

# U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Award Rhode Island Guidance Document

The application requires a narrative that provides a “snapshot” of the school’s efforts to address the three pillars. This document contains questions and prompts to help applicants to address the three pillars in a comprehensive manner.

Please note:

- No written narrative is required outside of what is requested within this template.
- It is important to document concrete achievement; wherever possible include evidence or data that supports each pillar.
- Provide details and examples whenever possible.
- Focus on what makes the school worthy of becoming a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School.
- Discuss innovative, yet replicable, practices and partnerships.
- Highlight any awards or recognition the school has received for its work in the three Pillars.
- It is recommended that you assemble a team to complete the application. This team might include, but is not limited to: a facilities manager, physical education director, food services director, curriculum director, finance department representatives, teachers, parents, and students.
- Be sure to note if students were actively involved in preparing the application.
- Consult the ED-GRS [Green Strides Resources Page](#) and [Webinar Series](#) for standards, programs and grants related to each Pillar, Element, and question. This is an excellent clearinghouse of information for all schools, not only those who apply.
- If the school is not able to meet the criteria for any Element within any of the three Pillars, put “N/A” and explain why it is unable to meet the criteria.
- **The total Application Narrative portion of the application, including the Summary Narrative, may not exceed 15 pages.**

## PILLAR 1: REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND COSTS

### Element 1A: Reduced or Eliminated Greenhouse Gas Emissions

In your narrative, please answer as many of the following questions as possible. Be sure to include details, examples, and data whenever possible. In addition, feel free to include any other actions the school has taken to reduce or eliminate greenhouse gas emissions that are not covered below.

- What is the school's plan to manage and reduce energy use? Describe an energy master plan, an energy conservation plan, an energy charter, an energy action plan, and/or energy conservation guidelines.
- How, and to what degree, does the school demonstrate a reduction in energy use and/or in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from an initial baseline? Include data if available on baseline and current energy usage (kBTU/student/year and/or kBTU/sq.ft./year), percentage reductions, and years.
- How does the school track resource use in EPA ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager or a similar tool and what results has the tracking shown? Include ENERGY STAR Rating if possible.
- How is the school's energy obtained from on-site renewable energy generation, purchased renewable energy, or other renewable/green energy sources? Include specific energy sources and percentages if possible.
- Was the school constructed or renovated in the past 10 years? If so, which portions of the school building(s) meet "CHPS" standard or have focused on improved energy conservation?
- Are there any other actions the school has taken to reduce or eliminate greenhouse gas emissions?

### Element 1B: Improved Water Quality, Efficiency, and Conservation

In your narrative, please answer as many of the following questions as possible. Be sure to include details, examples, and data whenever possible. In addition, feel free to include any other actions the school has taken to improve water quality, efficiency, and/or conservation that are not covered below.

- How, and to what degree, can the school demonstrate a reduction in the total water consumption from an initial baseline? Include data if available on baseline and current water usage (gallons per occupant), percentage reductions, and years.
- What are the school's water-conserving efforts? Include fixtures and appliances (e.g., waterless urinals, dual flush toilets, etc.) and school cultural practices.
- Does the school have water-efficient and/or regionally appropriate plants and landscaping and/or use alternative water sources (e.g., non-potable water) for any irrigation needs?
- How has the school reduced storm water runoff and/or reduced impermeable surfaces on school grounds?
- How does the school ensure that all school water sources are protected from potential contaminants, including lead?
- How has the school planned and/or developed the school grounds to be ecologically beneficial? For example, have rain gardens, wildlife and native plant habitat, and/or outdoor classrooms been created?
- What percentage of school grounds are for school gardens, xeriscaping, etc.?
- Are there any other actions the school has taken to improve water quality, efficiency, and/or conservation?

### Element 1C: Reduced Waste Production

In your narrative, please answer as many of the following questions as possible. Be sure to include details, examples, and data whenever possible. In addition, feel free to include any other actions the school has taken to reduce waste production that are not covered below.

- How, and to what degree, does the school implement a school-wide plan of waste reduction, recycling, and/or composting in order to divert significant solid waste from the landfill? Include data on baseline and current recycling and composting rates if available (e.g., cubic yards per year, monthly waste generated per person, monthly recycling/composting rates), percentage reductions, and years.
- How does the school nutrition staff minimize waste during food production and service? For example, are students included in menu planning to increase acceptability? Are staff trained on the required components of a meal? Is the Offer vs. Serve method of service utilized and/or the Smarter Lunchroom Scorecard guidelines employed to improve consumption of foods offered (such as slicing whole fruits and veggies)?

