



**Eco Office** is a community service learning activity for students who work directly with local businesses to conduct a basic carbon footprint analysis. From this analysis, the students prepare a report that includes results (scores) and recommendations of affordable, achievable actions a company can take to reduce energy consumption, save office resources and lower operating costs.

*Eco Office* is one component of the *Eco Audit* Educational Program. *Eco Office* brings together local businesses, college students, high school students and youth groups in a collaborative effort to promote environmentally responsible practices in the business environment.

### **A Success Story!**

#### **International Finalist at the 2008 United Nations Education Program Awards in Sweden**

In 2006, the program began in Shanghai with 9 company, 6 school and 76 student participants. To date, **160 companies, 60 high schools and colleges, 2,000 students and 20,000 employees** have learned sustainable work practices in China!

#### **Eco Office Goals:**

- Educate communities about energy and resource conservation;
- Show communities that conservation can reduce costs;
- Reduce a community's carbon footprint;
- Lessen a community's impact on local environment; and
- Empower citizens to make a positive difference in our world!

#### **Results to Date:**

To assess the results of the audits in the reduction of resource use and carbon footprint, students have so far conducted sixty re-audits. On average, re-audited offices have achieved an average of **31% reduction in paper use, 12% less electricity consumption and 25% less water usage**, with three companies not reporting any reductions.

#### **Program Background:**

*Eco Office* was created in 2006 in Shanghai, China. The program was designed with the technical expertise and support of **Environmental Resources Management (ERM)**, a global environmental consultancy. Funded by the ERM Foundation, ERM designed the audit checklist and training materials. The ERM Seattle office adapted the materials to US standards and will be supporting the development of the program in North America.

## Benefits to the community:

- Provides students with a unique opportunity to work directly with the business community and apply their knowledge to a real-world situation;
- Grows future business/community/ environmental leaders, educators and activists;
- Is multi-generational - bringing together youth, young adults, educators, school administrators, and businesspeople to work collaboratively toward a more sustainable future; and
- Helps to empower youth and grow the next generation of leaders and change agents.

## Benefits to businesses:

Businesses get practical and easy-to-implement recommendations on how to save office resources, reduce energy consumption and lower operating costs. In addition, participation in the program provides an excellent community service opportunity, as well as a way to communicate a company's values and commitment to corporate social responsibility. Participation in the program is FREE and the on-site audit visit takes about two hours, depending on the size of the company.

## Benefits to college students:

*Eco Office* offers a rewarding community service experience that broadens college students' horizons for future career opportunities through contacts with various businesses and the real world application of skills learned in the program. It also can serve as a valuable addition to a professional resume.

## Benefits to high school students:

Participation can fulfill schools' community service requirement. It will also be good experience to cite on college applications. It offers an exciting way to learn how to be more environmentally responsible and to practice what is learned in a classroom in a real-world setting. Students can do something that really makes a difference in their community, something of which they can be proud.

## *Eco Office in Action: Firehouse Cool Down Challenge*



*Students from Redmond High School have initiated a new program designed to reduce the carbon footprint from the City of Redmond known as the Firehouse Cool Down Challenge. Previously, these students coordinated energy audits at local schools through the Cool School Challenge.*

*The new project is designed to decrease the carbon footprint from the six Redmond fire stations. The station with the smallest carbon footprint and the station with the greatest percent improvement in their carbon footprint will be highlighted in local press.*

*This program is a great example of how schools, government and business can work together to promote environmental awareness and find practical solutions to common environment problems, as well as teach new "green job" skills to the near generation.*

## Growth Potential

*Due to its success in China, the Eco Audit Educational Program is establishing its first pilot program in Seattle with another to follow in New Delhi, India. The Eco Audit Educational Program - Seattle is collaborating with the national award winning Cool School Challenge Program to create a school curriculum model in the US, providing a community service component to the rapidly growing Cool School Challenge Program.*