

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION



Background

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

Becoming a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School, District Sustainability Awardee, or Postsecondary Sustainability Awardee is a multi-step process. The first step is to complete and submit this form to be selected as a nominee by your state education agency or equivalent.

Once selected as a nominee by your state education authorities, the second step of the process requires signatures certifying compliance with all applicable civil rights, Federal Student Aid, health, safety, and environmental statutory and regulatory requirements. You may view the certifications that you will be asked to make in the Nominee Presentation Forms [here](#).

Finally, your nomination materials, including the signed Nominee Presentation Form, documentation of progress in all areas of the award, and several photographs, will be sent to the U.S. Department of Education (ED). ED notifies national selectees in the spring, inviting them to send representatives to attend a ceremony in Washington, D.C. in the fall. Selection is based on documentation of the nominee's progress in the three ED-GRS 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](#) for programs related to each Pillar.

Please reach out to greenribbon@isbe.net 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 20, 2024.

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

School/District Applicant Information

1. School Name (or District Name if submitting a district nomination):

Palmer Elementary School

Street Address: 5051 North Kenneth Ave

City: Chicago, Illinois; County: Cook

Zip: 60630

District Name/Number: Chicago Public Schools District 299

2. School or District Website: www.palmerpride.org

3. Principal Name: Jennifer Mangayao

Principal Email Address: jkdixon@cps.edu

Phone Number: 773-534-3704

4. Lead Applicant Name (if different): Jennifer Mangayao

Lead Applicant Email: jkdixon@cps.edu

Phone Number: 773-534-3704

5. (Optional)

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/FriendsofPalmer

YouTube: N/A

Instagram: N/A

Twitter: https://x.com/palmer_panthers

Level <input type="checkbox"/> Early Learning Center <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary (PK - 5 or 6) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> K - 8 <input type="checkbox"/> Middle (6 - 8 or 9) <input type="checkbox"/> High (9 or 10 - 12) <input type="checkbox"/> School District	School Type <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private/Independent <input type="checkbox"/> Charter <input type="checkbox"/> Magnet	How would you describe your school? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input type="checkbox"/> Rural	Is your school in one of the largest 50 districts in the nation? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
			Total Enrolled: Click here to enter text.
Does your school serve 40% or more students from disadvantaged households? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	% receiving FRPL: 70% % limited English proficient: 42% Other measures: 14% with IEPs		Graduation rate: 100% Attendance rate: 92%

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

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 ED-GRS Pillar and Element.

You can view examples of summary narratives in past [Highlights Reports](#). 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.

Palmer Elementary School is a Chicago Public School located in the North Mayfair community of Chicago. A school of just over 750 students, there are over 20 languages at this school that is diverse with regard to language, ability, and background. Over the past several years, sustained efforts to increase sustainability have been implemented, starting with the construction in 2020 of a silver level LEED certified annex. Other efforts implemented across the school include the managing of our chicken coop, an effort that is sustained through the involvement of teachers, students, parents, and community members for the past four years. An addition of two outdoor gardens (one for chicken food and the other for food used for human consumption), three outdoor classrooms, and outdoor composting have enhanced the learning that takes place outdoors at the school. The school has a focus on native landscaping, which required no additional watering. Gardening is expanded inside the building, as well with the inclusion of indoor hydroponic and greenhouse gardens throughout the interior of the building. Palmer partners with several organizations, including the Chicago Department of Transportation which educates students on taking safe walking and biking paths to school. We partner with Pilot Light for sustainable food education, as well as Seven Generations and their Waste Warriors Project which has allowed almost all of our cafeteria waste to be either composted or recycled. We partner with the Water Reclamation District for our career day, which has allowed our students to learn the value of careers in sustainability. Palmer students are fortunate to have nearby Gompers Park, with it's expansive lagoon area. Students have taken trips to the lagoon in order to conduct water testing, as well as enjoy the nearby nature. Our students have a great deal of outdoor learning time, in particular through our Walking Classroom program where students take walks throughout the day while listening to supportive podcasts. In total, the efforts of Palmer have had a sustaintial impact on the environmental sustainability of our community and have provided our students with the tools needed to be the change agents we need for the future!

