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# News to Note

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## **Community Partnerships Strengthen Sustainability Efforts**



### **Increasing Countywide Sustainability Through Partnerships**

The Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education (WCEE) understands the value of partnerships and how increasing environmental literacy and sustainability statewide is only

possible by working together with municipalities, school districts, governmental agencies, private organizations, and individuals. This story provides a brief synopsis of one of these partnerships that increased sustainability across two counties.

Teachers and students from across 12 school districts in Marinette County (Wis.) and Menominee County (Mich.) received clean energy education and resources through a unique partnership between the M&M Area Community Foundation and the Wisconsin K-12 Energy Education Program (KEEP), as part of the C.S. Mott Foundation Clean Energy Initiative.



### **Increasing Energy Literacy**

Twenty-six teachers from 17 schools participated in an energy education workshop for teachers in October 2018, and another 17 teachers participated in a renewable energy workshop in February 2019. October's workshop introduced teachers to a variety of energy activities including exploring where our energy comes from, utilizing energy audit tools to engage students in collecting and analyzing data, and furthering sustainability efforts in school through Green & Healthy Schools

Wisconsin support. The February workshop was focused more on the benefits and impacts of renewable energy utilization including solar, hydro, and wind systems. [Learn more about KEEP workshops.](#)

### **Green & Healthy Schools Wisconsin (GHS)**

Due to this partnership, participating schools in Marinette (Wis.) County were registered as Green & Healthy Schools Wisconsin, and participating schools in Menominee (Mich.) County were registered as National Wildlife Federation ECO-Schools USA. GHS and ECO-Schools provide support and recognition for PK-12 public and private schools in Wisconsin working to reduce environmental impact and costs, improve health and wellness, and increase environmental and sustainability literacy. Being a Green & Healthy School provides the pathway to become eligible for nomination as a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School. [Learn more about becoming a Green & Healthy School.](#)



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*“Having my 6th grade Science students play Cool Choices really opened our eyes to how much energy and money we can save by making some simple changes in our lives.” – Vanessa Lecy, 6th grade Science teacher, Crivitz*

### **Cool Choices**

Ten districts involving 19 teams and more than 500 students played Cool Choices, an online game that encourages reporting of sustainable practices at school and home for any registered GHS school. Logging 985 sustainable actions within an eight-week period, staff and students engaged together in sustainability efforts that cut costs, eliminated waste and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Since the initial Cool Choices game in November 2018, five Crivitz Elementary teachers involved their students in another round of Cool Choices, which builds upon previous efforts and engages even more students in sustainability solutions. [Learn more about Cool Choices.](#)

**Next Steps**

With the momentum already seen in these districts, WCEE staff will continue to engage in and support future environmental education and sustainability efforts. One next step will be to provide in-class training for students through KEEP's Student Energy Audit Training (SEAT), which turns schools into an energy efficiency "laboratory." [Learn more about Classroom Visits and Curriculum.](#)