



## Green Schools Conference 2026 Call for Proposals

**Each year at the Green Schools Conference (GSC), green school leaders and advocates worldwide come together to learn, network, and support our shared mission of advancing green schools for all.** This event is the only national convening to unite all the players involved in making green schools a reality: people who lead, operate, build, and teach in schools. Attendees engage in skill-building, in-depth discussions, and problem-solving and get inspired by presenters at the forefront of connecting sustainability, social justice, and education.

We strive to build a program that is innovative, inclusive and inspiring. We invite you to be part of this unique event by submitting an education session proposal to share your successful green school strategies, partnerships, research, and lessons learned. The **Call for Proposals document** and accompanying **Submission Guide** provide detailed information about the criteria and type of sessions that we seek to help you prepare a successful session proposal.

The 2026 GSC will take place in late February in San Diego, CA. For more information, please also visit the [Green Schools Conference](https://www.greenschoolsconf.org/) website.

All proposals must be received via the [GSC 2026 Submission Site](https://www.greenschoolsconf.org/submit) by

**June 23, 2025, at 11:59 PM EST.**

GSC 2026 Submission and Review Timeline	
May 12, 2025	Call for Proposals opens
June 23, 2025	All proposals must be submitted by 11:59PM EST
July 10, 2025	Program review begins
July 24, 2025	Program review ends
Mid-August 2025	Accepted session notifications are sent
Early September 2025	<b>**NEW!</b> GSC Speaker & Program Orientation Call
Early September 2025	Presenter Acceptance deadline and Program Announcement
Late February 2026	Green Schools Conference in San Diego, CA

### **\*\*\*Important Process Note\*\*\***

The submitter cannot complete the proposal without the **acceptance of participation of all proposed presenters/moderators before the deadline.** Each presenter/moderator must log in to the submission site to enter their details and confirm their participation in the proposal. You may begin the process and return to your saved proposal until the deadline. Emailed, faxed, or mailed submissions will not be accepted. Please see the [Submission Guide](#) provided in the



[GSC Submission Site](#) for a complete list of the questions and what is needed to complete a proposal.

For questions regarding the Call for Proposals, please email  
[program@greenschoolsconference.org](mailto:program@greenschoolsconference.org)

### **GSC Call for Tour Proposals**

The 2026 GSC is also [accepting proposals half-day tours](#) that will allow attendees to explore sustainable school practices firsthand. The half-day tours will offer GSC attendees the opportunity to get out into the community to see and explore sustainable school best practices in action and engage directly with leaders helping implement the work.

**Submission Details:** Tour submissions should include at least one interesting and relevant offsite location that is accessible, safe, and appropriate for between 20 and 50 attendees to visit at the same time. Multiple sites can be included in a tour proposal, but adequate time between venues must account for travel time. Examples of tour locations include schools certified to a green building standard, a community or cultural site serving students in formal or informal education, a school leading on specific green school practices or infrastructure showcasing climate resiliency.

Transportation will be provided to attendees to and from the tour venues and we prioritize opportunities to use public transportation when possible. If the tour is a full day event with multiple stops, lunch will be provided.

**Speaker Policies:** Tours may have multiple site presenters (ex: students, school leaders, design team members, etc.), but we request that each submission be limited to four main presenters/facilitators.

### **Submit your Tour Proposal**

### **Green Schools Content Framing**

The Green Schools Conference is unique in its dedicated focus on whole school sustainability. We understand that shaping healthy, equitable and sustainable schools requires a holistic approach that includes schools' educational program, physical environment, and organizational culture. While these components within the [Whole School Sustainability framework](#) paint a vivid picture of a green school, the three pillars outlined by the U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools award program provide a structured approach for gauging progress: assessing environmental impact, promoting health & wellbeing, and fostering environmental & sustainability literacy.

Embracing a systems-change approach, the GSC emphasizes the interconnectedness of all these elements, underscoring their collective impact on creating environmentally conscious and thriving learning communities. Individuals submitting a session proposal are asked to identify specific aspects of sustainability that they will address. However, **education sessions are encouraged to feature an interdisciplinary panel of**



presenters to showcase how various green school components—and school and district leadership’s commitment to these efforts—contribute to whole district/whole school sustainability transformation in an equitable and inclusive manner.