Pillar I: Reduced Environmental Impact and Costs

A. Energy

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

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.)*

CPS annually tracks, and reports, Palmer ES' energy usage using the EPA's Portfolio Manager online tracking tool, while also using Ameresco's Asset Planner online energy management software to verify monthly energy usage and billing. The table in Supportive Document A summarizes the total energy usage, combined electric and natural gas, from the past five fiscal years, July 1st thru June 30th. The data is slightly skewed because of the Covid 19 shutdown, its effect on the school's energy usage and subsequent restarting of in-person classes. Overall usage is on a downward trend, especially pre-shutdown compared to the most recent data for FY23 & FY24.

3. **Please describe the strategies you have implemented or planned to reduce your energy consumption.**

We are working closely with the building automation team to adjust running times of equipment, including participation in local utility virtual and retro-commissioning and demand response programs. The District also performs preventive maintenance and proper tune-up schedules for all HVAC equipment to keep them running efficiently.

4. **What percentage of your school's energy is obtained from:**

- a. **On-site renewable energy generation:** 0%

Type: N/A

- b. **Purchased renewable energy:** 0%

Type: N/A

- c. **Participation in an energy cooperative, DOE Wind for Schools or other school energy program:** 0%

5. **In what year was your school originally built?** The original school building was built in 1925, the first annex built in 1996 and the most recent annex built in 2020.

6. **What is the total building area of your school?** 118,282 total sq.ft. Original building = 68,290, Annex 1 = 14,992, Annex 2 = 35,000

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.**

A new 35,000 square foot LEED Silver annex building was built for the school in 2020.

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

8. **Please describe your sustainability policy and practice for new or renovated construction materials and building maintenance.**

All new facilities are built to LEED certification and the district is undertaking participation in the Healthy Green Schools and Campuses building operations and maintenance initiative. Additionally, standards for annual capital improvement projects include equipment replacement with high-efficiency models, conversion of steam heating systems to much more efficient condensing hot-water systems and replacement of natural gas-fired equipment with electric powered systems.

B. Water and Grounds

9. **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.**

Water usage, as summarized in the table in Supportive Document B, is similar to energy usage with skewed data because of the Covid shutdown. As illustrated in the table in Supportive Document B, the past two full school years are showing a leveling off of usage compared to when in-person classes started again in 2022. As shown, Palmer ES used an average of 6.9 gals/sq.ft. of water over the past two fiscal years. Comparatively, the average annual usage per square feet across the District's facilities is 16 gal/sq.ft. And per Energy Star Portfolio Manager water usage data, the median average annual water usage of K-12 schools is 10.84 gals per square foot.

10. **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:**

All of the trees and shrubs planted as part of the Annex building construction, including in and around the parking lot, are native to the northeast region of Illinois. While more than 50% of the perennials and ornamental grasses are native. Some fertilization does happen with the District's landscaping vendors providing an adequate level of fertilization to the grounds at each Board Facility to support a healthy green appearance year-round. Fertilizers used by landscaping vendors in performance of the Landscaping Services are "natural" or "organic," "slow-release" and free from any weeds, pathogens, and materials that are insufficiently decomposed ("Fertilizer") and does not contain chemicals that could leach into groundwater and present potential health risks to CPS students, staff, or the public.

11. **Describe the water sources used for irrigation, including any cisterns or rain barrels.**

There is no landscape irrigation on the site and only water from when it rains is used to water plants on site.

12. **Describe any efforts to reduce storm water runoff (e.g., rain gardens) and/or reduce impermeable surfaces.**

During our construction, we added landscaping and reduced the number of concrete spaces into our parking lot - the turf field is also a permeable surface that has containment underneath, greatly reducing the amount of concrete across the school and stormwater runoff created during rain events.

