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Module 2

# Motivating the School Community to Rise Up against Climate Change



**Rise Up Against Climate Change!**

A school-centered educational initiative  
of the Inter-American Development Bank



## Rise Up Against Climate Change!

A school-centered educational initiative of the Inter-American Development Bank

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**Module 2** Motivating the School Community to Rise Up against Climate Change

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There is nothing more stimulating than deciding to improve the space in which one lives and works. In so doing, one can change the way one lives. Doing this alone, while possible, is extremely difficult. Doing it as a group is a great experience! Many traditional communities have social arrangements that facilitate collaborative work, such as indigenous communities in many Latin American and Caribbean villages. In Mexico this collective form of work is known as *tequio*; the inhabitants of a place come together to carry out the work, whether it be constructing a house for newlyweds, a church for the town, a collapsed bridge, or any other job that can be completed quickly and efficiently when done in collaboration. Would you like to initiate a similar adventure in your school?



Photos: Asden Awards, Paola Molina

# Transforming your school

Beyond its curriculum, the school fosters the development of attitudes and values that improve the quality of life of all community members. It is an excellent place for learning how to organize and practice a participatory culture through projects that benefit everyone.

Making the school an environmentally friendly space is the best way to educate students, as well as the larger school community (teachers, administrators, staff, parents) and beyond, on a new type of relationship that we must establish with nature.

The learning capacity of children and adolescents is significant. They will learn much as they practice *doing* in the process of designing and implementing projects that transform the daily reality of their school. Meanwhile, by working to achieve the dream of a school that is more coherent and harmonious with nature, teachers and administrators may be inspired to transform their home lives, too.

Achieving the tangible goals of transforming spaces and collaborating with others in new ways helps individuals recognize their power to transform their everyday conditions and construct a positive future. Confronting the challenges posed by climate change and other environmental problems in particular requires individuals to organize, collaborate, listen, dare to propose and carry out novel methods, and—ultimately—realize change.



## Box 1.

### Children making great changes

The ability of youth and children to promote or carry out change processes and actions in their communities is evidenced by a growing number of stories. One example is their influence in the reduction of tobacco consumption in countries such as the United States. As children became better educated in the risks of smoking, their influence over parents who smoked was a trigger for change. Another interesting example occurred in several communities of El Salvador, where a group of national and international organizations allied to train groups of children in the prevention of disasters.

Once children and adolescents are educated in the risks of particular activities, they play a significant role in identifying risk conditions and alerting adults to them. Such actions as a whole generate important changes in the culture and physical conditions of their environment (Mitchell, Tanner, and Haynes, 2009).

By their very nature, teachers and students have great potential to realize change. As classroom leaders, teachers are natural promoters and organizers of projects that will improve student well-being. And students, quick to learn, are excellent collaborators. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that projects of this type require significant administrative support and great tenacity. Those involved must plan, conciliate, motivate, and continually readjust according to what they learn along the way.

Listening to others is the first and foremost recommendation for those assuming leadership. When everyone's ideas are carefully heard—

without regard for social, religious, racial, or other differences—the collaborative actions taken are given a firm foundation and a longstanding future.

The initiative for projects of this nature may come from just one teacher or many, from a group of students, or even a combination of teachers and students. Aspirations for a better world encourage alliances among all stakeholders, so that little by little our schools may become role models for their surrounding communities.



Photo: Asden Awards

# Raising community interest

Planning any project requires some initial steps. In our case, these steps depend on whether the school is under construction or is already in operation.

If your community is in need of a new school, this is the perfect opportunity to foster not only students' education but the entire community's future well-being. An environmentally friendly school is a powerful vehicle of change: as it saves costs and improves educational outcomes, it also raises community awareness of the perils of climate change and other environmental problems, spurring change on a larger scale. Before embarking on your design and building stages, we suggest reviewing this manual as well as some of the additional sources provided.

While, in some cases, building according to ecological principles can be more expensive, this is not always the case.

Once up and running, any additional investment is recoverable in the short run; ecological schools quickly reap the benefits of smaller utility bills and increased efficiency. To this we must add the enormous educational value that construction of this type implies: improvements in the learning and work environments quickly translate into better outcomes.