### 2026 GSC Session Formats

**GSC will accept proposals in one of two programming formats: 60 min interdisciplinary sessions and 120 min hands-on workshops.**

- **Education session (60 min):** An education session should feature an interdisciplinary team showcasing best practices, research, or proven practice around a variety of green school topics. Sessions should feature replicable and real-world initiatives taking place at or with a school or district. Opportunities for attendee engagement, interactive discussion in small and large groups is strongly encouraged.
- **Workshop (120 min):** A 2-hour workshop is a hands-on, participatory learning experience. Workshops provide opportunities for attendees to explore or experience teaching methods, operational practices, or sustainability actions that can be replicated in their community, district, school, or classroom. Content is action oriented and focuses on giving participants practice with processes, technology, or concepts that they may not yet be familiar with. Presenter/facilitators should be experienced experts in their field.

### GSC Session Categories

The following descriptions are representative of the main categories of the program. All proposals should fall into at least one of these categories:

- **Environmental Impact:** Proven strategies and innovative approaches for schools to mitigate their environmental footprint by conserving resources, reducing carbon emissions, and supporting local ecology.
- **Health & Well-Being:** Proven strategies and innovative approaches for schools to support the physical and emotional health and well-being of students and staff through the built environment and curated programming.
- **Environmental and Sustainability Literacy:** Proven strategies and innovative approaches for schools to support student and staff understanding of the interconnectedness of living systems, human health, and economic prosperity through place-based education, project-based learning, and integrated approaches to curriculum.



- **Whole School/District Sustainability:** Proven strategies and innovative approaches for schools and school districts to implement a sustainability focused strategic thinking across all aspects of operations, utilizing organizational culture, physical place, and educational programming to attain measurable results.

### GSC Session Topics

Each education session or workshop should address at least one of the following topics:

- Carbon emissions reduction
- Curriculum and instruction
- Environmental health
- Evaluation and assessment
- Food and nutrition
- Funding/financing
- Physical activity
- Professional development
- Protection of ecological systems
- Resilience and safety
- School culture and climate
- Social and environmental justice
- Social emotional learning
- Student engagement/leadership
- Waste diversion and reduction
- Water efficiency and quality
- Workforce development
- Whole district/school: campaigns
- Whole district/school: change management techniques
- Whole district/school: community partnerships
- Whole district/school: strategies for diversity and inclusion
- Whole district/school: visionary leadership

### 2026 GSC Workshop Priority Topics

For workshop session proposals, the 2026 GSC program is seeking 2-hour workshops that also address one of these priority topics:

- **Achieving Climate-Resilient and Low-Carbon Schools:** Lead interactive activities and highlight case examples of proven and emerging strategies for strengthening schools against climate impacts and/or reducing their carbon footprint through proactive planning, integrated infrastructure, operational strategies, student education, and/or community engagement.
- **Innovative Sustainability Education:** Lead interactive activities and showcase proven or emerging programs grounded in sustainability and regenerative educational principles that empower compassionate, knowledgeable stewards of the Earth.
- **Engaging Diverse Audiences for Green & Healthy Schools:** Lead interactive activities to help attendees build skills in engaging a wide range of stakeholders, from change-resistant systems, to students, educators, and community members with varied perspectives, that advance sustainability efforts.
- **Nature-Based Solutions in Classrooms, Buildings, and Communities:** Lead interactive activities and showcase strategies to help attendees understand how green infrastructure, outdoor classrooms, and ecological or biomimicry design



can enrich educational outcomes and environmental benefits both within and beyond school walls.

### **GSC Priority Audiences**

The 2026 GSC program created from this Call for Proposals will have an interdisciplinary focus, so each session should address green school topics through multiple lenses and stakeholder perspectives. When designing your session or workshop, consider the primary audiences that the conference serves:

- School leaders (superintendent, principal, etc.)
- Educators
- School design and construction professionals
- School district administrative and facilities staff
- Green school partners (non-profit, government, for-profit, etc.)

All session proposals, especially the 60 min education sessions, should feature an interdisciplinary team of presenters or facilitators, including a school or district voice, who work together to share replicable and actionable content about a defined topic. The scoring rubric for proposals rewards more points to sessions that include a diversity of perspectives, either as part of the speaker panel or through session storytelling. Student presenters are encouraged in cases where student leadership and/or work is featured.

### **2026 Proposal Review & Scoring Criteria**

All session proposals will be reviewed and scored by a team of volunteer reviewers using a 20-point scale. Workshops will earn one bonus point for addressing at least one of the 2026 priority topics. Those with the top scores will be selected for the final 2026 conference program.

Reviewers will score proposals using one of the following rubrics.



