



Appendix A

Spotlight on Fairfax County Public Schools

Introduction

This Spotlight describes recent achievements by Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) and upcoming plans for Get2Green; energy; transportation; and potable water. As available, it identifies specific schools and facilities where achievements have taken place. The Spotlight includes comments and recommendations about opportunities to improve environmental performance for FCPS.

[FCPS](#) is the ninth largest school division in the United States, serving a diverse community of nearly 183,000 students with 199 schools and centers. FCPS has multiple departments and offices that have activities relevant to environmental topics. These include Facilities and Transportation Services; Food and Nutrition Services; Instructional Services; Office of Design and Construction; Office of Facilities Management; and Office of Safety and Security.

Current Concerns

Get2Green

Get2Green is FCPS' comprehensive program building a culture of environmental stewardship across the division. A collaborative initiative between Instructional Services and Facilities Management, Get2Green empowers students to become environmentally literate global citizens by integrating environmental stewardship into curriculum, operations, and school culture. The program's goals focus on increasing school participation in sustainability efforts, ensuring equitable access to environmental learning, and embedding hands-on environmental action in student experiences. With the expansion of the Get2Green program in FY 23, FY 24, and FY 25, the Get2Green staff now consists of a Senior Manager in Facilities Management and a Senior Manager in Instructional Services who co-lead the program as well as an Educational Specialist, Support Specialist, Business Operations Assistant, and five Resource Teachers in Instructional Services. Additionally, salary supplements are provided to a Get2Green Leader in every school and center to collaborate with students on creating a culture of environmental stewardship at their schools. Each school also receives dedicated funding to support their environmental stewardship goals. [Get2Green's web site](#) provides data dashboards with information about individual school energy use and recycling data.

Key Get2Green strategies toward achieving these goals include professional development opportunities, partnerships with community organizations, and an annual survey to track

progress. A lending library of sustainability kits supports hands-on learning and Discovery Carts bring exciting hands-on learning to classrooms. Additionally, students participated in real-world environmental projects such as Revitalize, Restore, Replant planting events and watershed restoration. In the 2024-25 school year, the Get2Green team published Together We Grow, a comprehensive garden guide that helps schools engage students in designing, planting, and caring for garden spaces.

Get2Green partners with the National Wildlife Federation's EcoSchools US program to provide a framework and recognition platform for schools engaging students in environmental stewardship. Schools receive awards for completing various action cards, with the highest award being a Green Flag. For the 2024-25 school year, the number of FCPS Green Flag awards doubled from 11% to 22% of schools. Additionally, 3% of schools earned Gold, Silver, or Bronze awards. Participation in EcoSchools is only one measure of program success. Get2Green staff conducted 1,000 customized school support visits this year, and schools created portfolios to document their environmental action. With a history dating back to 2009, Get2Green has evolved from grassroots efforts into a strategic division-wide program grounded in equity and aligned with Portrait of a Graduate goals.

COMMENT: EQAC supports the continued implementation of the Get2Green program.

Implementation of Recommendations from the Joint Environmental Task Force

In July 2021, the FCPS Board accepted [recommendations from the Joint Environmental Task Force \(JET\)](#) surrounding energy, transportation, waste reduction, and workforce development for the school division. Commitments by the FCPS Board to implement the JET included:

- Being energy carbon neutral by 2040.
- Achieve 50% emissions reductions by 2030, as compared to a 2019 baseline.
- Produce 25% of the county energy use from in-county renewable energy generation by 2030, and 50% by 2040, using 2019 energy use as the baseline.
- Decrease total energy usage from all county facilities by 25% by 2030, and 50% by 2040, as compared to the 2019 baseline.
- All new county buildings and major renovation projects beginning planning and design in 2021 and after must achieve Net Zero Energy (NZE) performance as defined below, unless county staff advises the Board prior to the 30% design phase why a project cannot meet the NZE standard. The JET defines an NZE building as one that is highly energy-efficient and produces onsite, or procures offsite as necessary, carbon-free renewable energy in an amount sufficient to offset the annual energy use associated with operations.
- Transition to electric or zero-carbon alternatives for school buses and eligible fleet vehicles by 2035; and to develop a plan to fuel the electric vehicles using non-carbon emitting fuels and carbon offsets with a complete transition to 100% clean fuel by 2030.
- FCPS and the County coordinate electrification efforts and share charging and maintenance infrastructure whenever possible.

- Achieve Zero Waste in county and school operations by 2030.
- Equip FCPS guidance counselors and career center staff with a standardized tool kit for talking with students about the range of green careers and the background necessary to enter those careers. Ensure the presence of green career professionals in career days and student interview days.
- Develop a comprehensive plan to offer one or more green career/economy-related programs for high school students to encourage participation in this emerging job market.