The first task in transforming an existing school is to make an initial assessment of the school and its community. It is important to first identify the possible project participants, as well as their levels of

interest and environmental awareness. This will help you gauge and plan for the challenges and opportunities that are likely to arise.

Similarly, it is highly recommended that you conduct a general assessment of school conditions. One option is to make a photographic record, identifying those sites that are problematic and those that could be used differently. This exercise may prove useful when the time comes to motivate the school community, as well as to evaluate changes once the project, or projects, are underway.

We suggest a few ways to gauge the receptivity of the school community. Two surveys will help you discover which community members can help with the project, their opinions, and how willing they may be to enlist in tasks that you hope to propose:

- **Identifying potential participants and their roles (table 1)**
- **Gauging community interest in creating a green school (table 2)**



## Identifying who will participate

By stakeholders, we mean the various people who are connected to the school: teachers, students, administrators (managers, office staff, accountants, and supervisors), maintenance staff, kitchen staff, parents, educational authorities, the surrounding community, and the local or municipal authorities. Even those people who sell products to the school, or civil society organizations that are part of the community, can turn into important allies and promoters of the project.

Identifying who these stakeholders are, what they do, and what roles they may or may not play in the project is an important first step. Before identifying stakeholders, you should know with some certainty what you seek to achieve in your project. In table 1 we propose a survey that can assist you in this particular exercise. Later, we will suggest how to apply the results of this survey to plan and recognize your allies and those that you will need to convince.



**Table 1. Identifying potential stakeholders and their roles**

Stakeholders		What role do they play in the school, and how many individuals are there?	Roles they can play in the project:	Why might these individuals favor the project?	Why might they oppose the project?
<b>Students</b> (if there is a diverse range of ages in the same school, it may be useful to distinguish among them)	Preschool				
	Primary				
	Secondary				
	High school				
<b>Teachers</b>					
<b>Administrators</b> (you may find it necessary to further divide this group by type of administrator)	Directors				
	Office staff				
	Supervisors				
	Accountants				
<b>Maintenance staff</b>					
<b>Kitchen staff</b>					
<b>Parents (whether independent or organized in councils, conferences, and so on)</b>					
<b>Educational authorities</b>					
<b>Local or municipal authorities</b>					
<b>Others</b> (local environmental organizations, neighbors of the school, neighboring schools, associations, institutions, or civil society organizations that support or finance projects of this nature. You could also consider a group of designers, architects, or engineers that could be interested in carrying out collaborative work with you)					

## Surveying the school community

Knowing what the school community thinks is the best way to begin any project aimed at converting the school into an environmentally friendly space. Hence, it would be useful to carry out a brief survey that may be distributed to the whole school with the support of different groups, such as students or teachers interested in undertaking a project of this type.