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

C. Waste and Chemicals Management

- 13. 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:**

Palmer school has collaborated with the Food Waste Warrior Project, in partnership with Seven Generations Ahead and the World Wildlife Fund to establish a school-wide zero-waste system that sorts lunchroom items into five categories: garbage, recycling, compost, garden-specific compost, and Share Table items. Our students serve as Zero Waste Ambassadors, ensuring proper sorting and minimizing waste. As a result, we've reduced lunchtime waste from ten bags to less than one. The compost produced nourishes our school garden, supporting science projects and providing snacks for students. Additionally, a separate compost bin benefits the chicken coop garden, where the chickens supply fresh eggs and valuable learning experiences. We also collect classroom milk cartons to reuse as plant containers, where students grow butterfly-friendly flowers and herbs in the Spring. In addition to this work, our 8th grade students compost using red wigglers.

- 14. 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?**

100% of the school's purchased paper is an eco-conscious choice. Office and classroom paper is Forest Stewardship Council certified, which means it is made from wood/paper that comes from forests managed to rigorous environmental and social standards. The paper is also considered "leadership forestry" coming from forests or sourcing programs that meet specific environmental standards and allows the school to support practices that better protect forests and the environment.

- 15. 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:**

All cleaning products are certified by Green Seal or by the Environmental Choice EcoLogo Program. Cleaning products are stored in the janitorial closet and no pesticides are used. The purchasing of cleaning products is done on a weekly basis after a review of inventory in order to reduce waste.

- 16. Describe how your school purchases environmentally preferable products for use by students and staff:**

We only use eco friendly products. Cintas, one of our vendor partners, restocks only eco-friendly products on a weekly basis and orders are only placed on an as needed basis to reduce waste.

D. Alternative Transportation

- 17. 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.**

Palmer Elementary is a neighborhood school. As such, it is by design that most of our students

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

walk and bike to school. Due to increases in students biking to school, we have made more investments in bike racks, with three full bike racks each and every day. While we do not have exact numbers of students who bike or walk to school, anecdotal and visual observations, as well as address records of students show that mostly all of our students live within blocks of the school and walk each day through well maintained sidewalks.

18. Describe the plans or strategies to increase the number of students walking and biking to school.

Palmer is a neighborhood school, so very few students are bussed. The majority of students already walk to school. To increase even more students walking versus cars, Palmer utilizes The Walking Classroom, which promotes the importance and enjoyment of walking. During The Walking Classroom, staff share with students their enjoyment of walking to encourage and build the students' appreciation for walking. Walking and bicycling to school are taught in Health classes. For example, the Health teacher uses the "Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety" curriculum from the National Health Education Standards (NHES) to help motivate more students to walk and bicycle to school.

19. 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: Palmer has partnered with the Chicago Department of Transportation and Bicycle Ambassadors to bring out community volunteers to teach our students about street safety, as well as safety when riding bicycles within the community. This program has focused on working with our primary students to build these habits among our youngest learners.

20. Describe how your school transportation is efficient and has reduced its environmental impact:

The majority of students walk to school with a small number getting dropped off/picked up by parents via cars. Only two small buses service Palmer for approximately 10 students (these students require bus services due to disabilities).

21. Describe any other efforts toward reducing environmental impact, focusing on innovative or unique practices and partnerships:

The District was recently awarded a federal grant and is in the process of purchasing and operating 50 electric buses to serve students. The District is also partnering with its bus operators and vendors to replace their fleets with electric powered buses.

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

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.**

All CPS approved vendors, employees and staff have to abide by the District's IPM practices and standards. which is to implement the most organic, least caustic and least harmful methods first when addressing pest control. The District implements effective pest control procedures, measures and controls while minimizing pesticide applications and pesticide exposure by: 1. Providing training and resources to staff on IPM; 2. Requiring pest control contractors to use IPM; 3. Limiting pesticide applications; and 4. Establishing protocols to timely provide notification and information to parents and staff regarding pesticide applications, in writing, in accordance with State Law and, for LEED certified schools, in accordance with LEED for Existing Buildings Operations and Maintenance guidelines. Along with participation in the Healthy Green Schools and Campus' initiative.

