

Fuels of the Future

by Brooke Ross

For some schools, protecting the environment starts in the classroom.

Fifth graders at Carolina International School (CIS) have a goal this Earth Day [2007]-to throw away as little trash as possible during lunch. To get their message across, students will encourage their peers to recycle. "I celebrate Earth Day every day," Nirvanna Madho, 10, told *WR News*. "I really don't throw anything away."

Participating in a zero-waste lunch is just one of many ways students at the school in Harrisburg, North Carolina, work to better the environment. Each April, the school organizes an Earth Day event. Students rotate through stations set up across the school's 36-acre campus, which includes forests and wetlands. Wetlands are moisture-rich lowland areas such as swamps or marshes. Students take part in hands-on environmental activities from testing water quality to checking out the latest models of battery-operated cars.

This year [2007], Earth Day at CIS kicks off a season of change. The school is preparing to go "green" with a major construction project,

set to begin early next year. Being green means protecting the world and its resources. The school's Earth-friendly makeover will include outdoor solar, or sun-powered, lighting and rooftop gardens. A water recycling system and other features to protect natural resources will also be built. The lobby will include a flat-panel touch screen on which students can watch how energy is being conserved, or saved, at their school.

"It's very important to educate children about environmental issues," says principal Deanna Duncan. "If we don't take care of [Earth], there isn't another one."

Schools to the Rescue

CIS is just one of hundreds of schools in the United States that are going green. A green school is built with recycled and environmentally friendly materials. Green schools are designed to use less energy than traditional school buildings.

The majority of the energy supply in the United States comes from the burning of fossil fuels, such as oil, coal, and natural gas. Fossil fuels were formed from the remains of prehistoric animals and plants. People use fossil fuels when they drive their cars, heat their homes, and power farms, factories, and cities.

Though people depend on fossil fuels, those energy sources have their drawbacks. Burning fossil fuels pollutes the air and releases gases that contribute to global warming, the gradual rise in Earth's average temperature.

Friendlier Fuels

Fossil fuels are gradually being used up. To conserve them, scientists are looking to renewable energy sources. Renewable energy is power from sources that can't be used up and do not pollute the environment. Water, wind, and solar power are types of renewable energy.

President George W. Bush announced an energy plan that calls on lawmakers to ensure that ecofriendly fuels are developed and made easily available to Americans. Gas is a fossil fuel used in cars, and the price to fill up a gas tank is rising. Gas costs about \$3 a gallon in some parts of the United States [2007].

At CIS, students are excited for construction to begin on their new school building. "I think the school is going to be a lot better," Drew Barsody, 10, told *WR News*. "I'm looking forward to seeing the solar panels."

Clean Power

Here are some common environmentally friendly energy alternatives.

Solar Power: Solar energy can be converted into other forms of energy, such as heat and electricity. California and Arizona are two states that use solar power. One drawback of solar power is that energy can't be collected if the sun isn't shining.

Wind Power: Energy produced from windmills is used to generate electricity. The amount of electricity generated from wind has been growing in recent years, tripling since 1998 in the United States. Electricity is produced from wind in 30 states, including California, Texas, and Iowa.

Water: Water power, or hydropower, is one of the oldest sources of energy. Hydropower often comes from dams or waterfalls. Of all renewable energy sources, it is most often used to generate electricity. In 2004, it accounted for 7 percent of all the electricity generated in the United States.

Ethanol: Ethanol is a clean-burning fuel that can power cars. It is created from several sources, such as corn crops. Typically, a small amount of ethanol is combined with gasoline to fuel vehicles. That helps decrease the fuel's cost and harmful emissions.