

NEWS RELEASE

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GCPS among 14 first-ever recipients of U.S. DOE's District Sustainability Award

On the inaugural year of the U.S. Department of Education's (DOE) recognition of school districts that make an effort to be environmentally responsible, **Gwinnett County Public Schools** (GCPS) made the list of the 14 school districts presented nationwide with the U.S. DOE's first-ever District Sustainability Award. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan made the announcement this week naming the sustainability winners, who were selected from a group of Green Ribbon Schools and districts. All were honored for their exemplary efforts to reduce environmental impact and utility costs, promote better health, and ensure effective environmental education, including civics and green career pathways. Secretary Duncan was joined by Chair of White House Council on Environmental Quality Nancy Sutley and Acting Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Bob Persiacepe. They made the announcement on Earth Day, Monday, April 22, at Mundo Verde Bilingual Public Charter School, in Washington, DC.

"Today's honorees are modeling a comprehensive approach to being green," said Secretary Duncan. "They are demonstrating ways schools can simultaneously cut costs; improve health, performance and equity; and provide an education geared toward the jobs of the future. In fact, the selected districts are saving millions of dollars as a result of their greening efforts. And the great thing is that the resources these honorees are using are available for free to all schools."

In learning that the efforts of Gwinnett County Public Schools had been recognized at the national level, **CEO and Superintendent Alvin Wilbanks**, said, "We are very proud of the work our school district has accomplished in terms of its 'green' initiatives. Through our actions in the area of energy conservation and environmental education, we are better serving our community and teaching valuable lessons to our students. In addition, these efforts are an excellent example of our outstanding stewardship of resources as they have resulted in savings of millions of dollars annually in utility costs."

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not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex,
religion, national origin, age, or disability in any
employment practice, educational program, or
any other program, activity, or service.

2010 Winner of



With more than 23-million square feet of ENERGY STAR-certified areas, Gwinnet leads the nation for K–12 certified building space. The school district’s 125 ENERGY STAR certified buildings use 35% less energy, generate 35% fewer greenhouse gas emissions and cost up to 40 cents less per square foot to operate than similar buildings across the nation. In fact, Gwinnett taxpayers save millions a year on the school district’s utility bills. GCPS also has completed several energy efficient upgrades of its schools including: lighting retrofits in the classrooms, occupancy sensors, automated energy management systems, water source heat pumps, and variable frequency drives.

Other GCPS Green Highlights during the 2011-2012 school year include:

- 125 schools are ENERGY STAR certified.
- Awarded the “2011 Leadership in Energy Efficiency Award” by the United States Green Building Council.
- Awarded the 2012 USDA Best Practice Award for “Farm to School - Working with Local Producers.”
- 84 schools, 49,729 students, and 2,864 teachers participated in the Green & Healthy School Program. These G&H schools plan, implement, and document their environmental efforts by completing an Environmental Profile, which aligns with the curriculum and encourages good stewardship. Successful G&H school programs encourage faculty to collaborate and plan vertically to offer cross-curricular environmental lessons, which provide relevant learning opportunities for students.
- Over 700,000 lbs. of paper was recycled.
- 52 Gwinnett schools have implemented a *Clean Air School and No Idling* programs to address traffic and safety issues on the district’s campuses.
- GCPS students are performing above the state average in Science across all grade levels on the CRCT, EOCT, and AP exams.
- The district participates in the EPA Waste Wise program--The annual chemical pickup from school science labs, the use of “green” art supplies, and the Integrated Pest Management system.
- Schools use compactors to replace dumpsters, which reduce the cost and number of hauls to the landfill as compared to the five-day-a-week pickup schedule for dumpsters.

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- To reduce water use within the district's buildings, all schools in GCPS are equipped with waterless urinals and toilets with low volume flush valves.
- Within buildings, porcelain tile floors eliminate the need for waxing, which results in saving water.
- GCPS was the first school district in North America to buy LEV diesel engines, and all vehicles over 1/2 ton use ultralow sulfur diesel fuel (clean diesel).
- To conserve water used for irrigation and maintenance of school grounds, GCPS practices xeriscape landscaping. GCPS also uses storm and ground water for irrigation purposes at high school athletic fields and does not irrigate any other areas of school grounds.
- 14 Gwinnett Public Schools have adopted sections of county roads. Student and staff volunteers cleaned up one-mile sections of roadway for a minimum of four times a year.

“EPA is proud to join the Department of Education in recognizing our nation's U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools for their remarkable efforts to create healthier learning spaces and educate students on the importance of environmental protection,” said EPA Acting Administrator Bob Perciasepe in recognizing the environmentally responsible efforts of GCPS and the other national winners. He added, “U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools are not only cutting costs thanks to energy-saving practices and use of more efficient technology, but they're also reducing instances of pollution-related illnesses like asthma, a leading cause of student absence. The students who attend these schools are better prepared than ever to become the next generation of environmental stewards and bring about a healthier, more sustainable future.”

The honorees were selected from a pool of candidates nominated by 32 state education agencies. Before Gwinnett was named as one of the 14 winning school districts, it received the honor at the state level when it was named Georgia's Green Ribbon District in March.

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Gwinnett County Public Schools is one of two Georgia winners this year. The other honor was presented to Ford Elementary in Cobb County named a 2013 U.S. DOE Green Ribbon School. The district Sustainability Award also was presented to Talladega County (Alabama), Fayetteville District (Arkansas), Oak Park Unified School District (California), Douglas County School District (Colorado), School District of Palm Beach County (Florida), Des Moines Independent Community School District (Iowa), Montgomery County Public Schools (Maryland), Acton Public Schools and Acton-Boxborough Regional School District (Massachusetts), Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools (Minnesota), Lower Merion School District (Pennsylvania), Kent School District (Washington), Marshall County Schools (West Virginia), and School District of Fort Atkinson (Wisconsin).