Limited information was made available to EQAC in response to our prior year recommendation to evaluate progress by FCPS with implementation of these recommendations. Input by a school board member (Personal Communication, June 19, 2025) indicated challenges with implementation of several JET recommendations. FCPS is behind schedule for transitioning their fleet of approximately 1,600 school buses to electric. The FCPS Board decided to not move forward with a federal grant that could have supported purchase of additional school buses based on concerns about the reliability of the grant. They also noted lack of a U.S. manufacturer. FCPS has not yet provided support for electric vehicles at either schools or the Gatehouse central office (e.g., no charging stations). The board member suggested that further coordination with Dominion Energy may be helpful with increasing the use of electric buses for FCPS. **RECOMMENDATION: Fairfax County should coordinate with efforts by FCPS to increase the use of electric buses. As noted in the Transportation Chapter, Fairfax County also is evaluating options for additional use of electric vehicles within the county fleet and with the Fairfax Connector as part of its EV Readiness Strategy.**

FCPS is not following the recommendation for school renovations to have Net Zero Energy due to potential funding limitations. FCPS is increasing the use of solar panels on school roofs (see later discussion in this spotlight about solar implementation). Alternative approaches to offset energy use could include consideration of expanded use of solar in parking lots and open fields and purchase of offshore wind power. Concerns also were expressed about the approaches being used in FCPS for waste composting. For example, when not done correctly, composting can attract unwanted animals like rats and raccoons and have unwanted odors. The state has not provided funding or training for implementing a composting program.

While FCPS is not providing career and technical education (CTE, i.e., vocational) training for solar power, electric vehicles, air conditioning, heat pumps, it is making available CTE for relevant skills associated with these areas such as in welding, finance, and modeling.

COMMENT: Given the concerns about challenges with implementation of JET recommendations, the FCPS Board may wish to reassess the usefulness of maintaining these recommendations. Further, the FCPS Board may wish to consider revised recommendations that meet the intent of the JET.

Energy Use

In FY 23 (the most recent year with available data), FCPS spent about \$41,000,000 on its electric, oil, gas, and water utilities as shown on the [FCPS Get2Green Dashboard](#). The Office of Facilities Management is tasked with keeping this bill as low as possible through development and implementation of conservation programs. FCPS employs 10 full-time and four hourly Energy Education Specialists to perform energy management, conservation, and educational services. To contribute to enhancing the pace of energy-related improvements at existing FCPS schools and other facilities, the Office of Facilities Management is in the process of planning Energy Savings Performance Contracts. Such contracts will enable the completion of urgently needed energy improvement projects that have been unfunded due to budget constraints including replacing inefficient HVAC equipment still in use beyond its useful life (e.g., chillers and boilers), old inefficient structural components (e.g., single pane, metal framed windows with no thermal breaks), and inefficient and poor quality fluorescent and High Intensity Discharge lighting. FCPS is currently not using Energy Savings Performance Contracting. Should this change, FCPS will use the [Virginia Department of Energy Contract](#). FCPS currently has in-place a public-private partnership (P3) at South County High School to address HVAC equipment and is looking to develop a plan for approving additional P3s. **COMMENT: EQAC supports FCPS efforts to implement energy improvement projects such as through use of Energy Savings Performance Contracting.**