- How, and to what degree, does the school use office/classroom paper content that is post-consumer material, fiber from forests certified as responsibly managed and/or chlorine-free?
- What are the school's efforts in storing/maintaining an inventory of potentially hazardous materials used in various programs, if any (e.g., science, art, maintenance, cleaning, pest control, etc.)?
- How, and to what degree, has the school reduced/eliminated hazardous waste generation over a measurable baseline? Include specific waste such as batteries and CFL light bulbs.
- What are the school's green cleaning custodial practices including green cleaning products, services, advanced equipment, and/or policies?
- What is the school's plan to prepare for the Styrofoam waste ban (which will take effect on January 1st, 2025)?
- How do the school's purchasing practices specifically promote environmentally preferable purchasing/green purchasing, as applicable, for consumable products, furniture, and equipment for administration, instruction, and/or maintenance?
- How does the school comply with the School Waste Recycling and Refuse Disposal Law (R.I. Gen. Law § 16-111-5)? This State Law went into effect in the 2022 School Year and requires schools to prevent food waste, recover edible food that would otherwise be wasted, divert food scraps and use share tables at all schools.
- Will the school discontinue use of disposal food service containers (R.I. Gen. Law § 21-27.2-) such as Styrofoam food service cafeteria trays? If so, how?
- Are there any other actions the school has taken to reduce waste production?

**Element 1D: Use of Alternative Transportation**

In your narrative, please answer as many of the following questions as possible. Be sure to include details, examples, and data whenever possible. In addition, feel free to include any other actions the school has taken related to the use of alternative transportation that are not covered below.

- How is the school reducing its transportation energy use through means such as: encouraging a) walking or bicycling to and from school; b) expanded school bus use: and/or c) EV charging stations? Include data and results of the efforts if available.
- Has the school implemented green transportation practices such as: a) efficient carpooling; b) no-idling loading areas; c) safe routes to school; and/or d) expanded bicycle storage?
- Are there any other actions the school has taken related to the use of alternative transportation?

## PILLAR 2: IMPROVING THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF STUDENTS AND STAFF

### Element 2A: Integrated School Environmental Health Program

In your narrative, please answer as many of the following questions as possible. Be sure to include details, examples, and data whenever possible. In addition, feel free to include any other actions the school has taken to integrate a school environmental health program that are not covered below.

- How is the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan being implemented at the school? Include: year of implementation; program responsibility/oversight; pest monitoring process; record keeping; notification practices; and efforts to reduce pesticide use.
- How, and to what degree, is the school minimizing and/or eliminating student and staff exposure to the potentially hazardous contaminants such as: cigarette smoke; mercury; carbon monoxide; fuel burning combustion appliances; airborne contaminate sources; asbestos; radon; chromated copper arsenate; and lead?
- What is the plan and timetable for inspecting and maintaining the school's ventilation systems and all unit ventilators to ensure that the systems are clean and operating properly?
- How, and to what degree, does the school ensure that all classrooms and other spaces are adequately ventilated with outside air, consistent with state or local codes, or national ventilation recommendations and standards?
- What specific and comprehensive actions does the school take to prevent exposure to asthma triggers in and around the school?
- What are the steps the school has taken 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: a) identify environmental health and safety issues; and b) take corrective actions?
- What is the school maintenance plan to manage and control student and staff exposure to chemicals that are used in the school (e.g., pesticides, cleaning supplies, fuel, paint)? How is it implemented and enforced?
- What are the routine inspections and actions that the school engages to: a) control moisture from leaks, condensation, and excess moisture; and b) clean up mold or remove moldy materials promptly when found?
- Are there any other actions the school has taken to support the integration of a school environmental health program?

### Element 2B: Nutrition and Fitness

In your narrative, please answer as many of the following questions as possible. Be sure to include details, examples, and data whenever possible. In addition, feel free to include any other actions the school has taken related to nutrition and fitness that are not covered below.

- How does the school implement the following programs (or programs with similar intent) and what are the results and outcomes related to these targeted efforts?
  - Nutrition and fitness recognition programs such as USDA's Healthier School Meals Recognition program, the My Plate Ambassador program and/or the Governor's Nutrition and Physical Activity Awards Program
  - A farm to school program that establishes a team inclusive of a school administrator, teacher, school food representative, and community member, parent, or wellness committee representative to lead efforts to incorporate farm to school programming in the three "C"s of Cafeteria, Community, Classroom
- Does the school utilize any values-based procurement practices to guide healthy and sustainable food purchases, such as the Good Food Purchasing Program?
- Does the school have an on-site garden that may supply food for students in the cafeteria or to the community, or be used to educate students about growing healthy local food?
- How does the school promote UV protection and skin health? Does the school use the EPA's "Sunwise" Program?
- How does the school implement the district's wellness policy and create supportive school nutrition and physical activity environments to enhance health and learning outcome for students?

