**Background**

Thank you for your interest in completing the Illinois Board of Higher Education’s application for nomination to Illinois Green Ribbon Schools (IGRS) Award or District Sustainability Award. IGRS recognizes schools, districts, and postsecondary institutions in Illinois taking a comprehensive approach to sustainability, incorporating environmental learning with improving environmental and health impacts.

Illinois Green Ribbon Schools serve as a model for integrating environmental sustainability into every aspect of our schools. Schools that are selected as an Honoree will receive recognition from the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and Illinois Green Alliance through a virtual celebration, press releases, and be gifted sponsored items once Honorees are announced in February 2026.

Illinois Green Ribbon Schools demonstrate progress across three pillars:

Pillar I: Reducing environmental impact and costs;

Pillar II: Improving the health and wellness of students and staff; and

Pillar III: Offering effective environmental and sustainability education.

Schools, districts, and postsecondary institutions demonstrating progress in every area will receive highest scores. It may help to assemble a team with expertise across these areas to complete the application. You may also wish to consult [Green Strides](http://www.greenstrides.org) for programs related to each Pillar.

Please reach out to [mwright@illinoisgreenalliance.org](mailto:mwright@illinoisgreenalliance.org) if you have any questions or need an accommodation to complete this application.

***Applications may not exceed 18 pages in length****.*

***Applications are due by 5:00 PM on December 19, 2025.***

**School/District Applicant Information**

1. School Name (or District Name if submitting a district nomination):   
   Click here to enter text.

Street Address: Click here to enter text.

City: Click here to enter text.; County: Click here to enter text.

Zip: Click here to enter text.

District Name/Number: Click here to enter text.

1. School or District Website: Click here to enter text.
2. Principal Name: Click here to enter text.  
   Principal Email Address: Click here to enter text.  
   Phone Number:Click here to enter text.
3. Lead Applicant Name (if different): Click here to enter text.  
   Lead Applicant Email: Click here to enter text.  
   Phone Number: Click here to enter text.
4. (Optional)  
   Facebook page: Click here to enter text.  
   YouTube: Click here to enter text.  
   Instagram: Click here to enter text.  
   Twitter: Click here to enter text.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Level**  Early Learning Center  Elementary (PK - 5 or 6)  K - 8  Middle (6 - 8 or 9)  High (9 or 10 - 12)  School District | **School Type**  Public  Private/Independent  Charter  Magnet | **How would you describe your school?**  Urban  Suburban  Rural | **Is your school in one of the largest 50 districts in the nation?**  Yes  No |
| **Total Enrolled:** Click here to enter text. |
| **Does your school serve 40% or more students from disadvantaged households?**  Yes  No | **% receiving FRPL:** Click here to enter text.  **% limited English proficient:** Click here to enter text.  **Other measures:** Click here to enter text. | | **Graduation rate:** Click here to enter text.  **Attendance rate:** Click here to enter text. |

**School Summary and Highlights:**

Use 1 to 2 pages to **provide a** **summary narrative** describing your school’s efforts to reduce environmental impact and costs; improve student and staff health and wellness; and provide effective environmental and sustainability education.  This overarching summary should highlight the best of your work in every IGRS Pillar and Element.

You can view examples in past Department of Education Green Ribbon [Highlights Reports](https://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/performance.html). The summary that you submit should be what you would like to see appear in a future Highlights Report, if your institution is selected.  Be sure to include concrete sustainability achievements, supporting data, unique partnerships, program participation, awards, and certifications.  It may be helpful to pull from your application materials to write the summary.

Click here to enter text.

**Pillar I: Reduced Environmental Impact and Costs**

**A. Energy**

1. **Do you track energy use in ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager®, or another way in your district?** Yes  No
2. **If so, how have you tracked your resource usage, for how long, and how has your usage dropped over that time?** *(Data or graphs can be submitted as a separate supportive document if desired.)*Click here to enter text.
3. **Please describe the strategies you have implemented or planned to reduce your energy consumption.**Click here to enter text.
4. **What percentage of your school's energy is obtained from:**
   1. **On-site renewable energy generation:** Click here to enter text.  
      **Type:** Click here to enter text.
   2. **Purchased renewable energy:** Click here to enter text.  
      **Type:** Click here to enter text.
   3. **Participation in an energy cooperative, DOE Wind for Schools or other school energy program:** Click here to enter text.
5. **In what year was your school originally built?** Click here to enter text.
6. **What is the total building area of your school?** Click here to enter text.
7. **Please describe any new construction or major renovations at your school in the past ten years, including the date, and the percentage of area renovated. Describe how you achieved green building or similar standards and any certifications earned.**  
   Click here to enter text.
8. **Please describe your sustainability policy and practice for new or renovated construction materials and building maintenance.**

Click here to enter text.

