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### County's first green school to open on schedule

By [TIM PALLESEN](#)

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

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Students get to elect the mascot for Florida's first green school from the wildlife in the sanctuary where Pine Jog Elementary School opens Aug. 18.

Adults usually name school mascots. "But we want to be leaders in the green movement - so we want to be different," Principal Fred Barch said.



Eliza Gutierrez/Staff Photographer

The distance learning center at Spanish River High School's biotechnology academy features laptop garages. The garages secure and hide the machines when they're not in use.



Eliza Gutierrez/Staff Photographer

Bob Schultz (from left), project coordinator with the school district, Bill Banks, of Hedrick Bros. Construction, and Fred Barrios, senior project administrator with the school district, stand in the Banyan Creek Elementary covered physical education center.

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school is all about.

"We're going to have 600 environmentalists here," assistant principal Patricia Bagan said.

The wildlife sanctuary, owned by Florida Atlantic University, displays the wonder of nature while the \$30 million school itself has been designed to be an instructional exhibit on how to save the earth.

The school district asked for design and construction elements from rainwater harvesting to low-maintenance polished concrete floors to create the most energy-efficient, environmentally-friendly elementary school in the state.

Pine Jog is set to be certified as Florida's first green school by the U.S. Green Building Council because of that energy and environmental design.

Playground equipment is constructed from recycled plastic milk jogs. Benches are recycled glass.

The school's special design cost 5 to 10 percent extra, but the district expects to make up that added cost in reduced water and energy uses in five years.

Three large touch-screen monitors will allow Pine Jog's students to compare their water and electrical savings to what a same-size regular school spends.

Innovations to inspire young environmentalists are all over Pine Jog's campus - from an automobile fueled by vegetable oil to Barch's solar-powered golf cart.

Students won't only be learning to conserve and save. Barch, the district's former K-12 science administrator, also is planning a lot of fun that students at other schools don't enjoy.

The digital video camera in the wildlife sanctuary, for example, allows a teacher to zoom in to see a bird's nest or a meteor shower.

Students also will raise up to 8,000 plants in Pine Jog's hydroponic strawberry patch, learning the metric system as they measure growth rates.

"We're looking to have our first strawberry festival," Barch said.

Pine Jog is strictly a neighborhood school for its first year. The school district plans to make it a choice school with an environmental focus next year.

Pine Jog won't be like other choice schools that bus students from outside the neighborhood, though.

The boundary area for accepting students will be much tighter to save gas, Barch said.



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