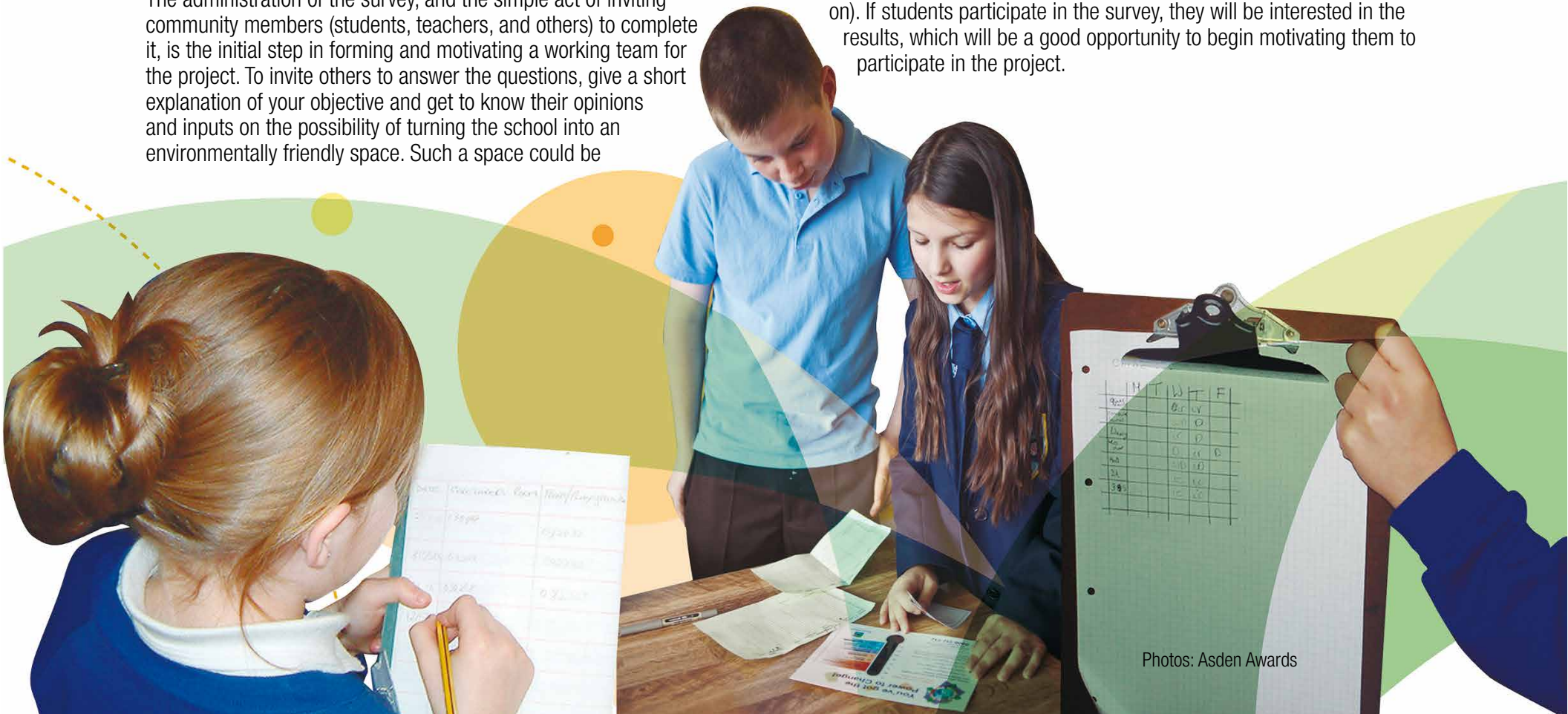
In table 2 we provide a sample survey, which you may adapt to the particular circumstances of your school by adding or eliminating questions. Your survey should be short, simple, and direct.

The administration of the survey, and the simple act of inviting community members (students, teachers, and others) to complete it, is the initial step in forming and motivating a working team for the project. To invite others to answer the questions, give a short explanation of your objective and get to know their opinions and inputs on the possibility of turning the school into an environmentally friendly space. Such a space could be

defined as one that saves energy, water, and other natural resources so that its ecological impact is as small as possible.

You can distribute your questionnaire to the entire educational community—as if it were a census—or to only a sample of the school community, depending on the size of your school and the size of the team that will conduct the survey.

Once you have distributed the survey and processed the responses, inform the community of the results—either through a posting on a wall newspaper or in daily meetings (such as weekly conferences, parent-teacher meetings, teachers' meetings, in the classroom, and so on). If students participate in the survey, they will be interested in the results, which will be a good opportunity to begin motivating them to participate in the project.



