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Senate Bill 904 (as introduced 10-15-09)

Sponsor: Senator Valde Garcia

Committee: Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs

Date Completed: 11-25-09

## **CONTENT**

**The bill would amend Part 25 (Environmental Education) of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to delete the criteria a school must meet in order to receive a "green school" designation; and establish criteria for a school to receive a green school, emerald school, or evergreen school environmental stewardship designation based on four categories of activities.**

Under Part 25, a public or private school in Michigan may apply to be designated as a "green school" by submitting an application to a department of a county or intermediate school district designated to accept, consider, and approve or reject the application. A school is eligible to receive a "green school" designation if it meets 10 of the following criteria:

- The school recycles paper.
- The school reuses its magazines and newspapers for other projects.
- The school has adopted an endangered species animal and posted a picture of it in a main traffic area.
- The school media center updates its print and nonprint ecological materials regularly.
- An energy savings program has been instituted at the school.
- Students at the school participate in a planned program of energy savings, including dusting coils on cafeteria refrigerators, placing film on windows, setting hot water heaters one degree lower, seeing how plants and trees strategically placed can save energy, and checking proper inflation on bus tires and other school vehicles once a month.
- The school has hosted a visit by an ecological spokesperson, a representative of the Sierra Club, an endangered animals species show, or a similar presentation.
- The school has a birdhouse habitat project.
- The school has established a natural Michigan garden project with native plants.
- The school has solar power presentations or experiments, such as a solar cookout.
- Classes do energy audits of their classrooms and make improvements, such as placing film on windows, caulking windows, or using kits to make windows more energy efficient.
- The school has a printer cartridge recycling program through which the school earns money by selling the cartridges to companies that buy them from schools.
- The school recycles batteries and has designated a representative to return them to an appropriate recycling program.
- The school recycles cellular telephones and receives money for them from recycling companies that work at schools.

- The school observes Earth Day in some way in April.
- Art classes at the school have a poster contest to support ecology concerns and a schoolwide display in conjunction with Earth Day activities.
- The school has science class projects in which students do several home energy improvements, such as turn down hot water heaters, install home window insulation kits, clean coils on home refrigerators, and install draft guards for the doors.
- The school has an ecology club, whose activities include helping senior citizens make their homes more energy efficient, putting in new furnace filters, caulking windows, cleaning refrigerator coils in homes, and setting water heaters one degree lower.
- The school's classes visit internet sites where clicking saves rainforest habitat and teachers document the students' efforts.
- The school sets a goal of 5% less energy usage in the school and works with local power utilities to see progress toward the goal.

The bill would eliminate these criteria. Instead, a school could receive a green school, emerald school, or evergreen school environmental stewardship designation if the school or students performed 10, 15, or 20 required activities, respectively. The school or students would have to perform at least two activities from each of the following categories, which would qualify toward an environmental stewardship designation: recycling, energy, environmental protection, and miscellaneous.

The recycling category would include coordinating a program for recycling at least two of the following: office paper, plastic water bottles, metal cans, printer cartridges, newspapers and magazines, computers and electronic waste, batteries, cellular telephones, cardboard, fabric and clothing, compact discs and digital video discs, or glass.

In addition, the recycling category would include the following:

- Composting food and organic wastes.
- Conducting a waste-free lunch program.
- Implementing a policy to buy recycled, biodegradable, locally produced, or less toxic food and school supplies.

The energy category would include the following activities:

- Offering at least one teaching unit on alternative energy.
- Using alternative energy, renewable fuels, or specialized energy-efficient technology in school operations.
- Implementing a school energy-saving program.
- Performing energy audits at student homes and educating student families and the community.
- Taking part in a project or event to promote improved vehicle fuel efficiency.
- Sponsoring an alternative energy presentation, project, or event.

The environmental protection category would include the following activities:

- Participating in activities promoting the health of the Great Lakes watershed.
- Offering a teaching unit on environmental issues facing Michigan.
- Establishing or maintaining a natural Michigan garden project with native plants.
- Establishing or maintaining an animal habitat project.
- Participating in a local community environmental issue by activities such as letter-writing, attending public hearings, raising funds, or community outreach.

The miscellaneous category would include the following activities:

- Adopting an endangered or threatened species and publicizing the activity.

- Hosting an environmental or energy speaker, event, or field trip.
- Establishing a student organization that participated in environmental activities.
- Observing Earth Day by participating in an Earth Day event in April.
- Maintaining an updated bulletin board or kiosk with information on environmental concerns and the school's actions in addressing them.
- Establishing an eco-reading program.
- Updating the school's media center environmental materials.
- Visiting internet sites that educate about the environment and support endangered ecosystems.

In addition to the activities described in the bill, a school could design and propose another activity, which could qualify toward an environmental stewardship designation if the entity designated to review, consider, and approve or reject applications approved the activity by December 1 of the applicable school year.

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Legislative Analyst: Julie Cassidy

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: Kathryn Summers

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.