Solar Installations

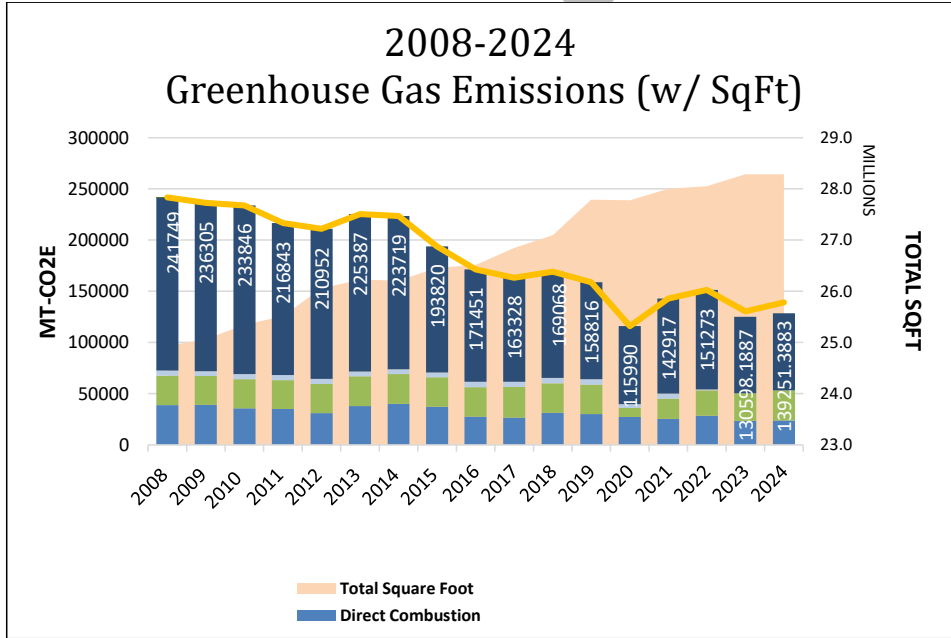
FCPS currently has ten schools with solar installations. Roof-mounted photovoltaic solar arrays paid for through grants and fundraising are located at Rachel Carson Middle School, Frost Middle School, Canterbury Woods Elementary, Bailey's Elementary School, and Thomas Jefferson High School. Roof-mounted solar installations for solar thermal heating of potable (drinkable) water can be found at Glasgow Middle School, West Springfield High School, and Thomas Jefferson High School. Franklin Sherman Elementary has a ground-mounted photovoltaic array. Experimental instructional projects integrating technology include a solar powered wind turbine at Lanier Middle School and a chicken coop with solar panel heat at Twain Middle School. Although these projects do not supply large amounts of energy to the schools, they serve as valuable educational tools. This year, Riverside ES and Jackson MS were selected for the Dominion Energy Solar for Students program. Centreville ES won the award in 2019.

In April 2025, the [FCPS Board approved the implementation of a rooftop solar power purchase program at 15 elementary school sites](#) which have an estimated cost savings over the life of the contract of approximately \$3 million. The 15 elementary schools comprise the following: Braddock, Clearview, Columbia, Crossfields, Fairhill, Fox Mill, Glen Forest, Hybla Valley, Louise Archer, Mosaic, Oak Hill, Shreveewood, Wakefield Forest, Washington Mill, and White Oaks. **COMMENT: EQAC supports FCPS efforts to implement solar projects at school buildings across the county.**

Greenhouse Gas Inventory

FCPS maintains approximately 28 million square feet of occupied space for education, support, and administration functions. In accordance with School Board Policy 8542 - Environmental Stewardship, FCPS publishes an [annual report of Greenhouse Gas emissions](#). The most recent report, for calendar year 2024, shows a total of 139,251 metric tons CO2 equivalent, with the largest contributors being direct combustion (i.e., for energy), mobile combustion for school bus vehicles, and mobile combustion for non-school bus vehicles. As shown on Figure B-1, Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions per unit of occupied space has generally decreased for FCPS over the past 10-year period, with the level being relatively steady for the past 2 years (2023-2024). **COMMENT: EQAC supports FCPS efforts to make greenhouse gas information publicly available on an annual basis including information specific to each individual school within FCPS.**

Figure B-3. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Occupied Space in FCPS Facilities
 Source: E-mail from John Lord, FCPS, May 27, 2025.



Potable Water

FCPS' Office of Safety and Security (OSS) successfully completed the first round of comprehensive testing for lead in drinking water (all drinkable sources in each school tested at least once) in early summer 2023. [Virginia Code §22.1-135.1](#) was amended in July 2020 to require notification to parents when sampling results of 10 parts per billion (ppb) or greater are obtained. From 2019 through the spring of 2023, OSS tested 13,538 fixtures at potable sources in 199 FCPS schools. Of the fixtures sampled, a total of 132 (0.98%) yielded results above 10 ppb, requiring parental notification. Twenty-seven (27) of the fixtures with elevated results were science faucets fitted with backflow prevention devices, which contain trace amounts of lead due to brass parts. If correcting for the science laboratory fixtures (which should not be used as drinking water sources), the total number of potable water sources with results above 10 ppb drops to 105 (0.78%). Each non-laboratory fixture with results above 10 ppb was remediated, resampled, and placed back in service when passing results were received or, in rare instances when remediation is not feasible due to building age or plumbing configuration, permanently removed from service. (All science classrooms now have "DO NOT DRINK THIS WATER" signage placed near laboratory faucets, and science staff have been reminded of good laboratory hygiene practices, which prohibit eating or drinking in laboratory environments.)

Additionally, the EPA Lead and Copper Rule has a [pending revision](#), with an expected publication date of October 16, 2024. This revised rule will require additional testing at approximately 111 FCPS schools. As such, OSS is currently collaborating with Fairfax Water to comply with additional testing requirements and create a sampling plan and has already submitted data and a draft sampling schedule for this project.

Commented [RW1]: This text is from 2024 ARE. Request for an update was made to the Office of Safety and Security.