2. **Describe the efforts or practices you have in place to minimize or eliminate the use of pesticides, both indoors and outdoors.**

Our crops (from our chicken feed and human consumption gardens) outside are rotated yearly to prevent any buildup of pest populations in the soil. The soil is also renewed each year to assist with this. Regular clean up of dead plant material and leaves are removed. Weeds are removed when seen. Organic mulch is used in our gardens to suppress weeds. Repellent plants such as basil and marigolds are planted to naturally repel pests. The garden committee is committed to ensure regular inspections of the outdoor gardens to monitor control measures. Members on the garden team have attended professional development on pest control methods and the importance of reducing chemical use. Pest management in our chicken coop is facilitated through the use of food grade diatomaceous earth, which is used to prevent unwanted insects from infesting the area. The perimeter of our chicken coop is managed with wire both around the edges and base in order to prevent rodents from being attracted to the chicken feed. Students eat in the cafeteria and teachers are provided with an eating space in the teachers' lounge in order to prevent rodent infestation. These areas are cleaned throughout the day by our custodial staff.

3. **Describe the actions taken or the practices your school employs to minimize or eliminate exposure to the following specific hazardous contaminants (if applicable):**
 - a. Elemental Mercury
 - b. Carbon Monoxide from fuel burning equipment or appliances
 - c. Radon
 - d. Chromated Copper Arsenate in wooden playground equipment

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

e. Others (e.g., Lead, Asbestos or PCBs)

Over the past two years, 21,000 school based staff across the District have gone through mercury training. This includes an understanding of the existing system CPS has in place to respond to mercury release situations. During instances of mercury release in our schools, the District also owns, and deploys, Nippon EMP3 equipment to sweep and clear facilities. The District has an established Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) ensuring all facilities have Carbon Monoxide Detectors and routine preventative maintenance is being carried out by building engineering teams in an effort to verify each school's system or detectors is operational. Exposure within the District to radon is limited but when required, radon sampling is done at pre-school and kindergarten facilities. There is no wooden playground equipment at the school. The district has (4) MECs Managing Environmental Consultants that advise the district and help develop abatement and remediation plans. Which include bi-annual reviews of facility conditions and testing. Plus all capital and facility improvement projects include an environmental assessment and abatement of any existing toxic material as a standard part of project scope.

4. Describe policies and practices in place to promote security and life safety.

Palmer conducts several safety drills during the course of the school year including: 2 allergen drills, 3 evacuation drills, 2 lockdown drills, 2 shelter-in-place drills and 1 bus evacuation drill. Three school safety officers work staggered shifts to ensure the safety of staff and students inside and outside the building throughout the day. Six staff members are CPR/AED certified and many new staff members seek recertification each year. Families receive communication on emergency procedures and emergency contact information as well as the dates of drills. Palmer collaborates with a local Salvation Army site to host staff and students in case school grounds need to be evacuated.

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.

We have Air Purifiers in every classroom and the filters in these are changed out regularly. We do not have animals in classrooms at this time.

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.

The District does visual inspection of all instances of mold risks to determine if remediation is required. Upon determination of presence of mold, priority is made to schedule and execute the remediation of mold impacted materials within 5-days.

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:

The Annex building has a full centralized heating, cooling and ventilation system with modern building automation system (BAS).

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

8. **Describe your school's preventive maintenance program for the building's ventilation system, including unit ventilators to ensure it is clean and operating properly:**

Facility boiler and HVAC systems are tuned-up on a 2-3 year rolling basis to ensure proper operations of not only the heating and cooling equipment but also ventilation systems and associated control devices.

9. **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:**

The building engineer has active control of the HVAC systems equipment through the existing building automation system that allows adjustments to temperature and air flow depending on real-time room conditions.

10. **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:**

Every school has a Temtop air quality monitoring device that is used when issues arise to verify site level air quality conditions in specific spaces. The District is also in the process of developing protocol for quarterly, school-level monitoring using these Temtop devices in a proactive manner and documenting conditions for review and actions.

11. **Describe your green cleaning policies, equipment, products and practices, and green cleaning certifications or awards:**

At all schools, the District uses only environmentally sensitive cleaning products that are either certified by Green Seal certified by Environmental Choice Ecologo Program. The District is also participating in the Health Green Schools and Campuses initiative as a pilot member and is currently going through the certification process now with the goal of being certified by the middle of next year.

B. Nutrition and Fitness

12. **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.