- What is the school's practice related to physical education and does it meet or exceed state guidelines and minimum requirements?
- What types of outdoor education, exercise, and recreation activities are available to students?
- What are the school's efforts and progress to improve staff wellness in the areas of nutrition and increased physical activity?
- Are there any other actions the school has taken related to nutrition and fitness?

**Element 2C: Coordinated School Health, Mental Health, School Climate, and Safety**

In your narrative, please answer as many of the following questions as possible. Be sure to include details, examples, and data whenever possible. In addition, feel free to include any other actions the school has taken to support school health, mental health, school climate, and safety that are not covered below.

- How is the school implementing a range of partnership programs with the local health department, businesses, postsecondary institutions, and other members of the community to improve students' and school staff members' nutrition, fitness, and safety?
- What is the school's use of a Coordinated School Health approach or other health-related initiatives to address overall school health issues? This could include comprehensive wellness policies and/or a health and wellness committee/team.
- What is the school's health professional services for student needs? Is there a full-time school nurse in the school and/or a school-based health center?
- How does the school address and implement comprehensive programs to support student mental health and positive school climate (e.g., anti-bullying programs, peer counseling, etc.)?
- Are there any other actions the school has taken (not covered above) to support school health, mental health, school climate, and safety?

## PILLAR 3: PROVIDING EFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION

### Element 3A: Shared Responsibility for Environmental Learning

In your narrative, please answer as many of the following questions as possible. Be sure to include details, examples, and data whenever possible. In addition, feel free to include any other actions the school has taken to support environmental learning that are not covered below.

- What types of school-wide practices and programs, lesson planning, and/or curricula focus on environmental literacy?
- How, and to what degree, has the school integrated environmental and sustainability concepts throughout its instructional program and across subject areas and grade levels?
- Does the school utilize the school building and its sustainability features as a teaching tool? Is the school participating in the “School as a Tool” program through RIDE’s School Building Authority?
- How do educators use outdoor spaces around the school and in the community to enhance the curriculum?
- Does the school partner with community-based and nonprofit organizations to enhance the curriculum with environmental and sustainability education? Do these include such activities as field trips, guest presenters, after school programs, and more?
- Do the school’s assessment materials across subject areas and grade levels have clear expectations and target proficiency levels for environmental and sustainability concepts? Include quantifiable measures, indicators, or benchmarks of progress toward environmental literacy and/or environmental proficiency where available.
- What types of professional development in environmental and sustainability education are encouraged or offered to teachers?
- Are there any other actions the school has taken (not covered above) to support environmental learning?

### Element 3B: Use of the Environment and Sustainability to Develop STEM Content

In your narrative, please answer as many of the following questions as possible. Be sure to include details, examples, and data whenever possible. In addition, feel free to include any other actions the school has taken to use the environment and sustainability to develop STEM content that are not covered below.

- How does the school use sustainability and the environment as a context or theme for connecting/learning STEM thinking skills and content knowledge?
- Does the school use sustainability and the environment as a context for connecting and learning green technologies and career pathways?
- How does the school’s environmental and sustainability focus support an age-appropriate understanding of natural systems?
- *For secondary schools:* How, and to what degree, does the school make available environment-related courses and measures (e.g., AP Environmental Science, International Baccalaureate Environmental Systems, postsecondary dual enrollment courses, etc.)? Include student outcome measures and program enrollments as appropriate.
- Are there any other actions the school has taken (not covered above) to use the environment and sustainability to develop STEM content?

### Element 3C: Development and Application of Civic Knowledge and Skills

In your narrative, please answer as many of the following questions as possible. Be sure to include details, examples, and data whenever possible. In addition, feel free to include any other actions the school has taken to HERE that are not covered below.

- How does the school use outdoor learning as a tool to: a) teach an array of subjects in context; b) engage the broader community; and c) develop important civic skills?
- How, and to what degree, does the school promote and encourage students to conduct class or individual, age-appropriate, civic/community engagement projects? Include important outcomes that have been achieved (using data as appropriate).

- What types of innovative practices and/or partnerships does the school promote and/or participate in to support environmental and sustainability education?
- How, and to what degree, has the school's environmental and sustainability education efforts shown growth in academic achievement among students over time? Include data as applicable.
- Are there any other actions the school has taken (not covered above) to develop and apply civic knowledge and skills?

End of Guidance