**B. Water and Grounds**

1. **Can you demonstrate a reduction in your school's total water consumption from an initial baseline or describe your best practices to limit water usage? For example, calculate your change in water usage (in gallons per occupant) over a specified period of time, or a reduction in water used for irrigation.**  
   Click here to enter text.
2. **What percentage of your landscaping is considered water-efficient and/or dedicated to ecological or instructional use? Describe the kinds of plants used and locations:**  
   Click here to enter text.
3. **Describe the water sources used for irrigation, including any cisterns or rain barrels.**Click here to enter text.
4. **Describe any efforts to reduce storm water runoff (e.g., rain gardens) and/or reduce impermeable surfaces.**  
   Click here to enter text.

**C. Waste and Chemicals Management**

1. **Describe the strategies you use to divert solid waste (e.g., trash, cafeteria waste, paper, or landscape waste) from landfills due to reduction, recycling and/or composting. Complete the calculations below or provide reduction rates:**  
   Click here to enter text.
2. **What percentage of your school's total office and classroom paper content is post-consumer material, fiber from forests certified as responsibly managed and/or chlorine-free?**   
   Click here to enter text.
3. **List the types and estimated quantities of chemicals (e.g., laboratory materials, cleaning products, pesticides) managed at your school, and how they are stored, disposed of, and minimized:**   
   Click here to enter text.
4. **Describe how your school purchases environmentally preferable products for use by students and staff:**   
   Click here to enter text.

**D. Alternative Transportation**

1. **What percentages of your students walk, bike, bus, or carpool (2 or more students in the car) to and from school? Please explain how these numbers are obtained and calculated, and describe any improvement in this area over time.**   
   Click here to enter text.
2. **Describe the plans or strategies to increase the number of students walking and biking to school.**  
   Click here to enter text.
3. **Has your school implemented any of the following? Check all that apply.**

Designated carpool parking stalls.

A well-publicized no idling policy that applies to all vehicles (including school buses).

Vehicle loading/unloading areas are at least 25 feet from building air intakes, doors, and windows.

Safe Pedestrian Routes to school or Safe Routes to School.   
  
Describe activities in your safe routes program: Click here to enter text.

1. **Describe how your school transportation is efficient and has reduced its environmental impact:**  
   Click here to enter text.
2. **Describe any other efforts toward reducing environmental impact, focusing on innovative or unique practices and partnerships:**  
   Click here to enter text.

**Pillar 2: Improve the health and wellness of students and staff**

**A. Environmental Health**

1. **Describe your school’s Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, including any certifications earned, routine inspections, pest identification, monitoring, record-keeping, and pest prevention activities.**  
   Click here to enter text.
2. **Describe the efforts or practices you have in place to minimize or eliminate the use of pesticides, both indoors and outdoors.**  
   Click here to enter text.
3. **Describe the actions taken or the practices your school employs to minimize or eliminate exposure to the following specific hazardous contaminants (if applicable):**
   1. **Elemental Mercury**
   2. **Carbon Monoxide from fuel burning equipment or appliances**
   3. **Radon**
   4. **Chromated Copper Arsenate in wooden playground equipment**
   5. **Others (e.g., Lead, Asbestos or PCBs)**Click here to enter text.
4. **Describe policies and practices in place to promote security and life safety.**  
   Click here to enter text.
5. **Describe actions your school takes to prevent exposure to asthma triggers in and around the school, such as animals in the classroom, sanitation, or other airborne contaminants.**   
   Click here to enter text.
6. **Describe actions your school takes to control and prevent leaks, moisture, condensation, and excess humidity; and to promptly cleanup mold or remove moldy materials when it is found.**  
   Click here to enter text.
7. **Our school has installed local exhaust systems for major airborne contaminant sources.**   
   Yes No

*If Yes, list the rooms with these features and their uses:*   
Click here to enter text.

1. **Describe your school’s preventive maintenance program for the building’s ventilation system, including unit ventilators to ensure it is clean and operating properly:**   
   Click here to enter text.
2. **Describe actions your school takes to ensure that all classrooms and other spaces are adequately ventilated with outside air, consistent with state or local codes, or national ventilation standards, including any periodic measurements and record keeping:**  
   Click here to enter text.
3. **Describe other steps your school takes to protect indoor environmental quality such as implementing EPA IAQ Tools for Schools and/or conducting other periodic, comprehensive inspections of the school facility to identify environmental health and safety issues and take corrective action:**  
   Click here to enter text.
4. **Describe your green cleaning policies, equipment, products and practices, and green cleaning certifications or awards:**  
   Click here to enter text.

**B. Nutrition and Fitness**

1. **Does your school employ the programs below to promote nutrition, physical activity, and overall school health?**

Participates in a Farm to School program or similar local food program.

Our school has an on-site garden.

Our cafeteria provides fresh meals daily with healthy choices for students.

At least 50% of our students' annual physical education takes place outdoors.

Health measures are integrated into assessments.

Give details about programs and successes: Click here to enter text.

