

SIMPLE STEPS FOR STARTING A SCHOOL-BASED SERT TEAM



School Energy and Recycling Team



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240-314-1090 • 301-279-3005 FAX

SERT@mcpsmd.org

www.GreenSchoolsFocus.org



The School Energy and Recycling Team (SERT) program provides necessary resources to staff and students at all Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to help foster a culture of environmental conservation. The special focus of the program is energy efficiency and recycling participation. School-based SERT teams, classroom activities, educational resources, and various contests provide our students with rich and rewarding experiences in environmental stewardship.

School-based SERT Team Overview

THE SCHOOL ENERGY AND RECYCLING TEAM (SERT) program promotes efficient and responsible energy use and active recycling programs in all Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). The school-based program is implemented by a SERT team, comprised of a leader, students, teachers, parents, building services managers, and staff from the administrative office. Schools practice environmental stewardship and responsible recycling, and implement strategies to earn quarterly SERT awards. Teams receive energy conservation and recycling resources and customized support to implement their ideas for conservation.

The SERT program reinforces responsible energy use and encourages students and staff to think “out of the box” regarding conservation. The SERT team leader has a great opportunity to implement and guide energy conservation strategies throughout their school. Comprehensive recycling programs are supported, developed, and recognized through the SERT program in each school.

The first step in setting up an active school-based SERT team is to form a plan for students and team members to hold scheduled recurring meetings. Team meetings will provide opportunities to brainstorm energy saving and recycling strategies, and to implement throughout the school. This document will help kick start the school-based SERT program in your school.

It is important to learn about recycling, energy use, and energy waste to manage and maintain effective conservation strategies. Learning about your school facility and the recycling stations and the appliances and equipment that use lots of energy is a great start. Tour your school and get familiar with your facility while completing the energy and recycling audit sheets.

Structuring your SERT team so that it works well for your school is important. You may find it helpful to elect officers or assign titles and duties to different individuals. Decide whether or not you need a team captain/president, secretary/scribe, project manager, computer sweepers, recycling rovers, etc. This will take some brainstorming with your group and depend on their ages and grade levels. Because each school is unique, schools define the structure and specifics that provide the most benefit for their location.

It is helpful to develop a mission statement and goals that give your team something to strive for—a performance measure. Visit our website (www.GreenSchoolsFocus.org) to find your school’s energy and recycling data. You will also find many other valuable resources for SERT teams on our website such as the SERT Best Practices guide, our monthly newsletter, conservation flyers, forms, recycling resources, and energy-conservation initiatives.

If you need assistance starting your school-based SERT team, contact your school’s assigned SERT facilitator. We’re here to help you have a successful program!



TEAM TIP

Adult Sponsor Guide

THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO LEAD THE SERT TEAM AT YOUR SCHOOL! The work you will do for environmental conservation is greatly appreciated. Here are a few questions that you should consider prior to your first school-based SERT team meeting:

1. How many students would you like to have on your team?

- Develop a student contract.
- Allow for growth and attrition.

2. How often should you hold meetings?

- Identify and assign daily tasks outside of meetings.
- Determine the schedule of possible outreach activities.
- Try to schedule meetings with activity bus availability.
- Know your school's recycling pickup days.

3. Will you develop a mission statement for your team? You may want to use the SERT program's mission statement as a reference:

The School Energy and Recycling Team (SERT) program provides support to significantly reduce energy and natural resource consumption and increase recycling participation systemwide through:

- *Sustainability training and education*
- *Incentives, recognition, and awards*
- *Accessible energy and recycling data*
- *Customized energy and environmental conservation programs and learning opportunities*
- *Conservation operations and procedures*

4. What are some of the attainable goals that will help the students feel a sense of accomplishment?

- Celebrate individual and team achievements with awards and certificates.
- Recognize classrooms, teachers, or groups who succeed in recycling and energy conservation strategies set by your team.

5. What plans do you have for spending any SERT awards earned? Keep in mind that planning ahead for spending your award funds will help to motivate your students!

