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Green Girl: Making school days green days

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With the school year approaching fast, I'm going to boast (just a little), and then give you tips on changing your school color to green.

In August, one of Florida's first truly "green" schools will open at the Pine Jog Environmental Education Center in West Palm Beach in conjunction with Florida Atlantic University. Certified by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, Pine Jog Elementary will be the only school in the U.S. to share a campus with an environmental center and a public university. The curriculum will emphasize science, nature and art as well as the three R's: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.



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Throughout the school year, teachers, students and their families will be encouraged to make their school and the world around them greener. Here are a few suggestions that will make a difference at your child's school.

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- **Pack lunches in reusable lunch boxes and washable containers.** It's cheaper and keeps plastic bags out of our landfills. Don't buy individually wrapped items.
- **Don't buy drinks in plastic bottles or aluminum cans.** Instead, send drinks to school in a reusable stainless-steel bottle. The bottle can be chilled overnight to help keep drinks cold.
- **Make sure your child's school has a recycling program.** If not, start one. If one is in place, encourage teachers and administrators to recycle paper, plastics and computer printer ink-cartridges. (This could be a great PTA project.)
- **Find ways to reduce idling cars and buses in the pick-up line.** Not only do the fumes pollute, but they create a health hazard for teachers directing traffic. Talk to administrators and start an initiative that asks parents to turn off engines while waiting. It's an easy way to reduce air pollution around our schools.

Changing school policies is rarely easy but can yield healthy rewards for children and teachers.

Pine Jog does not endorse the products listed. Supplemented by Tracey Ritchie and staff members of Pine Jog Environmental Education Center, West Palm Beach, in association with the College of Education, Florida Atlantic University. For more information, go to www.pinejob.fau.edu.

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