**US Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Visions**

Inspiring schools to achieve 21st Century excellence, the U.S. Department of Education (US ED) Green Ribbon Schools award will recognize schools, school districts, and institutions of higher education that have achieved, or are making demonstrable progress toward:

1) Reducing environmental impacts and costs;

2) Improving the health and wellness of schools, students and staff, and;

3) Providing environmental and sustainability education which is infused into many disciplines, and is especially effective in incorporating STEM, civic skills, and green career pathways.

These three "Pillars" of the Green Ribbon Schools award will serve as guideposts to motivate states, tribes, districts, administrators, faculty, parents, and students to create the most productive, enriching, and efficient schools possible. The demonstrated combined achievement in these three areas serves as the basis of the Green Ribbon Schools award.

The US ED has broken down each Pillar into "Elements" to provide more detail and an explanation for what is meant by each Pillar. Review criteria will be based on demonstrated achievement in each of the Pillars listed above as well as the following Elements:

**I. Energy Efficiency and Environmental Impact**

* Reduced or eliminated greenhouse gas emissions, using an energy audit or emissions inventory and reduction plan, cost-effective energy efficiency improvements, conservation measures, and/or on-site renewable energy and/or purchase of green power;
* Expanded use of alternative transportation to, during, and from school, through active promotion of locally-available, energy efficient options, and implementation of alternative transportation projects and policies;
* Improved water quality, efficiency, and conservation; and
* Reduced solid and hazardous waste production, or elimination of hazardous waste streams.

**II. Healthy School Environments**

* An integrated school environmental health program based on an operation and facility-wide environmental management system that considers student, staff, and visitor health and safety in all practices related to design, construction, renovation, operations, and maintenance of schools and grounds; and,
* High standards of nutrition, fitness, and quantity and quality of outdoor time for both students and staff.

**III. Environmental and Sustainability Education**

* Interdisciplinary learning about the key relationships between dynamic environmental, energy, and human systems;
* Development of civic engagement knowledge and skills, and students application of these skills, to address sustainability and environmental issues in their community; and
* Use of the environment and sustainability to develop STEM content knowledge and thinking skills to prepare graduates for the 21st century technology-driven economy.

*Full achievement of these elements is not always possible, but we encourage inclusion and explanation of efforts on the part of the school, district, or institution of higher education toward any and all of these goals.*

Items important to keep in mind as you consider applying to become a nominee:

1. These are ambitious goals and few if any schools, school districts, and institutions of higher education are expected to have achieved all three, or perhaps even 100% of any one of the pillars.
2. Schools, school districts, and institutions of higher education demonstrating exemplary achievement in all three Pillars will receive the highest ranking.
3. It is important to demonstrate concrete achievement, using quantified measures, whenever possible.
4. MSDE may request additional documents from nominated schools or districts to submit to US ED.
5. MSDE encourages thoughtful participation in all aspects of this application by appropriate stakeholders, e.g., school system facilities, instructional, and health staff, parents, students, and community members.
6. Schools, school districts, and institutions of higher education are encouraged to submit an application if they have strong substantiated evidence of compliance to any one pillar, but may be lacking in others.