**Table 2. Gauging community interest in creating a green school**

Record whether the respondent is a student, teacher, administrator, or so on, but do not record his or her name. It is advisable that the survey be anonymous so the respondents feel free to express their true opinions.		Make note of the name of the person that conducted the interview in case of any difficulty in interpreting the responses.	
Question		Answer	
<b>Why should the school concern itself with environmental issues?</b>			
Do you think the school can play a part in solving the environmental problems of our area?	Yes	No	If the answer is yes, ask <i>in what way?</i> If the answer is no, ask <i>why not?</i>
Do you think your school could gradually transform itself into a green school or an environmentally friendly school?	Yes	No	If the answer is yes, ask <i>how?</i> If the answer is no, ask <i>why not?</i>
What effect could changes in the school have on the students, teachers, and families?	None. A negative effect, because it will create more work. It may interest them, but they will not know what to do. It will motivate them to participate. Not sure.		<i>Why?</i>
<b>What has already been done in the school, and what is the respondent's opinion of it?</b>			
Is there some activity proposed in the curriculum that could be connected to or that resembles the proposed transformation of the school into an environmentally friendly space?			
What environmental improvement initiatives exist or have existed in the past in the school?			
If any exist, are they effective?	Yes	No	<i>Why?</i>

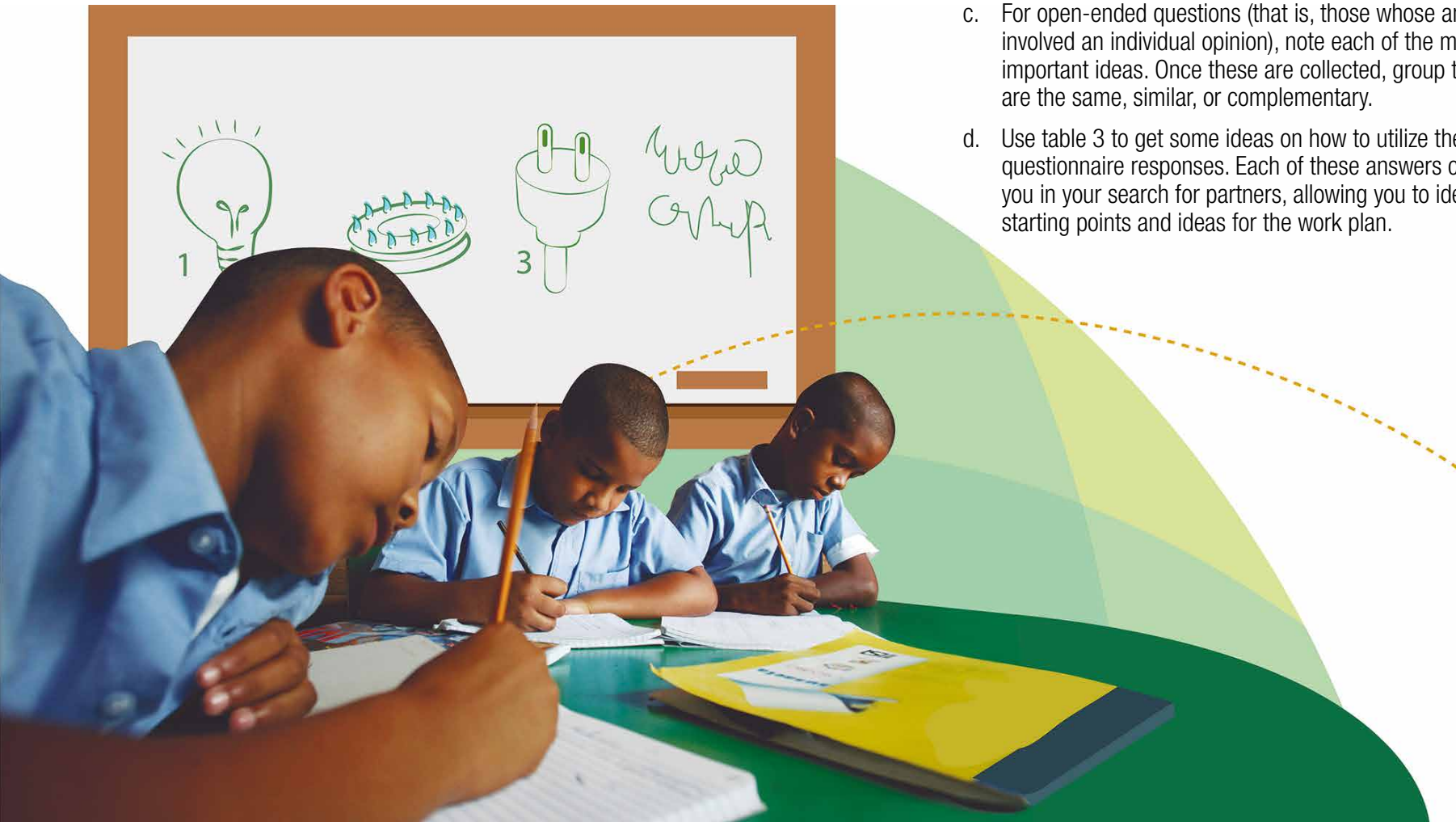
**Table 2. Gauging community interest in creating a green school, continued**

