

FLAT STRIPS OF LUSH, SUBMERGED GRASS rise in terraces from the courtyard of Sidwell Friends' new middle school in Washington like rice paddies in a mountainous Chinese village. Part of a man-made wetland connected to the school's water system, the plants filter liquid waste, just as real wetlands do with rainwater. It's an engineering marvel, but Sidwell stu-

BY BRYAN WALSH/WASHINGTON

dent Patricia Solleveld, 15, doesn't want you to get the wrong idea. "It doesn't smell at all," she says. Not only that, says Alejandro Alderman, 14, but the wastewater filtered through the wetland is clean enough to drink. "But D.C. regulations don't let us," he says. "Which is kind of too bad." Even if Sidwell middle school isn't quite the first institution to earn a platinum rat-

ing from the U.S. Green Building Council, an architectural watchdog organization. More and more public and private schools have begun replacing their wheezy old buildings with energy-efficient new ones—or at least upgrading the structures they have. New Jersey is requiring all new school buildings to meet stricter environmental standards, and California and Massachusetts have made millions available to green their classrooms. It all comes at

# Little Green Schoolhouse. As students learn about energy efficiency, their school buildings increasingly practice it

## ENVIRONMENT



Bright future — The 50 solar panels arrayed on Sidwell's roof provide 5% of the new middle school's total electrical supply

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# Life



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