their surroundings. The Eco-Schools programme provides, through its Seven-Step structure, the opportunity to not only create that awareness, but also to realise we are part of the problem and can become part of the solution through sound environmental actions.”

Lourdes Díaz, OPAS President of Board of Directors



Students from the Central de Artes Visuales making their edible garden in school.

United States of America



National Wildlife Federation (NWF)

National Operator: Kim Martinez



Greenpoint Green Flag Event May 2017. Photo: Teri Brennan

Country size: 9.3 million km²

Population: 329 million

Highest mountain: Denali 6,190 m

National tree: Oak

Joined Eco-Schools in 2008

Number of Eco-Schools: 5,500

Longest river: Missouri River 3,767 km

According to the myth, the catfish in the Missouri River are big enough to swallow a human being.

National animal: American bison

The Bison is a uniquely American animal and is the embodiment of American strength and resilience. As it is as fearless as the bald eagle, as strong as the oak and inspiring as a rose, bison is considered as the national animal of USA.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

National Legislation

The United States supports Environmental Education (EE) through national initiatives that aim to design and deliver guidelines for promoting excellence in the field, demonstrate the value and impact of EE through empirical evidence, and promote environmental literacy in each state. The National Environmental Education Act was passed in 1990 and requires the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to provide national leadership on EE. The office of Environmental Education at EPA was developed as a result of this Act and provides support to schools and organisations across the country to enhance EE. The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) is the largest non-profit organisation supporting EE in the United States and has affiliate member groups in each state that work on state-based EE policy. At the federal level, there is also the Green Ribbon Award Program through the US Department of Education that makes yearly awards to those schools/districts that show great progress and achievement in sustainability and EE.

K-12 Education

Education in the United States is provided in public, private, and home schools. State governments set the overall educational standards, often mandate standardised tests for K-12 public school systems. School funding consisted of \$1.5 trillion per year, out of which the bulk of the \$1.3 trillion in funding comes from state and local governments, with federal funding accounts for only about \$200 billion.

Professional Development

Most EE professional development for educators is conducted by a multitude of non-profit organisations that work with schools across the nation. There is an increasing demand for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) professional development. Educators are also interested in pedagogy that supports the use of real-world data, real-world issues, and real-world solutions.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

In April 2008, Kevin Coyle, NWF's Vice President, Education & Training Programs, asked Laura Hickey, NWF's Senior Director, Education & Training to look into the Eco-Schools programme. Kevin was desirous of having a "green" school programme in the United States that could serve as an umbrella for NWF's existing K-12 education programmes, i.e., Schoolyard Habitat® and Climate Classroom, and complement NWF's children and nature magazines. Kevin had heard about Eco-Schools and thought that instead of developing an entirely new programme, it would be worth considering being part of the Eco-Schools network. In May 2008, Kevin Coyle and Laura Hickey reached out to FEE to inquire about being the host organisation in the United States. FEE had received several inquiries from NGOs in the U.S., but none had had the bandwidth or national presence to run the programme until NWF applied. Laura Hickey spent several months researching English-speaking Eco-Schools websites and programmes and developed the NWF Eco-Schools USA programme plan which was submitted to Finn Bolding Thomsen on 9 July 2008.

The programme plan included not only how NWF would launch the programme, but also which environmental themes U.S. schools would address. Funding for the start-up of the Eco-Schools USA programme came from a donor bequest as well as from NWF unrestricted funds. FEE's Board of Directors considered the application at the board meeting in October 2008, and the National Wildlife Federation was approved as the USA's host organisation for the FEE programmes. This decision was confirmed at the 2009 General Assembly in Latvia.

Although NWF was approved as the host in late 2008, the programme wasn't launched until November 2009, when the team became fully staffed with Elizabeth Soper transferring to the K-12 team and the fully functional Eco-Schools USA website went live. Two years later, on 2 August 2011, the Savannah Country Day School in Georgia received the first Green Flag in the United States. NWF has now been running Eco-Schools in the United States for ten years.

KEY MILESTONES

In 2013, the Eco-Schools USA Website Dashboard 1.0 was released. Here, registered schools in the U.S. have the ability to track progress toward their goals, showcase their accomplishments and share their environmental impacts with data-driven metrics.

