



EMBARGOED UNTIL April 22nd, 2020 1:00 p.m. EST

U.S. Secretary of Education Names Carmel Unified School District a 2020 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School District Sustainability Awardee

April 22, 2020

The U.S. Department of Education announced today that **Carmel Unified School District in Carmel, California is among the 2020 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School District Sustainability Awardees.** Carmel Unified School District was nominated by the California Department of Education. The District achievements align with three pillars:

Pillar I: Reduce Environmental Impact and Costs

The Maintenance, Operations, and Transportation department of the district has made many efforts to reduce energy consumption and maximize efficiency. Water, indoor temperature, and electricity can be monitored from a central location allowing for quick detection. The district prides itself on preventative maintenance; every room in the district is routinely checked for safety and efficiency. Even though our district has grown in numbers, added more classrooms, and offered more activities, CUSD has reduced energy and water usage. Carmel Unified School District was awarded the 2019 AMBAG Energy Watch Champion for the great work accomplished reducing energy use and related energy costs through the installation of energy efficiency equipment.

Pillar II: Improve the Health and Wellness of Students and Staff

One of CUSD's highest goals is to create an atmosphere where every student feels safe, respected, and included in school. One of the goals of the district is that all students achieve personal wellness through an environment that promotes health and happiness. District-wide, school-wide, and individual student level supports have been added and are assessed through the Healthy Kids Survey and Challenge Success. All sites provide opportunities for students to be active, connect with peers and teachers, and to make a difference.

Pillar III: Provide Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education

In the classes, it is often difficult to tease out the environmental-type lessons with the course content because they are so connected; the environment is intertwined throughout the courses and curriculum at Carmel Unified School District (CUSD). All the school sites have garden spaces and a survey given to district teachers revealed that over 86% of CUSD teachers reported making classroom connections to nature or the environment, and 60% of those teachers do this more than once a month. A majority of our high school students enroll in Advanced Placement Environmental Science. At the middle school, all students enroll in Ecoliteracy. Elementary schools are engaged in many local and garden-based classroom activities. At all levels our students are involved in community service projects to support the environment.





“Empowering students and their families to learn about, love, and protect our beautiful Monterey Peninsula is one of the joys of my position,” said Dr. Barb Dill-Varga, CUSD Superintendent. “I am honored to work alongside and support our District’s Environmental Responsibility Team, led by Carmel Middle School teacher Darrell Steely. Teachers, administrators, students, and parents who worked on this team also deserve the credit for shining a light on the innovative environmental literacy learning experiences implemented for all of our students and the district’s ongoing commitment to implement green practices throughout our 600 square mile district. Our main goal is to develop future leaders who understand their connection to and responsibility for our environment. Partnering with us are organizations and nonprofits who care about the environment and our students, too. We also could not have accomplished this work without our supportive Board of Trustees. I am proud of and inspired by all our impactful work and this incredible national recognition.”

Across the country, 39 schools, 11 districts, and five postsecondary institutions are being honored for their innovative efforts to reduce environmental impact and utility costs, improve health and wellness, and ensure effective sustainability education.

The honorees were named from a pool of candidates nominated by 27 states. The selectees include 28 public schools, including three magnet schools and four charter schools, as well as 11 nonpublic schools. Forty-five percent of the 2020 honorees serve a disadvantaged student body.

The list of all selected schools, districts, colleges, and universities, as well as their nomination packages, can be found [here](#). A report with highlights on the 55 honorees can be found [here](#). More information on the federal recognition award can be found [here](#). Resources for all schools to move toward the three Pillars can be found [here](#).

A Note on the Award Name for Communications

ED's award is called "U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools" and has "District Sustainability Award" and "Postsecondary Sustainability Award" categories, in addition to the original school award. It is abbreviated ED-GRS. "Green Ribbon Schools" without the "U.S. Department of Education" is not ED's award, but instead is a separate program overseen by another organization. A selected school is a "2020 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School." A selected district is a "2020 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School District Sustainability Awardee." A selected postsecondary institution is a "2020 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School Postsecondary Sustainability Awardee. There is no "National," "Award," or "Program" in the title. There is no apostrophe or hyphen after Education.

