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Kira Sikorski

**Head Teacher First Grade, Franklin Park School
Franklin Township Public Schools Coordinator of School-Based
Green Teams (Somerset County)**

Kira Sikorski has been an educator at the [Franklin Park Elementary School](#) for 22 years and serves as the [Franklin Township Public Schools](#) coordinator of the school-based green teams. In this role, she has led nine of the ten schools in the district to achieve Sustainable Jersey for Schools certification with three of the schools at the silver-level and six of the schools achieving a Digital School Star as part of their certification. Five district schools were awarded grants by Sustainable Jersey for Schools in 2023/2024, totaling \$18,000. Kira's achievements in the Franklin Township Public Schools District have set her apart as a sustainability leader with a bright future.

As a young adult, Kira took on various leadership roles as a caregiver, lifeguard and referee. She excelled in skiing, swimming and soccer. These experiences shaped her abilities. She is adept at being decisive in high-pressure situations; understands risks and can effectively communicate safety guidelines; and knows the importance of being a role model by upholding high standards of conduct and responsibility, especially when supervising others. Kira said, "I like to push myself to be better. My father gave me a strong work ethic and my mom instilled in me follow through, to keep my word and to do what I say I will do. I strive for quality in everything I do."

As the Green Team Leader at the Franklin Park Elementary School, Kira realized that the Franklin Township Public Schools would benefit from a district level coordinator of the sustainability programs. She brought her ideas to the district and after a formal review process, she was hired to fill this role. She works collaboratively with Dr. John Ravally, Superintendent of Schools, and Dr. Daniel Loughran, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, who support and encourage the district's sustainability goals.

Kira mentors and manages the ten school-based green teams and helps complete district-level Sustainable Jersey for Schools actions that add to their overall application portfolio. She said, "I recommend to green teams that they start with actions they are interested in first. It's important not to get overwhelmed. Also, to use the search function on the Sustainable Jersey for Schools website, there a lot of information there to help you." She added, "I tell my green teams that Sustainable Jersey for Schools provides three chances to get it right. Submit in January, tweak the application in March and finalize it in June. This makes the application manageable and maximizes the potential for feedback to achieve certification."



Sustainability and Energy Conservation Policy

Kira has led the effort to revise the Franklin Township Schools Sustainability and Energy Conservation Policy to increase sustainability within the district. In March 2024, the Board of Education approved [Policy 7460: Conservation](#),

[Sustainability and Green Initiatives](#). Kira worked with Sustainable Jersey for Schools and her district to rename and rewrite the policy to better encompass the board's goals. The district goals for the 2023/2024 were to: reduce food and energy waste; foster environmental awareness; continue increasing clean-energy projects; increase recycling efforts; and encourage the Franklin Township Public Schools community to engage in environmentally-sound projects. Kira held a strategy session with the school leaders to highlight how the Sustainable Jersey School applications align with the district goals.

Digital Schools Star Recognition for Six Schools

Six of the ten schools in the Franklin Township Public Schools District have earned [Digital Schools](#) Star recognition as part of their Sustainable Jersey for Schools certification. Pursuing Digital Schools Star recognition encourages school personnel at all levels and departments to work together to improve planning, decision-making, curriculum, budgeting and technology resources to help students prepare for the future. Kira helped manage the district level Digital Schools actions with the assistance of Dr. Amy Arsiwala, Supervisor of Technology, and her team. Thanks to this collaborative work, six schools each received 60 points toward their certification application with the completion of the actions: [District Commitment to Digital Learning](#); [Equitable Access to Digital Learning](#); [Digital Citizenship](#); [Data Safety and Security Policy](#); [Digital Device Life Cycle Management](#) and [Community Engagement](#). Some of the schools in the district also completed the school-based actions, receiving 15 points for each action completed, including: [Digital Innovative Classroom](#); [Personalized Learning and Growing Independent Learners](#); and [Professional Growth and Collaboration](#).

Franklin High School Green Fair

On April 29, 2023, the Franklin High School Green Team and Environmental Club hosted the district's first green fair. The event provided a showcase for sustainable initiatives and model practices for the community. The green team enlisted help from important partners including the Franklin Township Environmental Commission, Central Jersey Electric Vehicle Association, Franklin Township Public Library, Franklin Township Shade Tree Commission, Somerset County Agricultural Development Board and 12 school-based organizations. The event schedule included a tree planting demonstration hosted by the Shade Tree Commission, a "Tree Dance" by the high school dance team and a song performed by a student from the spring musical. Representatives from the Central Jersey Electric Vehicle Association shared information related to the benefits of electric vehicles at their booth.