<b>GSC 60 min Education Session Proposal Review Rubric</b>	
<b>Max Value</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
5 points	Provide a clear picture of what to expect during the session, including a realistic plan for teaching the session material in the allotted time using a variety of teaching methods for attendee engagement
5 points	Provide an interdisciplinary perspective with at least two presenters representing different stakeholder groups
4 points	Highlight a school or school district that has demonstrated measurable results related to ecological impact, health and well-being, or student learning; and articulate how results are measured or evaluated
3 points	Propose presenters that have the experience and knowledge necessary to deliver the material
3 points	Define clear action steps and guide attendees on replication in other schools, districts, states or by other public-private partnerships
<b>Max value: 20 points</b>	<b>(20 base points)</b>

<b>GSC 120 min Workshop Proposal Review Rubric</b>	
<b>Max Value</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
7 points	Provide a clear picture of what to expect during the 120 min workshop, including a plan for delivering content in an interactive way to give participants direct practice in implementing new processes, technologies, or concepts
5 points	Propose presenters that represent diverse perspectives and have the proven experience and knowledge necessary to deliver an engaging workshop
5 points	Guide attendees to build new skills and/or develop action plans that can be applied in their own schools, districts, states or organizations
3 points	Highlight a school or school district that has demonstrated measurable results related to ecological impact, health and well-being, or student learning; and articulate how results are measured or evaluated
+1 Point Priority Topic	Presentation proposals will earn an extra point if the submission is related to one or more of the <b>GSC 2026 Workshop Priority Topics</b> listed above.
<b>Max value: 21 points</b>	<b>(20 base points +1 bonus point)</b>





## **GSC Program Policies**

USGBC staff will manage the review process for education session proposals in partnership with Green Schools National Network staff and a volunteer group of reviewers. The reviewer group's responsibility is to curate the most robust educational program possible for conference attendees by including new, meaningful content and learning experiences. All sessions and presenters will be selected based on the below guidelines:

### **Session and Presenter Policies**

- All presenters are expected to attend in person. There is no accommodation for remote attendance.
- Presenters are encouraged to attend the full 2-day conference and will receive discounted registration for participation in the conference program.
- An individual presenter may only participate in one (1) education session or workshop during the conference.
- A firm/institution/organization may have a maximum of two (2) total presenters/moderators participating in the education program.
- To promote new and diverse groups of presenters, strong preference will be given to presenters who did not present at the previous year's conference.
- Each session or workshop should include a minimum of two (2) and maximum of four (4) presenters or facilitators. The only exception for exceeding the maximum is if student presenters are involved.
- Each session or workshop is allowed up to two (2) student presenters in addition to the 2 – 4 presenters or facilitators. Eligible students are individuals attending grades 5 – 12 or undergraduate degree program.
- Sessions based upon an advertisement, product, or service will not be accepted into the program.
- Only complete proposals will be considered.

### **Presenter Responsibilities**

- Session submitters may only propose presenters with the knowledge and permission of the proposed speakers. All proposed presenters must be able and willing to present at the conference at the time and date assigned. Proposals submitted without the knowledge of proposed presenters are subject to immediate rejection; if the proposal is selected and it is found that all presenters



did not know about the proposal or did not agree to present, the session is subject to immediate cancellation.

- Accepted presenters who are unable to attend must notify conference staff immediately. Replacement presenters must be suggested by the session Submitter and approved by GSC conference staff. Conference staff reserves the right to modify or cancel any session based on a change in the presenter.
- Conference staff reserves the right to retain or remove presenters based on the program's best interest. If a presenter's employment changes, conference staff must be notified. Suppose the session content is related to the presenter's previous employment. In that case, the previous employer must sign a letter indicating a willingness to permit the presenter to speak (the letter could include that the presenter will acknowledge the employer during their remarks).
- If a session is accepted that includes one or more student presenters, those students must share email address, title, short bio and head shot with conference staff by the specified deadline to be recognized as an official presenter and access the speaker discount code.
- All presentations must be uploaded to the Speaker Resource Center by the specified deadlines before the conference. Non-compliance may result in the cancellation of the session.

### **Program Review Process**

- Speaker and Reviewer discounts may not be combined or transferred without approval by USGBC staff.
- The review group reserves the right to develop submitted sessions using a combination of proposals and/or invited presenters.
- The review group may modify any submitted session by adding or removing presenters or requesting content changes or additions.
- Submissions not selected for the conference may be considered for the Community Connections program and/or other USGBC events.
- Final decisions regarding these policies may be made at the discretion of the review group and conference staff from USGBC and Green Schools National Network.