<p>If they no longer exist, why were they not effective?</p>	<p>They generated conflict within the school community.                  They were simply abandoned due to lack of interest.                  The directives lacked leadership.                  They lacked participation from parents.                  They were only intended to exist for some time.                  They were very effective but came to an end.                  Other reasons.</p>		
<p>Have you participated in or carried out any environmental improvement activities outside of school?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Why?</p>
<p><b>Reasons to change the school</b></p>			
<p>Would you be interested in changing some area of the school?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>If the response is yes, ask, <i>how would you like to change it?</i>                  If the answer is no, ask <i>why not?</i></p>
<p>If the answer is yes, continue with the following questions.</p>			
<p>Do you think it is possible to change it?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Why?</p>
<p>What is needed to achieve this change?</p>	<p>Support from the school's directors.                  Participation of the whole school.                  Organization by groups.                  Someone taking the initiative.                  Participation of parents.                  Financial support.                  Other.</p>		
<p>Would you be willing to start this change or help in its implementation?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Why?</p>

## Analyzing the results

Once the questionnaire has been administered, the results need to be organized and analyzed by making use of teams of teachers and students. Using a blackboard or projector, use table 3 and follow these steps:

- a. Organize the completed surveys by the different stakeholders who answered questions: students, teachers, and so forth.
- b. Tally responses to the multiple-choice questions to gauge how many students or teachers responded yes or no to any particular question.
- c. For open-ended questions (that is, those whose answers involved an individual opinion), note each of the most important ideas. Once these are collected, group those that are the same, similar, or complementary.
- d. Use table 3 to get some ideas on how to utilize the questionnaire responses. Each of these answers can assist you in your search for partners, allowing you to identify starting points and ideas for the work plan.



**Table 3. Analyzing the results of the survey**

Organize the surveys according to those surveyed: students, teachers, administrators, etc.		
Why should the school concern itself with environmental issues?		
<b>Question:</b>	Do you think the school can play a part in solving the environmental problems of our area?	
Count the times the participants answered:	Yes	No
List all the answers to these questions:	In what way?	Why not?
Use the answers:	How many people are natural partners, and what are their initial ideas on how the school can help ensure a safe environment?	How many people are opposed, and what are possible ways to persuade them otherwise?
<b>Question:</b>	Do you think your school could gradually transform itself into a green school or an environmentally friendly school?	
Count the times the participants answered:	Yes	No
List all the answers to these questions:	How? Here, group together those ideas that are the same, similar, or complementary.	Why not? Here, group together those ideas that are the same, similar, or complementary.
Use the answers:	Answers provide you with the first ideas on how to improve the school.	Answers allow you to further explore any resistance by community members, as well as identify the main challenges in carrying out the project.
<b>Question:</b>	What effect could changes in the school have on students, teachers, and families?	
Count the times the participants answered:	None. A negative effect, because it will create more work. It may interest them, but they will not know what to do. It will motivate them to participate. Not sure.	

