



Environmental Champions *Program*

A FUN AND CREATIVE EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR CHILDREN, TEACHERS, SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF TO LEARN & PRACTICE THE MOST INNOVATIVE WAYS TO MAKE BUFFALO A MORE BEAUTIFUL PLACE.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2026



The Environmental Champions Program (ECP) is a joint partnership between the City of Buffalo and Buffalo Public Schools.

While the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) are all good things to practice, there are even more ways we can help the Earth. **RETHINK, REFUSE, REPAIR, REUSE, RECYCLE, ROT** (now the 7Rs) are the seven great ways students, teachers, administrators and staff can continue to eliminate waste and protect our environment!

The goal of the ECP initiative is to engage students across Buffalo to learn more about the 7Rs and to put them into practice at their home, school and in their community.

Applications will be assigned points based upon:

Completeness of the application	15 pts
Environmental Champion’s Program’s Components	40 pts
Explanation of what your school will do with the grant money up to \$500	10 pts
Program sustainability	20 pts
Measurable Results	15 pts

By completing Steps 1-5 in Academic Year 2025-2026 schools will be recognized as an Environmental Champions School by Mayor Sean M. Ryan and Buffalo School Superintendant Dr. Pascal Mubenga and receive a Certificate of Completion.

Schools will be eligible to win grants with values up to \$500!

Grants will be issued in the Fall Semester of the school year. For questions regarding grant money, please contact Marianne Dixon, Director for the Office of School Leadership: 716.816.3024 OR mdixon@buffaloschools.org. Please note that the district does not allow purchases using the following companies: Walmart, Amazon, Home Depot, Oriental Trading Company, Lowes, or any big box store. When calculating your budgets, please do not use these vendors. If you need support with allowable vendors, please reach out to the Office of School Leadership. In addition, please complete the Supply Detail Form – Code 45 in Excel format. If you need this form, please email [bhouch@buffalony.gov](mailto:bhouck@buffalony.gov).

All K-12 Buffalo Public Schools are eligible to apply.

Applicants and programs must:

- Be a K-12, Buffalo Public School
- Agree to share their program information and documentation with the City of Buffalo
- Submit a complete ECP Application with supporting documents. Completed applications must be submitted via email to: bhouck@buffalony.gov

Deadline to Register: must email Bridget Houck at bhouck@buffalony.gov by Friday, April 24, 2026

Deadline for 2025-2026 ECP Applications: must be received by Friday, May 22, 2026

Program Guidelines

Completeness of the Application (15 pts)

The application must be completed in full (all questions answered) and legibly. If appropriate, answers of “same” and/or “not applicable” are acceptable.

Environmental Champions Program’s Components (40 pts)

STEP 1: Establish school Green Team and identify sustainability coordinator

The School Green Team is the foundation of the Environmental Champions Program (ECP). A successful Green Team should incorporate the school community including students, teachers, administrators, custodial engineers, support staff, and parents. An adult Sustainability Coordinator, within the school, should be identified to facilitate and lead the Green Team. A student Green Team representative (or two) should also be identified.

STEP 2: Conduct recycling audit

A recycling audit allows the Green Team to understand your school’s recycling situation. Become a detective and investigate the types of recyclables and waste produced by various classrooms across your school. Pay particular attention to contaminants; for example plastic bags like grocery bags, Ziploc bags, or newspaper bags, food waste, candy wrappers and potato chip bags. This audit can be

completed over any length of time—in one day, one week, or one month. The information you capture will be necessary for Step 4.

The aim of this audit is to categorize the types of recyclables and waste produced, and to measure the amount generated by your school. The School Green Team and Sustainability Coordinator should collect, sort, and measure these materials. Items necessary for an audit include: gloves, keen observation skills, and simple mathematics.

A Recycling Audit Template is available on the last page of this document for your convenience and guidance. The data you collect will serve in the development of a strategy for waste reduction. Make sure to document this process by taking photos! The City's Recycling Coordinator is available to assist in preparing and conducting the audit.

STEP 3: Develop strategy and awareness campaign to promote sustainability

Use information from the recycling audit to create a strategy that impacts the school community. Utilizing skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and communication, develop a fun, in-person or virtual campaign that entices the school community for greater awareness, involvement, and learning. Examples include: eye-catching posters in prominent locations, school announcements, e-newsletter for e-articles for the school paper, online promotion through your school's website, creating a video for class presentation, or conducting a school-wide assembly. The City's Recycling Coordinator can brainstorm initiatives with your school's Green Team.

Sources: (1) NYSDEC: <https://www.dec.ny.gov>, (2) Buffalo Recycles: <https://buffalorecycles.org/>, (3) Recycle Right NY: recyclerightny.org

STEP 4: Organize an “Earth Day” event that involves your school community

Earth Day is an annual event that occurs on April 22, and occurs in countries and communities across the world. Green Team members should organize an event that engages the school community for greater environmental learning and practices. Activities can include an information table, a clothing drive, building a rain barrel, creating a school garden or launching a letter writing campaign.

Consider collaborating with the wider community to bring these projects to life, utilizing their insights, knowledge, and resources. Feel free to pursue the Earth Day activity whenever it is convenient for members of the Green Team during the month of April.

