

# THE CRITERIA FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GREEN FLAG IN FINLAND

In the Green flag action, environmental education and participation of children and youth are in key role. The aim is to reduce the environmental impact of nurseries, schools and institutes and also to make a behavioural change in young people, school staff and families. A continuous improvement is one of the principles of the Green flag programme. The goal is to raise people that make their decisions for the benefit of the environment. The Green flag project is evaluated based on the following mandatory criteria.



## 1. Theme

Every Green flag project shall have a theme.

- 1.1. The Green flag action shall be started with one of the basic themes; water, energy or waste.
- 1.2. The other themes, nature & biodiversity, sustainable consumption and common globe, can be chosen after one basic theme project has been accomplished.
- 1.3. Advance to the *Sustainable Green flag* level requires at least three Green flag projects of different themes. At least two of the projects shall be conducted of the basic themes.
- 1.4. The same theme cannot be chosen twice in a row, unless it is first discussed with the Finnish Association for Environmental Education.

## 2. Eco committee and staff team

Each nursery/school has to have an eco committee and a staff team.

- 2.1. The eco committee is in charge of planning the actions and setting goals for the project as well as evaluating the results.
- 2.2. The eco committee action shall encourage participation of children and youth by active involvement in activities, discussion and decision-making processes.
- 2.3. The eco committee shall include
  - In nurseries: educators and children. The committee must have more children than adults.
  - In schools and institutes: teachers and pupils. At least 2/3 of the committee members shall be pupils preferably from all age categories.
- 2.4. The eco committee is encouraged to include other personnel (kitchen staff, cleaner, janitor) as well and especially parents in nurseries.
- 2.5. The eco committee shall gather for a meeting at least once a month.
- 2.6. The staff team among the personnel is formed. The team shall monitor that the project is progressing and all the criteria for Green flag is met. The staff team is also in charge of informing other personnel and committing them to the project.
- 2.7. The staff team supports the eco committee in their actions and at least some members of the staff team shall be in the eco committee as well.
- 2.8. The staff team's responsibility is to pay attention that the aims of sustainable development mentioned in the curriculum/curriculum for early years take place in the Green flag project.

## 3. Environmental reviews

An environmental review related to the theme shall be carried out both in the beginning and in the end of the project. In the review, school/nursery evaluates their environmental impact and how educational aims are achieved.

- 3.1. The results of the environmental review are reported in the action plan. The results of the follow-up review are reported in the final report and results of these reviews are compared.
- 3.2. The aims and actions are planned based on the results of an environmental review.
- 3.3. The follow-up review is in effect a repeat of the original environmental review. By comparing the results of these reviews achievements and successfulness of the project can be evaluated.
- 3.4. An environmental review shall also include information of how the aims of environmental education are achieved. This information can be received by surveying daily actions, knowledge and skills related to the theme.
- 3.5. An environmental review shall include numeral information about the environmental impact of the nursery/school. This information can be collected from indicators, bills and also from handmade measurements and calculations.

#### **4. Reduce of the environmental impact**

The environmental impact shall be reduced during each project.

- 4.1. The Eco-Code (environmental friendly actions) shall be composed and obeyed in order to reduce the environmental impact of a nursery/school. It should demonstrate, in an obvious and imaginative way, your school's commitment to improving its environmental performance. It should be memorable and familiar to everyone in the school.
- 4.2. The Eco-Code should be prominently displayed throughout the school; i.e. in every classroom or in corridors.
- 4.3. The Eco-Code learned during the project shall be obeyed also after the project is finished and shall be updated and developed by the new Green flag projects.
- 4.4. The environmental impact of nurseries/schools is also reduced by maintenance functions, purchases and other procedures, which are not directly linked to the daily activities.

#### **5. Environmental education**

Environmental education activities of the nursery/school are improved and developed during the Green flag project.

- 5.1. The Green flag programme is carried out by following the nurseries/schools own guidelines for education still focusing on the perspectives and aims for environmental education.
- 5.2. Environmental education is carried out in diverse dimensions during the project; emphasis being on operational and memorable experiences.
- 5.3. In schools, environmental education concepts and targets linked to the theme should be infused into the already existing subjects. In nurseries, environmental education concepts and targets linked to the theme should be infused to all educational activities.
- 5.4. Children and youth shall be offered genuine opportunities to participate i.e. active roles in planning, in decisions making and in evaluating of the project.

#### **6. Cooperation**

Partners linked to the chosen theme are surveyed during the project. Potential partners shall be contacted with special activity and cooperation is done by the possibilities.

#### **7. Timescale of the project and continuity**

The Green flag action shall be ongoing during the project.

- 7.1. Registration into the Green flag programme shall be done only in the beginning of the first project. Registration is valid until the participant decides to resign. The registration form may be found from the internet ([www.vihrealippu.fi](http://www.vihrealippu.fi) -> osallistujasivut-> lomakkeet)
- 7.2. The Green flag project shall continue one school year/calendar year in minimum and 1.5 years in maximum.
- 7.3. The Green flag award requires future plans how actions are continued and developed during the next project.
- 7.4. A new project can be launched only after the previous project has been approved by the Green flag jury.

## **8. Participants**

The Green flag project shall involve the entire nursery/school community.

- 8.1. In nurseries, at least 80 percent of the children should participate in the project on daily bases and as participants of the events and activities.
- 8.2. In schools, at least 10 percent of the pupils should participate actively in the project, for example, as eco committee members, planners of the activities and carrying out the reviews. At least 70 percent of the pupils should participate in the project on daily bases and as participants of the events and activities.
- 8.3. The entire school community should be aware of the existence of the project as well as actions and aims related to the project. The administration of the school and major part of the personnel shall be committed to the project.

## **9. Action plan**

A detailed action plan of the theme should be produced for the Green flag project.

- 9.1. The action plan form may be found from the internet ([www.vihrealippu.fi](http://www.vihrealippu.fi) -> osallistujasivut-> lomakkeet). The latest form shall be used.
- 9.2. The action plan shall be sent by mail to the Finnish Association for Environmental Education until March 15<sup>th</sup> (reporting earliest in the next fall, November 15<sup>th</sup>) or until October 15<sup>th</sup> (reporting earliest in the next spring, April 15<sup>th</sup>).

## **10. Reporting**

The Green flag project is evaluated by the report and all projects fulfilling the mandatory criteria are awarded with the Green flag.

- 10.1. The Green flag project shall be reported to the Finnish Association for Environmental Education. The report should arrive in fall at latest November 15<sup>th</sup> and in spring at latest April 15<sup>th</sup>.
- 10.2. The report form may be found from the internet ([www.vihrealippu.fi](http://www.vihrealippu.fi) -> osallistujasivut-> lomakkeet). The latest form should be used. Guideline for the report is found from the A section in the Green flag handbook.
- 10.3. The report should be informative and clearly point out how the criteria were actualized in the project.
- 10.4. The report should include material from the whole period; therefore documentation should be done during the project.
- 10.5. Children/youth shall participate in evaluating the Green flag project and in composing of the report. Children's/youth's perspectives shall be visible in the report.