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

Give details about programs and successes: We participate in the Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom program. For example, our students have adopted cows, as well as having learned a great deal about corn and its importance in Illinois. We have two gardens at our school. One garden grows food for human consumption, while the other garden compliments our on site Chicken Coop where food for chicken consumption is grown. The Chicken Coop Garden is managed by a Chicken Coop Committee, while the Garden Committee manages the outdoor and indoor gardening spaces for both flowers and food for human consumption. Our cafeteria provides fresh meals and we are fortunate to have what is known as a cooking kitchen with a chef on staff. Students eat fresh fruits and vegetables as a part of every meal. Health measures are integrated into assessments and children engage in physical based assessments through both our PE and Health classes. We also have green houses within the school that we use for classroom learning and exploration with the purchase of an outdoor greenhouse on the horizon. Pilot Light Food Education incorporates healthy food choices and education with classroom curriculum following the National Food Education Standards. Palmer's partnership each year with Community in Schools Chicago shares resources for nutrition, health, and fitness for the Palmer community such as, the Wellness 4 All dance program, the Respiratory and Health Organization presentation on E-cigarettes and Vaping, Natya Dance Residency, Bicycle Ambassadors, Colgate Dental Van, Candor Health Program, and hygiene needs.

13. Provide specific examples of actions taken which are innovative or unique practices and partnerships:

Our school partners with Pilot Light Chefs in order to provide food education. We have hosted health fairs for our students in partnership with Pilot Light and Kohl's clothing stores, as well as the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. We also partner with the Walking Classroom, an organization that promotes students taking walking breaks. During these walking breaks, the children use special equipment to listen to social emotional instruction based podcasts as they take their physical fitness walks. We also have a local Chicken Coop. At the chicken coop we have special gardening and composting of chicken waste that takes place. Children, parents, and community members work together to care for our Chickens. We participate in our district's sports programming and ensure that we have large numbers of students participating in sports ranging from cheerleading to volleyball to basketball and more. Lastly, classrooms participate in the Adopt a Cow program through the National Dairy Council. Students are able to learn about dairy farms and observe a calf grow throughout the year! Classrooms can also participate in virtual field trips to learn from expert farmers about agriculture.

14. Describe how outdoor education, exercise and recreation are promoted within the curriculum and outside the classroom.

At Palmer our students have access to two specifically designed outdoor classroom areas. In those areas you might find children listening to direct instruction from teachers, reading books of their own choosing, or a range of other learning experiences. Exercise is a regular part of our day, as our students engage daily in GoNoodle Moving Minutes exercises in the classroom, as well as participation in the social emotionally focused Walking Classroom Program in partnership with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. Physical Education and Health class are two of Palmer's enrichment classes. Those classes are frequently held outdoors.

15. Describe efforts to improve nutrition, health, fitness of students and staff, highlighting innovative practices and partnerships:

We are a healthy school (designated by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation for the past

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

several years) and as such we celebrate with healthy snacks or activities that are not focused on food. Nutrition education is taught through a stand alone health class for all students PreK to 8th, while also being incorporated into literacy units of study, for example, the nutrition inquiry unit plan in 8th grade. We partner with Pilot Light to provide food education aligned to their food education standards for students. Several teachers have implemented The Walking Classroom program with their students over the past few years. This program enables students to walk while learning from teacher chosen podcasts. For staff, our district provides a range of support for staff through the Be Well staff newsletter. Programs have included a fitness fun day, information regarding our Employee Assistance Program in support of Mental Health, as well as a mindfulness partnership. Our school website has a dedicated page focused on health and wellness and the sharing of resources that are of use to both staff and students. Our district offers a Telehealth program giving tips for healthy recipes for our staff. We have also hosted a health fair in partnership with the Kohls clothing store, Pilot Light, and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation during which our students engaged in fun health focused activities.

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

16. 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:

We have a local Wellness Team whose membership includes teachers, parents, students, lunchroom staff, and early childhood. This team meets monthly to coordinate health programs for students including our Mobile Medical Van partnership with Lurie's Children's Hospital to provide free physicals and immunizations to students. We coordinate free eye glasses for students from Tropical Optical here in Chicago. We coordinate a free dental cleaning program through Contos Smile Center. We also partner with Lutheran Social Services of Illinois to host an on site therapist who works with students both with and without insurance. The Wellness Team at Palmer is grounded in the criteria from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and we have been named one of America's Healthiest Schools for the past several years for our coordinated efforts.