6. Have you been in contact with the SERT facilitator assigned to your school? They are here to support you and your program. [Find your facilitator](#)'s name and contact information on our website.

Create a twitter account for your SERT team. Tweet photographs of your team in action and tag #mcpsSERT! We may spotlight your team in our monthly newsletter!



TEAM TIP

Suggested Agenda Items for Your First School-based SERT Team Meeting

- Introduce yourself and the SERT program.
- Have students introduce themselves with an ice-breaker activity.
 - Name, teacher or grade, interests
 - How many computers do you have at home?
 - What is your favorite electric appliance or gadget?
- Talk about basic forms of energy, energy use and recycling. Discuss the relationships between energy use, recycling, and conservation. Provide age-appropriate website links.
- Discuss the electrical audit. This is key to understanding the energy use in your building.
- Discuss the recycling audit and why doing an inventory of your recycling infrastructure is a smart way to start a successful program.
- Talk about the structure of your SERT team and elect or appoint students to fill key positions. Set team meeting times.
- Conceptualize ideas for conservation and develop a basic understanding on why it is important now and for our future.
- Get the students to commit to the program!

Visit our website for information about field trips, an ice breaker, word search, light switch cover templates, and many more activities for your SERT team!



TEAM TIP

Electrical Audit Review

AFTER COMPLETING A SERT TEAM ELECTRICAL AUDIT, please consider the following questions and determine what your SERT team can do to conserve energy. These questions may help set your goals for energy conservation.

1. How many square feet are in your building?
2. How many exterior doors are in your school?
3. Are exterior doors closed during the day and after school?
4. Are window blinds closed at the end of the day?
5. How many computer labs does your school have?
6. How many computers are in your school?
7. How many printers are in your school?
8. How many hours are they turned on?
9. Who shuts down the computers?
10. What time is computer equipment shut down?
11. Are the classroom lights turned off when the classrooms are not occupied?
12. Do you see small home appliances in the classrooms?
13. How can the information above be used to save energy?

Consider conducting energy conservation-related contests for students, teachers, or classrooms. Get everyone involved!



TEAM TIP

SERT Team Recycling Audit



School
Name:

School
Number:

Recycling Audit
Performed By:

Floor:

Wing /
Hallway:

INSTRUCTIONS: As you check the hallways, classrooms, auditorium and other areas of your school, please indicate which items are **missing**. Email completed forms to SERT at recycling@mcpsmd.org.

CLASSROOMS AND OFFICES					
Room #	Deskside Bin	Paper Slim Jim Bin	Paper Slim Jim Lid	Commingled Slim Jim Bin	Commingled Slim Jim Lid
	<i>One deskside and one paper Slim Jim bin per room</i>			<i>High schools only</i>	

HALLWAYS						
Area	Centralized Station	Paper Slim Jim Bin	Paper Slim Jim Lid	Commingled Slim Jim Bin	Commingled Slim Jim Lid	Recycling Awareness Posters

CAFETERIA / MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM			
Commingled Bin	Commingled Lid	Paper Bin	Recycling Awareness Posters

Recycling Audit Review

AFTER COMPLETING A SERT TEAM RECYCLING AUDIT, please consider the following questions and determine what your SERT team can do to increase recycling participation. These questions may help set your goals.

1. Have you reviewed the audit with your building services manager?
2. Large types of commingled materials (cans, bottles, boxes, etc.) are very common in MCPS kitchens. Have you spoken with the cafeteria manager to make sure that there are adequate large recycling bins in the kitchen area?
3. Have you reviewed the "[Recycle Wisely](#)" flyer with your team so that everyone knows what can and cannot be recycled in MCPS?
4. Do you know when your school's recycling dumpsters are services? The [schedule](#) is on our website. Knowing your pickup day(s) is key to knowing when classroom pickups should take place.

MCPS recycles in accordance with Montgomery County's recycling regulations so all of the items that you recycle at school can also be recycled at your home!



TEAM TIP