The green fair also modeled exceptional sustainable practices. Lawn signs from other events were reused to publicize the green fair. Staff and students collected the lawn signs from the school musical and other events and students from the Autism class and Communication Impaired class painted over the signs with green fair information. Students from the Murals and Mosaics class painted over an outdated large play advertisement sign. The Autism class reused empty water and soda bottles to create flowers and bird feeders to decorate the event. Donated reusable bottles with a "FHS Green Fair" logo added were sold at the event to encourage participants to refill bottles with free water instead of buying bottled water.

During the fair, attendees were asked to participate in a Green Challenge or pledge to be eco-friendlier. The goal was to get members of the school community to commit to reducing their ecological footprints by pledging to engage in more "eco-friendly" behaviors. The pledge form was developed by students in the Franklin High School Environmental Club. Students calculated their ecological footprints using the [Ecological Footprint Calculator](#) by Global Footprint Network. Kira said, "The green fair and the work we are doing in our schools is important because we want the students to know their options before they get into the real world. We want them to value sustainable habits and know the many ways

they can be involved in working toward solutions to create a healthier planet.” Franklin High School received 30 Sustainable Jersey for Schools certification points for this work by completing the actions: [Green Fair](#); ["Green" Your Green Fair or School Event](#); and [Green Challenge](#).

Sustainable Jersey-PSE&G Energy Efficiency Partnership Program

The Franklin Township Public Schools District applied and was selected to participate in the [Sustainable Jersey-PSE&G Energy Efficiency Partnership Program](#). The program provides technical assistance and assigns a Sustainable Jersey staff member to guide and support the district’s efforts to improve building performance of school facilities through energy efficiency analysis, planning and preparing applications for PSE&G and New Jersey’s Clean Energy Program incentives for facility upgrades.

Kira manages the energy portfolio tracking for all the district’s schools. She explained, “Overall, energy tracking and management helps our schools make smart decisions about building energy use, reducing energy use and related emissions as well as reducing costs.” As part of the technical assistance, Sustainable Jersey reviewed the district’s facilities and created a building portfolio. Energy data was requested and received from PSE&G to create an ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager account. Kira updates and oversees the account, which is used to internally track the energy usage of all district buildings. The district uses the Portfolio Manager to make sure the facilities are performing well, and to apply for new upgrades to make the facilities more efficient. This allowed six of the schools in the district to receive 20 certification points for the completion of the Sustainable Jersey action: [Energy Tracking & Management](#).

\$18,000 in Sustainable Jersey Grants

Five district schools were awarded [grants by Sustainable Jersey for Schools](#) in 2023/2024 totaling \$18,000. The Elizabeth Avenue Elementary School received a \$2,000 Sustainable Jersey for Schools grant funded by the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) to implement food waste reduction strategies. Franklin Park Elementary School and Pine Grove Manor Elementary School each received a \$2,000 grant funded by NJEA to expand their school gardens. Franklin High School is using a \$2,000 grant funded by the PSEG Foundation to install a reusable water bottle refill station in the cafeteria. The Franklin Middle School-Sampson G. Smith Campus will use a \$10,000 grant funded by the PSEG Foundation to enhance the school’s garden with pollinator friendly plants, rain barrels and new seating. This project will also be used to help enhance the English Language Arts climate change curriculum.



More About Kira

Kira received a MA in School Administration from Rowan University and a BS in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. She is a member of the [Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development](#), the [New Jersey Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development](#) and the [New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association](#).



Kira grew up in Franklin Township and graduated from Franklin Township Public Schools. She was the first female referee for soccer in New Jersey and worked as a team with her father and brother to officiate games. Kira and her husband Chris live in South River. They have a son named Brenden who is in high school and is active on the school Robotics team, which Kira and Chris help mentor. Kira gets good ideas from her husband, who is the Middlesex County Recycling Coordinator. Kira is an avid Pittsburgh Steelers fan. She enjoys spending free time baking, biking, visiting the beach and playing video games with her family.