

**Originating Committee:** Education and Outdoor Recreation Committee

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**Intended Recipients:** Missouri Department of Conservation, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Missouri Department of Agriculture; Conservation Federation of Missouri Affiliates; Select Missouri Representatives and Senators, Governor of Missouri

### **Increase Multi-Stakeholder Support for Show-Me Green Schools**

**WHEREAS**, the mission of the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM) is to ensure conservation of Missouri’s wildlife and natural resources through advocacy, education, and partnerships; and

**WHEREAS**, the Conservation Federation of Missouri recognizes the importance of establishing a connection to nature that will lead to stewardship behaviors; and

**WHEREAS**, schools are centers of their community that can model solutions to the multi-faceted challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, inspire innovation in students, teachers, and community members, and serve as a driving force that brings us forward into a healthy, sustainable future; and

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Department of Education defines green schools as institutions that actively work to simultaneously drive impact across three pillars (reduce environmental impact, improve health and wellness of students, staff, and families and provide sustainability literacy); and

**WHEREAS**, green schools are healthy, high performing places that yield better learning and health outcomes for students, more effective and fulfilled teachers, and resource conservation; and

**WHEREAS**, green schools demonstrate fiscal responsibility and reduce operating costs by benchmarking and managing energy use, water consumption, and waste, and initial benchmarking often catalyzes significant cost-savings through behavior change alone, without any financial outlay; and

**WHEREAS**, green schools help to decrease student and teacher exposure to toxins by implementing green cleaning policies, integrated pest management, and green purchasing policies; and

**WHEREAS**, asthma symptoms are lessened in green schools by reducing asthma triggers and improving ventilation systems to increase fresh air intake, which would help the 73,500 students in Missouri schools who suffer from asthma; and

**WHEREAS**, Missouri is experiencing a crisis-level teacher shortage and green schools have been shown to increase teacher job satisfaction and improve teacher retention; and

**WHEREAS**, Missouri youth are experiencing depression and anxiety at unprecedented levels, and green schools engender hope, connection, and agency in young learners by increasing exposure to natural environments, improving psychological well-being, and reducing symptoms of anxiety, stress, and depression, modeling available responses to climate change and biodiversity loss, and providing action and leadership opportunities for students; and

**WHEREAS**, green schools improve the quality of and access to outdoor spaces that promote hands-on learning, increased physical activity, students’ sense of connection to nature, and social skills like cooperation and empathy; and

**WHEREAS**, green schools provide environmental and place-based education, which, as shown by a 2019 meta-analysis by Stanford University, helps “develop individual pro-environmental behaviors, build community capacity, support conservation action projects, and ultimately, contribute to addressing long-term environmental and conservation goals”; and

**WHEREAS**, Missouri, fortunately, has school programming that delivers these student, teacher, and environmental benefits through Show-Me Green Schools; a suite of three programs providing many flexible avenues for cultivating, strengthening, and recognizing green schools practices no matter a school’s starting point; and

**WHEREAS**, Show-Me Green Schools served 75 of the approximately 6,000 public, private, and charter schools for pre K-12 students in Missouri through its three programs in 2023; and

**WHEREAS**, Show-Me Green Schools’ mission is to support all Missouri schools in identifying and advancing practices throughout their campuses, educational programming, and school culture in support of the three pillars; and

**WHEREAS**, climate change and other environmental challenges disproportionately affect low-income and communities of color, and comprehensive green schools support can help address this equity issue for our state; and

**WHEREAS**, Show-Me Green Schools actively collaborates with regional and national groups that support and complement green schools such as the North American Association for Environmental Education, Center for Green Schools, Green Schools Alliance, and the U.S. Department of Education Office of Infrastructure and Sustainability; and

**WHEREAS**, the Show-Me Green Schools Partner Network members offer Missouri schools resources to support the advancement of green schools initiatives across one or more of the three pillars; and

**WHEREAS**, the Show-Me Green Schools Partner Network highlights current actions being employed by a wide range of stakeholders for schools and their students; and

**WHEREAS**, expanding this network on a statewide basis will help Missouri to establish a unified effort to advance green schools practices and will support the Show-Me Green Schools aim to provide flexible support for schools, no matter their starting point; and

**WHEREAS**, representatives from Show-Me Green Schools Partner Network organizations can serve as Mentors in the “Green Schools Quest” (part of the Show-Me Green Schools suite of programs), a project-based challenge that engages students in implementing a sustainability project of their choosing at their school; and

**WHEREAS**, to date, 59 organizations are members of the Show-Me Green Schools Partner Network, while there is significant room for expansion to ensure Partners' service areas adequately cover schools throughout the entire state and provide services that encompass all three pillars of a green school; and

**WHEREAS**, the intended recipients of this resolution have missions that intersect with the three green schools pillars; and

**WHEREAS**, recipient state agencies have a wide range of opportunities to increase support for Show-Me Green Schools, including but not limited to financial support, and can help to reserve and establish budgets to aid Show-Me Green Schools initiatives; and

**WHEREAS**, the CFM has already adopted resolutions that support a variety of green schools outcomes such as limiting anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, the expansion of pollinator habitat, mitigating flooding from increasing extreme rain events, zero-waste initiatives, and even nutrition benefits from the inclusion of Share the Harvest venison sticks in programs that could benefit food insecure school children; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Conservation Federation of Missouri assembled in Lake Ozark, Missouri, this 2nd day of March, 2024, encourages state agencies and CFM Affiliates to begin or expand their support for Show-Me Green Schools in one or more of the following ways:

- meet with Show-Me Green Schools leadership to discover agency intersection points and potential collaboration opportunities,
- provide outreach opportunities for Show-Me Green Schools with their audiences,
- join the Show-Me Green Schools Partner Network,
- provide Mentors for the Green Schools Quest (a program under the Show-Me Green Schools umbrella),
- provide or collaborate to secure funding support for the ongoing development and management of Show-Me Green Schools programs.

**Searchable Keywords:** MGS, ED-GRS, quest, education, place-based education, stewardship, energy, waste, water, health, asthma, collaborate, mission

Expires: March 2nd, 2029