**Table 3. Analyzing the results of the survey, continued**

List all the answers to the question:	Why?
Use the answers:	Answers allow you to identify the fears or expectations of becoming involved in a project of this nature, and to plan the best way of making use of this enthusiasm and breaking through the resistance.
What has already been done in the school and what is the respondent's opinion of it?	
<b>Question:</b>	Is there some activity proposed in class that could be connected to or that resembles the proposed transformation of the school into an environmentally friendly space?
List all the answers to the question.	Answers provide you with a brainstorm of links between the school curriculum and ways to improve the school's environmental performance.
<b>Question:</b>	What environmental improvement initiatives exist or have existed in the past in the school?
List and organize all the answers provided	Answers help you recall what has been done before and to understand how much the community remembers these actions.
<b>Question:</b>	If any exist, are they effective?
Count the times the participants answered:	Yes No
List all the answers to the question.	Why? (Applies to both answers)
Use the answers:	Answers allow you to identify which past projects are considered successes and which failures, and, as such, the problems to resolve.
<b>Question:</b>	If they no longer exist, why were they not effective?
Count the times the participants answered:	They generated conflict within the school community. They were simply abandoned due to lack of interest. The directives lacked leadership. They lacked the participation of parents. They were intended to exist only for a limited time. They were very effective but came to an end.
Use the answers:	Answers allow you to identify if past patterns are repeating themselves in current projects, and, as such, help plan a way to resolve possible obstacles.



**Table 3. Analyzing the results of the survey, continued**

<b>Question:</b>	Have you participated in or carried out any environmental improvement activities outside of school?	
Count the times the participants answered:	Yes	No
List all the answers to these questions:	Why?	Why not?
Use the answers:	Answers help gauge the community's environmental awareness.	
Reasons to change the school		
<b>Question:</b>	Would you be interested in changing some area of the school?	
Count the times the participants answered:	Yes	No
List all the answers to these questions:	How would you like to change it?	Why not?
Use the answers:	Answers help you recognize different visions of what your educational center could become.	Answers help you understand either the level of comfort that the school community currently feels, or the amount of resistance or apathy, and, as such, the obstacles to consider in your work plan.
<b>Question:</b>	Do you think it is possible to change it?	
Count the times the participants answered:	Yes	No
List all the answers to these questions:	Why?	Why not?
Use the answers:	Answers gauge the enthusiasm of the school community. Many respondents will let you know that your community is optimistic and open, while others may inform you that the community is fearful and somewhat resistant. Knowing this is very useful. Do not be discouraged: the resistant ones, once convinced, are the best partners.	

**Table 3. Analyzing the results of the survey, continued**

<b>Question:</b>	What is needed to achieve this change?	
Count the times the participants answered:	Support from the school's directors. Participation of the whole school. Organization by groups. Someone taking the initiative. Participation of parents. Financial support. Other.	
Use the answers:	Answers may provide some ideas on how to begin planning the project.	
<b>Question:</b>	Would you be willing to start this change or help in its implementation?	
Count the times the participants answered:	Yes	No
List all the answers to these questions:	Why?	Why not?
Use the answers:	Answers may provide you with an estimate of how many people are open to beginning work and how many will have to be convinced along the way.	

# Sparking interest and gaining allies

At this stage, you know the different types of individuals that make up the school community and what each of them thinks: some are optimistic and willing to work with you, others are less receptive, and still others are skeptical or resistant. Bring together the interested stakeholders and analyze the reasons why others may be skeptical or resistant. Try to get closer to the interested or the skeptical stakeholders to better understand their concerns and to gradually convince them. Remember, every single person can become a partner—it is a question of persistence, tenacity, and motivation.





## Who are your allies, and how do you win over the doubters?

Every one of the school's problems will inevitably require its own analysis. In the various sections that make up this manual you will find recommendations for diagnosing problems, as well as numerous recommendations that will help you define and address them. Here we seek to offer some general tips for careful and participatory planning.

In gathering your survey results, you will have gauged who will be easier to work with and who will need convincing. To better leverage the enthusiasm of all potential participants, again complete the first exercise (table 1), but this time add a new question (table 4).



