

### KPS by the Numbers:

Students: 5,283  
Staff: 762  
Schools: 14  
Square footage: 931,800  
Annual energy costs: \$775,000  
District average Energy Star rating: 72.8  
Website: [gogreen.kenarneypublicschools.org](http://gogreen.kenarneypublicschools.org)

### How We're Helping:

Sustainability Master Plan  
Energy Savers Incentive Program  
ENERGY STAR Benchmarking  
Engagement Index Survey  
Green Challenge Series  
Green Schools Initiative  
Verdis Online Dashboard  
Verdis Online Pledge



GREEN SCHOOLS INITIATIVE  
KEARNEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# Kearney Public Schools Case Study

## Project Background

Kearney Public Schools, located in central Nebraska, was looking for a way to reduce energy, water, and other resource use while saving money and chose to work with us to create an affordable Sustainability Master Plan that would lay out strategies and goals to meet their needs.

We created the Sustainability Master Plan for Kearney Public Schools by collecting and analyzing consumption and operations data, interviewing key stakeholders, conducting a staff survey, touring several schools, and identifying strategies. The final Sustainability Master Plan was released in

December 2013, and it succinctly articulated key strategies that will drive down costs and improve the school district's environmental footprint. This plan is carefully tailored to the size and scope of Kearney Public Schools.

We are currently serving as the district's sustainability coordinator and will keep the district's Green Schools Initiative moving forward. It is an endeavor that engages many key stakeholders from across the district.

## Energy Savers Incentive Program

Kearney Public Schools experienced great success reducing paper use through financial incentives and monthly reporting, and key staff requested a similar model focused on reducing energy use. We created the Energy Savers Incentive Program to equitably track energy use in all buildings and financially incentivize increased energy efficiency. We also developed a complementary monthly dashboard that is used to track and summarize each school's progress on a monthly basis, helping administrators monitor their building's ongoing energy efficiency.



## The Plan

Kearney Public Schools needed a straightforward, manageable Plan for their sustainability journey. We found easy-to-understand and inexpensive strategies for them to implement and created an outline of behavior change initiatives to foster engagement throughout the District. The data created baselines and goals for resource use reduction, and the engagement strategies provide guidelines on next steps to reach their goals. Key areas of our work from the Sustainability Master Plan and the initial implementation phase are shown below.

### Baselines & Goals

- Created baselines and goals for the District's key metrics (energy, water, waste/recycling, engagement). Goals are essential to reporting progress and increasing engagement

### Energy

- Used the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star tool to benchmark, compare, & analyze buildings
- Despite a high district-wide average Energy Star rating (72.8), several opportunities for improvement were identified

### Engagement

- Organized key staff and students into Green Teams in the majority of schools
- Utilized the Verdis Online Pledge tool for staff to participate in daily actions to conserve resources connected to the Master Plan goals

### Water

- Recommended strategies for potential savings in landscaping, internal building use, and behavior change

### Waste and Recycling

- Identified areas to divert waste to recycling as well as feasible waste reduction strategies

### Major Construction

- Created guidelines for KPS to use as they construct new buildings to green their construction process

### Reporting

- Created a Green Schools Initiative webpage that allows the public, staff, and students to view the Master Plan, current projects, pledge participants, and the district's status in achieving its goals
- Implemented a Verdis Dashboard tool on the website to track progress towards the goals outlined in the Master Plan

## Green Schools: An Immense Opportunity

Approximately 20 percent of our national population - about 60 million people - go to school every day as students, teachers, staff or administrators. Through the creation of green schools, there is an amazing opportunity to positively impact student performance, decrease costs, protect the environment and affect the lives of millions. What an opportunity!

A green school is, in essence, an energy and resource efficient school that minimizes all types of waste: energy waste, water

waste, material waste, purchasing waste, and more. Operating such a high-performance environment not only results in cost savings, it sets an excellent example for students to carry out of the classroom.

There is no doubt that opportunities to increase efficiency exist in America's schools; they abound throughout all organizations, and schools are no different. And in all likelihood, we're not talking peanuts here; the potential for savings is huge.

“ The green schools movement is the biggest thing to happen to education since the introduction of technology to the classroom.

### Glenn Cook

*Editor in Chief*  
American School Board Journal

Visit the Kearney Public Schools Green Schools Initiative website at [gogreen.kearneypublicschools.org](http://gogreen.kearneypublicschools.org)