Explain use of grant money up to \$500 (10 pts)

Explain how your school will utilize the grant money. Grants will be issued in the Fall Semester of the school year. For questions regarding grant money, please contact Marianne Dixon, Director for the Office of School Leadership: 716.816.3024 OR mdixon@buffaloschools.org. Please note that the district does not allow purchases using the following companies: Walmart, Amazon, Home Depot, Oriental Trading Company, Lowes or any big box store. When calculating your budgets, please do not

use these vendors. If you need support with allowable vendors, please reach out to the Office of School Leadership.

Program Sustainability (20 pts)

The application needs to have a component of real sustainability built in; it needs to last from semester to semester, year to year. Describe how you can design the program, to ensure its long-term, on-going capability.

Measurable Results (20 pts)

How you will measure the success of your program.



Cut here and mail or fax this form

ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPIONS PROGRAM APPLICATION

APPLICATION FORM (please print clearly or type)

1. PLEASE COMPLETE THE ENTIRE APPLICATION IN FULL (15 PTS)

Name of School

School Address

City

Zip

School Website

Social Media Handle: Twitter, IG, FB

Sustainability Coordinator Name

Title/Affiliation

Sustainability Coordinator Email

Phone #

Signature of Principal (or Assistant Principal)

Date:

2. ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPIONS COMPONENTS (40 PTS)

STEP 1: ESTABLISH SCHOOL GREEN TEAM

- How many students are involved with the Green Team: _____
and which grades are involved: _____
- How often does the Green Team meet (virtually or in person) for environmental activities:

STEP 2: CONDUCT RECYCLING AUDIT

- After pursuing the audit, list items that are recyclable but found in your garbage bin:

- Please share with us **THREE PHOTOS** and **TWO RECYCLING REPORT CARD AUDITS** attachments that the Green Team conducted. Please use the Recycling Audit template (attached in the application) or develop your own recycling audit.

STEP 3: DEVELOP STRATEGY AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY

- Briefly explain the strategy you developed in terms of WHAT and HOW.

What was your strategy? _____

How was the strategy implemented? _____

Approximately how many people were impacted (classrooms, entire school)? _____

- Explain the curricular connections that occurred with this strategy and campaign.

- **Please share with us documentation (photos, video links) of the awareness campaign in action. (UP TO 5 IMAGES)**

STEP 4: ORGANIZE AN "EARTH DAY" EVENT

- When did you schedule the Earth Day event? _____/_____/_____ (month/day/year)

- Briefly explain the Earth Day event that the Green Team conducted.

- List all community wide stakeholders that were involved with this event:

- **Please share with us highlights and photos of the Earth Day event. (UP TO 3 IMAGES)**

RECYCLING AUDIT TEMPLATE

Sustainability Coordinator Name

Date

Green Team Representative

Room #

HOW WELL ARE WE SEPARATING RECYCLING AND WASTE ACROSS OUR CLASSROOMS AND OFFICES?

The table below shows both qualitative and quantitative data collected from careful investigation of the recycling set up in your room.

	GARBAGE BIN	RECYCLING BIN
ITEM ANALYSIS What was found?		
QUANTITATIVE DATA Count the items found		
GOOD RECYCLING PRACTICES Explain what is done well in this office or room		
RECOMMENDATIONS Explain how to improve recycling in this location		

THE 7RS

RETHINK, REFUSE, REDUCE, REPAIR, REUSE, RECYCLE, ROT

RETHINK:

The first step is rethinking consumption and waste. Reframe your consumption and take notice of what's "really important" and how your habits impact the environment around you.

REFUSE:

This is the first and leading principle that tells us to refuse anything we don't really need. Politely decline single-use items like plastic utensils and cups, and anything else that isn't truly essential in our lives. This is the first step to cutting down on our waste.

REDUCE:

Reducing goes along with refusing, in terms of thinking about what is needed and cutting out what is not. Whenever possible, we can make choices to reduce the things we use, such as bringing our own bags to the grocery store, bringing a reusable cup to school, or even printing double sided.

REPAIR:

Too many items are thrown away simply because we don't know how to fix them, it's too expensive to do so, or they have been designed to become obsolete. Avoid anything that is not built to last if possible. If you can't fix it, consider turning it into something else.

REUSE:

It's important to note that reuse comes before recycling, and this means that whenever possible, we should see if items can be repurposed. Old pasta jars, for example, can be repurposed as containers for dried food items. Reuse also means that instead of tossing something out that we don't need anymore, if it is still usable, we can donate it or give it to somebody who can continue to use it.

RECYCLE:

If we are unable to reuse items, and they are recyclable, we can recycle them so the material can return into what it once was, or maybe it's turned into something brand new. While recycling is a way to extend the lifespan of a material, it still requires resources and energy.

ROT:

And finally, rot means creating a valuable resource from food waste and organics by composting. Recycle your fruits, vegetables, and yard trimmings into a nutrient-rich soil fertilizer that helps your garden grow while reducing waste to the landfill.

QUESTIONS?

Contact Bridget Houck at 716-851-5325

Or [bhuck@buffalony.gov](mailto:bhouck@buffalony.gov)

Email application to:

[bhuck@buffalony.gov](mailto:bhouck@buffalony.gov)