1. **Provide specific examples of actions taken which are innovative or unique practices and partnerships:**  
   Click here to enter text.
2. **Describe how outdoor education, exercise and recreation are promoted within the curriculum and outside the classroom.**   
   Click here to enter text.
3. **Describe efforts to improve nutrition, health, fitness of students and staff, highlighting innovative practices and partnerships:**  
   Click here to enter text.

**C. Coordinated School Health, Mental Health, School Climate, and Safety**

1. **Does your school use a Coordinated School Health approach or other health-related initiatives to address overall school health issues?**   
    Yes  No

If yes, describe the health-related initiatives or approaches used by the school:  
Click here to enter text.

1. **Does your school partner with any outside institutions, businesses, clubs, nonprofit organizations, or community groups to support student health and safety?**   
    Yes  No

If yes, describe these partnerships:  
Click here to enter text.

1. **Describe your school’s curriculum content for student health and fitness as well as its applied learning:**Click here to enter text.

**Pillar 3: Effective Environmental Literacy**

**A. School Culture of Sustainability**

1. **Describe what *sustainability* means to your school or district in particular. How is sustainability included in your mission to educate students?**  
   Click here to enter text.
2. **What role has the administration played in the culture of sustainability at your school?**

Click here to enter text.

1. **What practices, working groups, or committees does your school employ to help ensure effective environmental and sustainability education? Provide specific examples of actions taken.**  
   Click here to enter text.
2. **Does your school have a green team, garden club, or a community green committee on sustainability? Who participates? What kinds of project or activities do they undertake? What roles do they play in the school?**  
   Click here to enter text.
3. **Describe other ways your school integrates sustainability into daily habits and culture of the school’s staff, volunteers, students and community (****e.g., recycling days, no bottled water, murals, themed events, virtual backpacks, etc):**  
   Click here to enter text.
4. **Any other school practices, visions, projects, plans or information you want to include to showcase the environmental work your school has achieved?**  
   Click here to enter text.

**B. Curriculum and Pedagogy**

1. **Does your school have a written definition and requirement for environmental literacy? Is there an assessment required?**

Click here to enter text.

1. **How does your school use sustainability and the environment as a context for learning STEM? How is sustainability and the environment incorporated into the curriculum in all areas?**

Click here to enter text.

1. **How does your school use sustainability as a context for learning green technologies and/or career pathways?**  
   Click here to enter text.
2. **Describe students’ outdoor learning experiences at multiple grade levels. How do they support curriculum content?**  
   Click here to enter text.
3. **If applicable, describe how the school grounds are devoted to environmental education uses:**Click here to enter text.

**C. Community Involvement**

1. **Describe how your school promotes student and teacher engagement with the community and civic involvement outside the school? Have there been green themes to their work?**  
   Click here to enter text.
2. **Describe your partnerships to help your school and other schools achieve in the 3 Pillars. Include both the scope and impact of these partnerships:**  
   Click here to enter text.
3. **Describe how your school shares environmental education or sustainability events with other schools or organizations?**  
   Click here to enter text.

**D. Professional Development**

1. **In your required staff professional development for all teachers, is sustainability education or environmental education training included? If so, please describe what this entails.**

Click here to enter text.

1. **What workshops or professional development events have your teachers attended themed around environmental topics?**

Click here to enter text.

1. **Have your teachers or staff earned any certifications in environmental education? What kind have they earned?**

Click here to enter text.

1. **Have any of your teachers or staff received any awards related to environmental education?**

Click here to enter text.

1. **Do any of your teachers or staff hold environmental education related volunteer positions or memberships?**

Environmental Education Association of Illinois

North American Association of Environmental Education

Children and Nature Network

Northern Illinois Nature Preschool Association

Chicago Wilderness

Local environmental related clubs

**Supporting Materials**

**Attach a minimum of three photos and a maximum of five photos with your application (photo size limit 5 MB).** Please save your photos using descriptive language. For example, “Students conduct water quality tests in outdoor classroom with science majors from nearby university x” would be more helpful than “Photo 1.” **Photos should be action shots, not posed.** By sending these photos, you are giving Illinois Green Alliance and the Illinois State Board of Education permission to use them.

**Please provide a brief description (300 characters) for each:**

**Image 1:** Click here to enter text.

**Image 2:** Click here to enter text.

**Image 3:** Click here to enter text.

**Image 4:** Click here to enter text.

**Image 5:** Click here to enter text.

**Submit Your Application**

**Applications must be received by 5:00 PM on Friday, December 19, 2025.**  Applications are being collected by the Illinois Green Alliance on behalf of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). *Applications should be no longer than 18 pages.*

For an application to be considered, it must be **submitted via email** to [mwright@illinoisgreenalliance.org](mailto:mwright@illinoisgreenalliance.org). Submittals via other methods will not be accepted.

**Questions?** Contact [mwright@illinoisgreenalliance.org](mailto:mwright@illinoisgreenalliance.org).