17. 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:

Palmer partners with the Walking Classroom in order to provide students with participation in their program. This includes students using portable devices to listen to social emotional focused podcasts while going on walks during the school day. We partner with Pilot Light to teach Food Education. We partner with Between Friends to provide our middle school students with safe relationship instruction. We partner with the Illinois Farm Bureau to provide education focused on Illinois Agriculture, as well as provide students an opportunity to virtually adopt a cow! We have partnered with Seven Generations Ahead in order to support our school

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

composting program in the cafeteria. We have also partnered with the Respiratory Health Association in order to support our anti vaping efforts among our middle school students. We have partnered with the Water Reclamation District of Chicago for sessions during our STEAM Night, as well as during our school health fair. Finally (although there are more partnerships) we have partnered with the Chicago Department of Transportation for their Safe Ambassadors program which teaches students how to cross the street safely among other skills.

18. Describe your school's curriculum content for student health and fitness as well as its applied learning:

At Palmer we have a stand alone Health class where students in PreK to 8th grade attend and learn about health and wellness as aligned with the applicable Illinois Learning Standards. We also have interdisciplinary units, including a Nutrition Inquiry unit of study in 8th grade, as well as integrated food education lessons aligned with the Pilot Light Food Education Standards. Fitness is also a stand alone class held in our gymnasium and in addition, our students have regular moving minutes through our participation in the Walking Classroom and use of GoNoodle Moving Minutes. Students participate in competitive sports, including cheerleading, volleyball, flag football, basketball, track and field, and more! After school recreation classes include ballet, tap dancing, and yoga. These are all free for students to participate in.

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?

The Palmer mission statement includes seven statements that ground our work at the school with students and in the community. Our mission statement is as follows: Design a culturally relevant curriculum that utilizes authentic experience, celebrates diversity, and promotes unity. Utilize restorative approaches to address breaches to our safe community. Provide opportunities for students to think critically and solve real world problems. Promote high expectations and the pursuit of a growth mindset in a trusting environment. Foster instruction that is data informed, supports multiple intelligence and student choice, as well as collaborative learning. Facilitate the involvement of the community by engaging our students with community partners. Provide access to technological tools and tasks that allow students to work in digital environments and foster 21st Century learning. We also are committed to being involved in the community and support our students in solving real world problems. For example, students in 8th grade student nutrition and through this unit they reflect on their own habits and practices in this area. Our 3rd grade students create solutions to the great pacific garbage patch. Our entire student body works together to compost trash from the cafeteria. We have also hosted school wide litter pick up events that have not only brought together students, but also family and community.

2. What role has the administration played in the culture of sustainability at your school?

Administration works with teachers to support their interests around sustainability efforts. Teacher leaders support all of the initiatives described in this application. Administration ensures that community partnerships are well run, that our school sustainability page on our website is up to date with our most recent efforts (in order to inform the community), and ensures that sustainability efforts are appropriately funded within our budget.

3. What practices, working groups, or committees does your school employ to help ensure effective environmental and sustainability education? Provide specific examples of actions taken.

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

The Palmer school community works together to ensure effective environmental and sustainability education with groups such as the Gardening Club. The gardening club includes Palmer teachers from a variety of backgrounds as well as parents in the school community. We work with the Food Waste Warrior Project as a part of Seven Generations Ahead to reduce the amount of food waste we produce. This also allows us to compost using lunchroom leftovers and grow new food for both student consumption and for our chicken coop. Seven Generations Ahead provided Palmer with resource packets on behalf of the World Wildlife Fund in order to teach students about sustainability through action and how to be environmentally conscious on a daily basis. Furthermore, the Chicken Coop Committee has created no-prep lesson plans to teach students about the importance of livestock, the needs of animals, and the food cycle.