**Table 4. Raising awareness of common objectives**

Stakeholders		What role do they play in the school, and how many individuals are there?	Role they can play in the project	Why might these individuals favor the project?	Why might they oppose the project?	How do you leverage their interest and raise awareness?
<b>Students</b> (if there is a diverse range of ages in the same school, it may be useful to distinguish among them)	Preschool					
	Primary					
	Secondary					
	High school					
<b>Teachers</b>						
<b>Administrators</b> (you may find it necessary to further divide this group according to the type of administrator)	Directors					
	Office staff					
	Supervisors					
	Accountants					
<b>Maintenance staff</b>						
<b>Kitchen staff</b>						
<b>Parents</b> (whether independent or organized in conferences, councils, and so on)						
<b>Educational authorities</b>						
<b>Local or municipal authorities</b>						
<b>Others</b> (local environmental organizations, neighbors of the school, neighboring schools, foundations that lend support to these kinds of projects)						

# Fostering collaboration

Generally speaking, school communities are inclined to projects of this nature. If there is resistance, it is likely related to financial concerns or past unsuccessful experiences in this school or another. Here, we offer some ideas that may help in this respect, especially the video on green schools discussed in the introduction of this manual. Important first steps would be to:

- Plan a project with simple and feasible beginning stages and visible short-term benefits.
  - Proceed gradually, conducting a planning exercise to see the different angles of the problem to be resolved.
  - Involve various groups in the reflection and planning exercises for the coming stages, remembering that plans are neither static nor fixed but rather should be adjusted as the project advances and participants learn from the process.
  - Seek out the support and partnership of persons who exercise leadership in the school community. In some cases these individuals are older students, certain teachers that are favored by the kids, and so on.
  - Emphasize examples of similar projects that required community commitment more than financial expenditure. Select the most feasible options for the school, and approach groups that can offer advice or support in seeking financial or technical assistance.
- Share materials such as videos and documentaries that relay the importance of participation by all groups and sectors of society in confronting environmental issues and climate change. Many such materials are available for free on the Internet. (You will likely find many sources using terms such as *climate change*, *green schools*, *participation and the environment*, and *environmental education*.)
  - Invite a researcher or environmentalist to lead a conference with the teachers and directors, in which, in addition to discussing environmental problems, he or she provides an overview of what schools and society can do to discover and promote solutions.
  - Visit a site that conducts ecological or sustainable management of its facilities, either in part or in full.

Invite your teaching colleagues to conduct a brief investigation, with their students, into the possible transformations that can help the school become an environmentally friendly space.



## Box 2. My street, a garden always green

Some years ago, a 12-year-old-girl in Mexico City succeeded in making one of her ideas into a government program, named ***Mi Calle, un jardín siempreverde*** (“my street, a garden that is always green”). Isela Salas Juárez, who lived in a part of the city with very little space for gardens, decided it was possible to convert the city’s abandoned and forgotten spaces into green spaces for the children of her community.

What she proposed was that, together with her friends and family, she could clear the ground, plow the land, design the landscape, and plant the seeds, and the city authorities could contribute the plants and other materials to improve the land.

She presented this idea to her parents and teachers, and decided to visit the authorities responsible for the green areas of the city. Many regarded her as a naive girl who would lose her enthusiasm in time, but her persistence and tenacity led her to write to and lobby before various public officials explaining her initiative. Ultimately, Isela succeeded in leaving an indelible mark on the city. Now, although the program functions under a different name, several initiatives uphold the same principles that defined her idea: the government provides the facilities, the community does the work and maintenance, and more green areas have been established in Mexico City over time.



## Mi calle, un jardín siempre verde

## Nosotros ponemos la planta; tú, las manos y el cuidado



### Mi calle puede ser:

- Una barrera contra el ruido
- Un freno a la contaminación
- Un captador de agua
- Un rincón de clima agradable
- Una invitación a caminar

# Sustaining motivation

## General recommendations

These recommendations for sustaining interest and motivation in the school community or among the groups participating in the project are applicable and valid for any stage of the process:

- Periodically acknowledge the participation and hard work of each member of the project, and express thanks and gratitude.
- Dedicate time to explaining and listening to the concerns and suggestions of all the project's participants.
- Provide periodic updates on the project's accomplishments, setbacks, and challenges, in such a way that the school community is an integral part of the project's progress and decision making.
- Ensure that the work environment is cordial and respectful at all times.
- Maintain accessible information that reminds participants of the project's objectives and goals, whether posted in a newspaper or in posters hung around the school.
- As much as possible, involve the entire school community, and clearly reinforce everyone's role in the project.
- Distribute the workload, and trust in the autonomy and sufficiency of each team.
- Establish partnerships with different groups and individuals that work in the school, and if possible, with others that can

provide support from outside the educational center.

