
BULLETIN: SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL PROGRAM

Division of the State Architect (DSA) documents referenced within this publication are available on the [DSA Forms](#) or [DSA Publications](#) webpages.

DISCIPLINE(S)

Sustainability

PURPOSE

This bulletin is to notify K-12 school districts and community colleges of advancements in DSA's Sustainable Schools Program administered by DSA Headquarters (HQ) Sustainability Unit effective January 1, 2026. The HQ Sustainability Unit will aid K-12 school districts and community colleges in achieving sustainable facilities consistent with California's climate goals and will aid design professionals in complying with the California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen) and the California Energy Code (CEC) regulatory requirements. A Regional Sustainability Architect (RSA) will reside in each DSA regional office to engage with districts and their design professionals.

A notice will be sent to DSA listserv notifying districts of the RSA in their region, and the Contact tab on the DSA website will be updated as RSA services are available in each region.

BACKGROUND

Studies have demonstrated that climate change has severe negative impacts on early childhood development, lasting through elementary and secondary education. Such impacts range from increased school absences due to respiratory issues to schoolwide closures triggered by extreme heat and wildfires. Many school districts lack critical resources and expertise necessary to understand the building standards for energy efficiency, sustainability, and resiliency and the advanced technologies and methods to plan for climate resiliency in facility development.

DSA key services will continue to be full CALGreen and CEC review for pre-check modular and relocatable buildings only, and content review for most modernization and new construction projects submitted to DSA. Expanded programs and services will be available to support sustainable school facility development beyond minimum code requirements, but full sustainability review for site-built projects submitted to DSA will not be offered.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

1. Pre-application Meetings

Pre-application meetings create an opportunity for design professionals and owners to coordinate directly with the regional staff that will be involved in their project reviews and receive feedback on code issues that may affect project development. During pre-application meetings, RSAs will be available to provide subject matter expertise directly to design professionals and district personnel on project-specific CALGreen and CEC compliance requirements. In coordination with, RSAs will receive and evaluate alternate means and methods requests, and review requests for exception from regulatory requirements where permitted.

2. Education and Outreach

The HQ Sustainability Unit will increase course offerings available on the DSA Academy. Courses will target information for design professionals and district personnel in support of the planning and implementation of sustainable, energy efficient and zero-net carbon practices specific to school construction.

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Upon request, RSAs will be available to answer questions and provide guidance to local school districts in planning for greater resiliency and sustainability in their construction projects.

3. Project Intake Reviews

The RSA will support the DSA Project Services Team to provide intake review of the project documents related to CALGreen and CEC requirements. RSA responsibilities will not expand DSA review beyond ensuring that all required information is included in the project drawings submitted to DSA. Information being verified is identified on the DSA forms: *DSA 403: Energy Code Compliance Checklist*, *403-PC: Energy Code Compliance Checklist for Pre-Checked (PC) Building Designs* and *403-C: CALGreen Code Submittal Checklist* as applicable. The RSA will report any deficiencies to the regional Intake Architect who will continue to be responsible for coordinating with design professionals and district staff as the project advances through the intake process.

4. Pre-Check (PC) Application reviews

The HQ Sustainability Unit, including the RSAs, will continue to conduct CALGreen and Energy reviews (CGE) of PC applications consistent with *Procedure (PR) 18-02: CALGreen/Energy Code Review (CGE) for Pre-Check (PC) Building Designs and the Construction, Relocation and/or Alteration of Relocatable Buildings*. While there will be an RSA in each regional office, CGE reviews of PCs will be assigned, prioritized by submittal date and according to RSA availability statewide. The HQ Sustainability Unit will confirm that unapproved changes affecting overall energy compliance to PCs are not made subsequent to PC approval.

5. State Agency Engagement

DSA coordinates with various state agencies on regulatory development and statewide sustainability efforts that may impact schools. RSAs will relay site-specific conditions of concern to regulatory development entities to inform future regulatory amendments.

A DSA Bulletin is a notification to its stakeholders regarding any issue intended to be directed to a broad group of external stakeholders as well as DSA staff.