

News Release

Education Information Services ■ 125 South Webster Street ■ P.O. Box 7841 ■ Madison, WI 53707-7841 ■ (608) 266-3559

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI-NR 2013-52

Tuesday, April 30, 2013

Contact: Patrick Gasper, DPI Communications Officer, (608) 266-3559

Green Ribbon Schools boost health of environment, finances, students, and staff

Wisconsin at top nationwide for number of schools receiving federal designation

MADISON — State Superintendent Tony Evers congratulated four Wisconsin schools and one school district which earned Green Ribbon Awards from the U.S. Department of Education.

“Becoming a Green Ribbon School does not happen overnight,” Evers said. “These schools make it a continuing goal, day after day, to shift ‘the normal,’ demonstrating effective ways for schools to improve the environmental and financial sustainability of schools while helping students and staff stay healthy.”

The Wisconsin awardees are:

- **Jefferson Elementary-Fox River Academy (Appleton Area School District)** integrates environmental education into core teaching and after-school programming. With a strong tradition of community involvement, students engage in projects such as restoration work and citizen monitoring at local parks. The school serves a significant percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged.
- **Westlawn Elementary School (Cedarburg School District)** runs a robust recycling program and has increased energy efficiency of its facilities. Fifth-graders planted more than 500 native tree species on school grounds over two years. A habitat garden, amphitheater-style space, and wooded area enhance outdoor learning, while the school garden provides healthy, fresh food for classes, meals, and the community.
- **Summit Environmental School (La Crosse School District)**, located in a high poverty area, has gradually transformed from a traditional elementary to one with a comprehensive environmental focus. Summit provides extensive outdoor learning, partners with community agencies, and includes all students in its sustainability efforts. Students from special education programs serve as official inspectors of the school’s automatic timed faucets, learning math skills and preventing wasted water.
- **Racine Montessori School** has implemented a “waste-free every day” policy, provides an hour of outdoor time daily and an annual week-long trip to a nature reserve, and employs a physical education instructor who is also a licensed nutritionist. Students can enlarge the grounds’ native prairie landscape by collecting and replanting seeds.
- **Fort Atkinson School District** has achieved lofty sustainability goals while including students in the process. All six schools earned Energy Star certification; students accompanied the certification teams as a learning experience. The district runs buses on clean-burning liquid petroleum, landscapes and irrigates sustainably, ensures healthy snacks, and integrates environmental concepts throughout its curriculum for all ages.

(more)

The federal Green Ribbon program recognizes schools and districts for achieving the often-intertwined goals of saving energy, reducing costs, fostering health and wellness, offering environmentally sustainable learning spaces, and providing environmental education (including civics and green career pathways), to boost student academic achievement and community engagement.

Wisconsin's honorees were nominated by the Department of Public Instruction after attaining the highest level of achievement in the state's Green and Healthy Schools program. Green and Healthy Schools, offered through a partnership between the DPI, Department of Natural Resources, and Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education, supports and recognizes schools for reducing environmental impacts and costs, improving health and wellness of students and staff, and providing environmental education.

In the end, every one of this year's Green Ribbon nominees from Wisconsin received the distinction, tying Wisconsin with only three other states for the most selectees.

Nationally, more than half of the honorees are in high-poverty areas, and Evers stressed that going green is attainable whatever education challenges are faced by a particular school.

"For any school that wishes to pursue this kind of achievement, please know that you won't be doing it alone," he said. "Our staff will provide resources, information, or contacts to help any school improve the health and well-being of students, staff, and the environment."

###

NOTES: More information about the federal Green Ribbon program is available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools>. Wisconsin's Green and Healthy Schools program is detailed on the collaborative EEinWisconsin website, at <http://eeinwisconsin.org/net/content/go.aspx?s=99683.0.16.2209>. This news release is available electronically at http://news.dpi.wi.gov/files/eis/pdf/dpinr2013_52.pdf.