- Celebrate successes and accomplishments, as small as they may be.
- Evaluate each accomplishment according to the effort and work put in, not just the ultimate goal.
- Stimulate groups of students to develop their own initiatives; their work and success are the best ways to motivate the rest of the school community.

## Particular recommendations for groups of stakeholders

To gain the interest of students:

- Hold discussions on the topic.
- Promote investigation into ways the school can become green.
- Encourage participation in the projects involved, offering extra credit.
- Assign important projects that require responsibility, and reward students with public recognition for their work.
- Invite students to participate in the design and development of artistic workshops related to the activities of the project (theater, music, photography, painting, poetry, dance, and so on) that result in a final product promoting the project's aspirations and accomplishments.
- Organize collaborative murals on the topic that bring together students from different grades or even different schools.



- Encourage groups of students to develop their own initiatives.

To gain the interest of teachers, administrators, and other employees of the school:

- Invite them to a conference to reflect on the topic, using videos or other materials to show the scope of environmental problems and the importance of the educational sector.
- Show them the benefits that a project of this nature can offer (for example, improving overall quality of life with better workspaces, rest areas, and classrooms).
- Invite a specialist or a group that works in the field to give a seminar or convene a conference on the topic.
- Organize a motivational workshop whose central themes might include teamwork, organizational participation, the environment, and quality of life.
- Invite them to be part of the initial diagnostics team.
- Organize an opening project for the event, such as a party, dance, or fair, where you present the plan for the project. (You may also choose to invite educational or municipal authorities and parents.)
- Hold artistic workshops based on the activities of the project (for example, workshops for plays, music, photography, painting, poetry, dance, and so on), whose result will be used in the project.

To gain the interest of educational, municipal, and local authorities:

- Invite them to see the facilities and to discuss your thoughts and changes.
- Call together a discussion or reflection session on the topic,

using videos or other materials that convey the scope of environmental issues and the importance of the educational sector in the building of solutions.

- Analyze and look for synergy with environmental programs or plans that community authorities are already developing.

To gain the interest of parents:

- Invite them to a conference presented by a specialist on the topic.
- Send a letter or notice of the initiatives that the school wishes to carry out.
- Describe the benefits of having a green school: better learning and development conditions for their children, improved community conditions, creation of a society that is friendlier to the environment.
- Encourage, with the help of students, parental participation in the project's activities.
- Offer parents an invitation, made by their children, to join the project.

# Monitoring and evaluating progress

A blog or diary of activities is a simple and attractive way to record what you have completed. Anyone can read it and contribute, although it is important to always assign responsibility for reviewing any daily or weekly changes to one person. Apart from registering the project's advances, lessons, needs, and challenges, it is important to explicitly document people's participation. To do so, you can establish the following questions or any others that your team considers important to guide your evaluation:

- Has the number of people participating in the project increased? Who has joined?
- In which activities are there more participants, and which require improvements?
- What opinions do the participants express regarding the project, its tasks, and the advances made thus far? Do they feel satisfied with what they have done until this point?
- Has the project overcome the resistance that was initially shown by the more skeptical community members?

Hold periodic meetings to present achievements and advances, analyze the challenges yet to be addressed, reflect together on experiences, and discuss how participants should adjust to changing circumstances. In the process:

- Share with the entire school community the advances and challenges of the project.
- Create a space or site that is open to comments by the public. This may be done using a wall newspaper where one can post cards or through an online blog, if the school has access to those mediums.

Keep in mind that evaluating a project of this nature should not only involve the quantification of achieved goals. One of the most important aspects of such projects is documenting what is learned along the way, as this allows participants to improve the project while in progress. Challenges are inevitable, but performance is sure to improve as adjustments are made.

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## Module 2

# Motivating the School Community to Rise Up against Climate Change

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**IDB**

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## Rise Up Against Climate Change!

A school-centered educational initiative  
of the Inter-American Development Bank