In partnership with U.S. EPA, EPA Taiwan and NWF's New Jersey Affiliate, New Jersey Audubon, the U.S.-Taiwan Eco-Campus Partnership programme was born in 2014. The goal was to develop an international sister schools programme that would bring communities in both countries together around the theme of sustainability.

In 2015, the National Wildlife Federation Honoured America's Top 10 Eco-Schools and one year later in 2016, NWF reached a milestone of 10,000 K-12 schools participating in the school greening efforts via Eco-Schools USA (5,000 registered) and NWF Schoolyard Habitats. In 2017, Eco-Schools USA introduced the Learning About Forests (LEAF) and WOW: Watersheds, Oceans and Wetlands pathways.

In 2018, a Green Flag milestone was celebrated when the 100th Green Flag bestowed by Eco-Schools USA was awarded. This year has also been one to celebrate as it is not only the 25th Anniversary to the global Eco-Schools programme, but also the 10th Anniversary of the NWF as the host of the Eco-Schools programme in the United States.

The U.S. Department of Education has a Green Ribbon Schools award which aims at recognising schools that reduce environmental impact and costs, improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff and provide effective environmental and sustainability education. The combined progress in all three of these areas, which are known as Pillars, serves as the basis for recognition. More than 100 Eco-Schools have received the U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Award since its inception in 2011.



McKinley Elementary Eco Action Team. Photo: Debbie Abel



“Our students have become more aware and passionate about the environment, and, in turn, they are driven to protect our planet. Eco-Schools provides incredible opportunities for students to collaborate, deepen their observation skills, increase their questioning skills, and learn that they can make an impact, no matter their age. Our students have increased their environmental literacy and are eager to share what they know with younger students and our wider community.”

Jennifer Hertzberg, Principal, Flint Hill Elementary School

“We congratulate the team at the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) on the occasion of your 25-year anniversary! The work that the National Wildlife Federation is driving through the Eco-Schools programme is inspiring youth from the U.S. and around the globe to engage in joint environmental stewardship projects in their homes, schools, and communities. We, along with our partners at the Global Environmental Education Partnership (GEEP), look forward to developing closer ties between FEE programmes and GEEP initiatives as we work to expand the global conversation on environmental literacy.”

U.S. EPA's Office of Environmental Education & Office of International & Tribal Affairs

“The impact of the students in America's Eco-Schools is truly remarkable. Students restoring local forests and wetlands; pursuing zero-waste through recycling, and reducing air and water pollution - all while engaging in hands-on activities that build essential science and math skills and forge lifelong connections with nature. The National Wildlife Federation is so proud of the first 10 years of the Eco-Schools programme, which has improved students' academic performance, developed greater problem-solving skills, and enhanced leadership abilities. By providing millions of students with quality environmental education, Eco-Schools is instilling a lasting love of nature and preparing environmentally conscious youth to create a more sustainable future for all Americans.”

Collin O'Mara, National Wildlife Federation President and CEO



National Wildlife Federation (NWF)

11100 Wildlife Center Drive, Reston, 20190 VA



NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

It is always a challenge to work in such a huge country. With over 132,000 schools, we have needed to focus our efforts on reaching schools in the largest 25 school districts across the country, which is still only a fraction of the number of schools. So capacity, funding and educational policies are our biggest challenges - every state, municipality, town - have their own educational policies. A huge moment was, therefore, when we hit 100 Green Flags! Each time we receive an application for the Green Flag award, we learn so much about our schools and are able to track not only their progress but ours as well.



US Virgin Islands



Virgin Islands Conservation Society (VICS)
National Operator: Valerie Peters

Launch of Eco-Schools at Jane E Tuitt on St Thomas

Country size: 346.4 km²

Population: 107,200

Highest mountain: Crown Mountain 474 m

National animal: Bananaquit

Joined Eco-Schools in 2017

Number of Eco-Schools: 7

National plant: Yellow Trumpet bush

Yellow trumpetbush is an attractive plant that is cultivated as an ornamental, but can occasionally become an invasive weed.



STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Although Environmental Education (EE) has not been widely incorporated into the national curriculum, a wide range of non-profit organisations implement EE initiatives throughout the islands, many in conjunction with biodiversity and marine conservation programmes.

