GREEN GLOBES® PROJECT PROFILE





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CERTIFIED

Vernonia School Incorpates Sustainable Principles to Achieve Green Globes® Certification

Halfway between the city of Portland and the Oregon coast, the town of Vernonia is nestled in a large swath of forest. In 2007 the rural community experienced its second flood in 11 years, and this time, Vernonia School was devastated. "The building was completely inundated," recalls Aaron Miller, Superintendent/Principal at Vernonia School District 47J. "Water levels were up to five feet in portions of the school. We decided it was time to move the school to higher ground - both literally and figuratively."

"Our certification demonstrates that we honor our natural surroundings."

Seeing opportunity through the disaster, the community built a new 150,000- square-foot K-12 school to serve its 565 students well above the flood plain. The district deliberately incorporated sustainable measures and green technology to serve as a model for students. "We are forging a niche in education to attract families and create a viable community here," says Miller. "The Green Globes® rating system helped us evaluate our efforts, and our certification demonstrates that we honor our natural surroundings."

Energy savings were critical. Oregon schools receive state funds based on a per-student dollar amount, and Vernonia's location already positioned it with some of the highest electrical rates in the state. "Wherever we can cut costs helps us direct more money toward students," notes Miller. "Although this is a much larger building than the one damaged in the flood, we decreased our energy costs by approximately 20 percent. These savings directly impact what we can do in the classroom," he explains.

SUSTAINABILITY FEATURES

- Sustainability concepts women throughout building components thanks to an echo-charette at design concept
- Water-efficient fixtures that reduce water use by 51 percent
- Natural light infiltration through skylights and strategic window placement to boost student performance and reduce energy
- A series of bioswales that collect and treat water runoff from nearby roads and parking lots; and bioswale plus rock-bed filtration for roof stormwater runoff to protect salmon in the Nehalem River
- A biomass boiler using locally produced pellets to heat the building with renewable energy
- Photovoltaics





True Sustainability

The design meshed the building and its surroundings with a curriculum that looks toward future economies. For example, students in Vernonia School's forestry class partnered with the local watershed council and state land management to perform wetlands mitigation on the school's new site. Recommendations from the Green Globes final report are being used as an education tool as well, helping students in the school's new engineering program understand how the building was constructed and examine areas for future improvement. the community to understand the environmental impacts of development decisions. "Our Green Globes evaluation process was very smooth, and it became a critical player in showing students the value of preserving the environment."

In the end, Miller says the new school created a healing atmosphere and its Three Green Globes certification gave the district a real sense of accomplishment. "We are in a place that will serve our students, growing curriculum and the environment for decades to come-this is true sustainability."



Living in a natural resources-based economy, Miller believes it is important for students and