4. **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?**

The gardening club includes several Palmer teachers from a variety of backgrounds as well as parents in the school community. The Palmer Chicken Coop Committee is composed of staff members and community members who work together to maintain the composting area, the chicken food growing garden, the coop structure, and the chickens. The chickens eat a balanced diet of grains, seeds, fruits, vegetables, and other food items grown locally at the school.

5. **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):**

At Palmer we encourage all students to bring refillable water bottles to school. There are times designated in each classroom for students to refill water bottles at one of our many refilling stations. Water bottle refilling stations were installed at the school in 2020 as a part of our major construction project. Classrooms use Google Classroom, an online tool that allows students to complete paperless assignments. We also repurpose materials for art projects, most recently our students having completed a bottle cap mural reusing bottle caps donated by the community to the school. Our students compost and recycle in the cafeteria on a daily basis. We have a shared table in the cafeteria that allows students to reduce food waste.

6. **Any other school practices, visions, projects, plans or information you want to include to showcase the environmental work your school has achieved?**

We executed a robust health fair in partnership with several organizations. We have a Career Day and a STEAM Night that showcases jobs in sustainability related fields. We have expanded our use of both hydroponic and greenhouse gardening systems across our school. Each year, we work to fulfill the requirements for the All Star Award with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and each year we have earned this rigorous standard of excellence.

B. Curriculum and Pedagogy

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

Palmer promotes the environmental literacy definition provided by the Environmental Education Association of Illinois on its sustainability web page, which reads in part, "understanding the environment around us ... the building of relationships between the human and non-human ... the

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

ability to see that everything is interrelated ... understanding that humans are part of the natural world, not over it.” Palmer finds resources and plans from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to help educate students in environmental issues and how they can help.

8. 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?

Palmer school uses sustainability and the environment as a context for learning STEM by implementing NGSS standards in hands-on project based learning activities. Sustainability and the environment are incorporated into the curriculum in all areas because our teacher-created ELA units are interdisciplinary. For example, during the Wonders of the Ocean unit in third grade, students work together to come up with a solution to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Students must have a step-by-step technology focused action plan to solve this real world pollution problem. Additionally, students must have logical reasons why their solution is the most effective, a 3D model, and a visual aid to convince the audience why their plan should be selected to make a difference. This performance task highlights the interdisciplinary nature of our units and the inquiry-based learning tasks students engage in to demonstrate their learning.

9. How does your school use sustainability as a context for learning green technologies and/or career pathways?

We have held a Career Day with the Water Reclamation District, as well as a STEAM Night in order to showcase careers in sustainability. We also hosted a health fair in partnership with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, the Water Reclamation District, and Kohl’s Cares in order to showcase not only how students can be healthy, but careers in sustainability. PreK students participate in field trips in collaboration with the Green City Market to learn about different career paths such as farming, hydroponic engineering, organic sales, and food education leadership roles.

10. Describe students’ outdoor learning experiences at multiple grade levels. How do they support curriculum content?

Our students spend time reading in the outdoor classroom spaces, of which we have three on our campus. The CDOT (Chicago Department of Transportation) Ambassadors safe crossing program has taught our students about how to walk and bicycle safely to school, a goal of our school as we are located in a tight knit community. Students spend time taking care of our chickens and gardening on our grounds via these outdoor spaces. Physical education and health classes are held outdoors on a regular basis leveraging our large campus filled with grassy areas and a permeable turf field. We partner with the Walking Classroom, an organization that has provided us with portable headsets where students listen to health and SEL focused podcasts as they take holistic walks around the school. We are fortunate to have a school near a very large city park with well maintained nature areas (by the park district). During that trip, students tested the water quality in the lagoon. Students also observed and noted native plants and animal species found in the area. Some students went fishing and released their catches back into the lagoon. We also talked about the current initiatives of restoring the original area based on the information signage located at the park.

11. If applicable, describe how the school grounds are devoted to environmental education uses:

Our school grounds are devoted to environmental education in several areas. We have a chicken coop, as well as a chicken cook garden with a composting area (where cafeteria waste and chicken

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

waste are combined to create rich gardening soil). We also have an outdoor garden dedicated to growing food for human consumption. Inside our school, students garden using both indoor hydroponic and greenhouse gardening systems. Within our art classes, students create artwork, most recently our bottle cap murals, using repurposed materials. We have three outdoor classroom spaces that are used for direct instruction and reading activities using the outdoors as a learning space.