THE STORY OF ECO-SCHOOLS

The years 2016 and 2017 were dedicated to laying the groundwork to introduce the Eco-Schools programme in the US Virgin Islands. In May 2016, the Department of Education approved the Eco-Schools initiative as a programme in which local public schools could participate to support their STEM and environmental programmes. In early 2017, the Department of Education assigned a liaison to assist with identifying potential candidates and assisting with implementation.

Hundreds of hours were spent meeting with various governmental officials, senators, the Climate Change Commission, Curriculum Centre superintendents, administrators, educators, experts in their fields, government agencies, NGOs, scientists, possible donors etc. The intent was to introduce the Eco-Schools concept to as diverse groups as possible to gain territory-wide awareness and buy-in, and identify potential partners and align with their EE outreach work as well as existing programmes that align with Eco-Schools.

Due to the two recent hurricanes that devastated the US Virgin Islands in the summer of 2017, VICS was unable to launch the Eco-Schools pilot programme in the US Virgin Islands during the fall of 2017. To build on the work that had been done on a volunteer basis, VICS reached out to the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) - Eco-Schools USA for assistance.

On 9-10 April 2018, two Eco-Schools introduction meetings were held on both St Thomas and St Croix. The intent was to encourage schools to participate in the programme utilising the Eco-Schools USA website, format, and materials (which are aligned with NGSS, Common Core Standards and National Science Standards). The response was overwhelmingly positive, and the Science Curriculum Coordinator, Gerald Walters, encouraged public schools in the US Virgin Islands to sign up for Eco-Schools. Teachers recognised the opportunity to spend more time teaching and less time developing new lesson plans to keep up with ever-changing standards. An MoU was established with NWF, which allowed registered US Virgin Islands schools to utilise all Eco-Schools USA's materials free of charge. In conjunction, Eco-Schools US Virgin Islands planned to foster locally relevant partnerships to support local EE initiatives and collaborate in developing locally relevant educational materials.



Throughout the academic year 2018-19, VICS has been in communication with schools to encourage them to take on a single theme or be recognised for the sustainable work they are already doing for them to achieve the bronze, silver or Green Flag award by the end of the 2019-20 school year. In addition, VICS will encourage additional schools to take on the Eco-Schools challenge and begin their process as well.

VICS is currently establishing MoUs with various local agencies to provide expertise on various topics – to date, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, the Department of Energy, VI Waste Management, EPA, Nature Conservancy, University of the Virgin Islands.



1.

Planting a garden at Jane E Tuitt on St Thomas

KEY MILESTONES

The introduction and initiation of the programme was a challenging task as the Islands, including the education system, are still recovering from the 2017 hurricanes. Some schools have closed, some are operating double sessions and many are in desperate need of repairs and upgrades.

Some other achievements since the programme was implemented have been the creation of raised beds and gardens at Jane E Tuitt Elementary School as well as the silver award of Claude O Markoe School on St Croix.



“Sustainability has become a priority in the US Virgin Islands since the devastating 2017 hurricane season. Eco-Schools is the perfect medium to help integrate resiliency practices to preserve natural resources and prepare the islands for the consequences of climate change.”

Paul Chakroff, Virgin Islands Conservation Society Director



NATIONAL OPERATOR - REFLECTIONS

A highlight moment for me as the National Operator has been getting the opportunity to bring together a wide variety of stakeholders to help support education in the US Virgin Islands.

Virgin Islands Conservation Society (VICS)
4126 Anna's Retreat St Thomas, 00802 USVI



The islands

The US Virgin Islands consist of 4 larger islands: St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John, Water Island, and 50 smaller islets, cays, as well as a coral reef system which harbours immense biodiversity.

The US Virgin Islands are one of the few localities under the U.S. flag with coral reefs. Coral reefs are valuable resources and are of tremendous economic value. They function in shoreline protection, support our fisheries and support our tourism-based economy. Furthermore, much of the country's population depends on marine resources for their livelihoods, such as through fishing and tourism.

Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)

Scandiagade 13, DK-2450 Copenhagen SV, Denmark

+45 70 22 24 27

www.ecoschools.global

@EcoSchoolsInt