C. Community Involvement

12. 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?

We hold a Partnership with Seven Generations Ahead to support our composting efforts in the cafeteria. Pilot Light, a food education program has supported our teachers with their Pilot Light Food Advocacy Project. Ms. Doyle, a PreK Teacher regularly attends gardening workshops as a part of her leadership on the school Garden Team. For Career Day the Water Reclamation District came out to showcase careers in sustainability. Our STEAM Night Partnerships included the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Griffin Museum of Science and Industry, and SparkShop.

13. Describe your partnerships to help your school and other schools achieve in the 3 Pillars. Include both the scope and impact of these partnerships:

Northtown Academy, a neighboring high school, volunteers at STEAM Night and Olympic Day. During STEAM Night, these high school students work with outside partners such as Water Reclamation and Griffin Museum of Science and Industry on environmental education. On Olympic Day, Northtown Academy students have volunteered time to run outdoor events that promote student and staff health and wellness.

14. Describe how your school shares environmental education or sustainability events with other schools or organizations?

One way Palmer shares about environmental education and sustainability is by hosting family-friendly events such as STEAM night. This is a free event where students and families are invited to an interactive evening of discovering the fun of STEAM through a variety of hands-on activities, experiments, and demos. Staff at Palmer collaborate with outside partners such as Sparkshop, Water Reclamation, The Museum of Science and Industry to plan and implement engaging activities for students and families in the school community.

D. Professional Development

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

Sessions focused on teaching with the garden and teaching with the chicken coop for a wider set of educators is planned for this school year. Additionally, we have teacher committees that are dedicated to these two topics and have attended separate training that they are ready to share with others. The sessions will be required.

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

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

Teachers have attended workshops from the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, as well as Pilot Light. They have also attended workshops from OpenLands focused on sustainability, outdoor education, and gardening.

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

We have several teachers with science and health teaching endorsements. We also have teachers on staff with the Eat What You Grow Certification.

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

Our 4th Grade was chosen to participate in Science on The Go: Woodland Creatures in which we partnered students with museum educators from Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum to learn about the effects our actions are having on the environment of woodland creatures and what we can do to ensure the sustainability of the woodlands. Following this, 2 of 3 fourth grade teachers applied and were accepted into the Science Teacher Network for the Museum and are currently partnering with them on “Chicago Bird Watchers” with their 4th graders. Ms. Swiderski was funded by a Donors Choose Grant to bring hydroponic gardening into her classroom in 2022. Each year since, she facilitates students learning about edible plants in her classroom. At the end of the school year each student leaves with an edible plant for the students to continue growing with their families. This year that project will be expanded with a grant from The Friends of Palmer enabling each student to take home a small potted garden with three edible plants. Other awards earned have included the 2023 Agriculture Grant via Pilot Light, 2023-2024 Pilot Light Fellow, 2024-2025 Fellowship Alumni Association with Pilot Light, Donors Choose Funded for Worm Composting in the classroom, and an additional Friends of Palmer Grant for hydroponic growing materials.

19. 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, the Illinois State Board of Education, and the U.S. Department of Education permission to use them.

ILLINOIS GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS APPLICATION

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

Image 1: Photos of Students Participating in our Composting Program:

https://palmerpride.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=596237&type=d

Image 2: Photos of the Palmer Chicken Coop:

https://palmerpride.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=470163&type=d

Image 3: Photos of Chicken Coop:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Xw0U_ZnHPvCLUqrFRev_NTMN6pLu-Pls?usp=sharing

Image 4: Photos of Students Gardening:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Xw0U_ZnHPvCLUqrFRev_NTMN6pLu-Pls?usp=sharing

Image 5: Photos of Health Fair with Hydroponic Gardening:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Xw0U_ZnHPvCLUqrFRev_NTMN6pLu-Pls?usp=sharing

Submit Your Application

Applications must be received by 5:00 PM on Friday, December 20, 2024. 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 greenribbon@isbe.net. Submittals via other methods will not be accepted.

Questions? Contact greenribbon@isbe.net.