



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

No. 15-038

April 22, 2016

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KENTUCKY SCHOOLS NAMED NATIONAL GREEN RIBBON WINNERS

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – Two Kentucky public schools and one postsecondary institution are among 73 schools, districts and postsecondary institutions nationwide that have been recognized for their promising efforts to reduce environmental impact and utility costs, promote better health among students and staff, and ensure effective environmental education, which includes science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), civics and green career pathways.

Eastern Elementary School (Scott Co.) and Russell Cave Elementary School (Fayette County) were named 2016 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools.

In addition, Berea College was among 11 colleges and universities recognized by the U.S. Department of Education with the Postsecondary Sustainability Award.

The schools and universities will be honored at a Washington, D.C. ceremony in July.

In announcing winners, U.S. Secretary of Education John King lauded the award recipients for serving as strong examples of innovative learning and civic engagement.

“I congratulate these schools, districts and postsecondary institutions for their commitment to sustainable facilities, health and classroom practices,” King said. “These honorees are 21st century learning environments that encourage every student and teacher to perform at his or her best.”

At Eastern Elementary in Scott Co., environmental and health education is embedded into the curriculum schoolwide. A spiral curriculum allows each grade level educator to teach environmental concepts within the science curriculum, while also connecting it with other subject areas. A Health Committee engages students in learning how to be healthy, how to live a healthy lifestyle, and make better choices concerning their health. The school participates in the Farm to School program and uses local, fresh food. Students receive 120 minutes of physical education instruction weekly – at least half of which takes place outdoors.

Eastern Elementary uses onsite renewable geothermal energy and has earned the EPA Energy Star for the last five years. The staff turns off all computers and monitors before leaving each day, turns off lights and projectors when leaving the classrooms, and keeps light usage at a minimum when school is not in session. The school has

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reduced greenhouse gas emissions 22 percent since June 2010 and reduced non-transportation energy use by nearly 30 percent in the same time period.

At Russell Cave Elementary, the Green Team leads efforts to reduce environmental impact and costs. Students audit energy usage at the beginning of the year and then implement various initiatives to reduce the school's energy use. The school regularly recycles more than it throws away and has reduced copier usage by purchasing composition notebooks for all students. Originally built in 1926, Russell Cave Elementary is an "all-electric" building, but has decreased its energy use by nearly 50 percent since 2010 and its water use by about the same amount.

Russell Cave has implemented several health initiatives. A part-time school nurse works with teachers and families to encourage healthy choices and a healthy lifestyle. The school's health policy stipulates the amount of activity students receive and the types of food that are given to them. The school's science lab provides environmental lessons to all students throughout the year and also brings in many community partners.

Commissioner of Education Stephen Pruitt said resource-efficient schools are not only good for the environment, but also benefit districts, schools and students.

"Healthy schools ensure that students learn and educators teach in an environment conducive to achieving their full potential," Pruitt said. "Sustainability education helps all students engage in hands-on learning, build thinking skills, and develop a solid foundation in STEM subjects, plus they learn valuable lessons about the environment, become environmental stewards and are exposed to 21st century career options. And when districts save thousands of dollars in energy costs – more money is available to support teaching and learning in the classroom."

Berea College is a statewide leader in reducing its ecological footprint, environmental impact and costs. Berea's campus boasts the first LEED-certified building and LEED-certified historic hotel in Kentucky. Berea's innovative Ecovillage is an ecologically-sustainable residential and learning complex designed to provide housing for student families, childcare for campus children, and a living/labor opportunity for students interested in sustainability. Berea College is well on its way to becoming a Net Zero Waste Institution with a 70 percent diversion rate for 2014-15. And, with the launch of its car and ride share programs in 2014, Berea College was named a top-ranked car share school in the nation.

The college funds a full-time director to oversee programs and incentives to reduce obesity, smoking and stress and improve physical fitness and nutrition. More than 25 percent of the food served in its dining facilities comes from local and organically-sourced suppliers, much from the school's own 400-acre organic farm. The college's Farm Store offers organic produce, meat, and other locally-sourced products to students, staff and the community.

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Berea College is one of seven Work Colleges in the United States; students have the opportunity to work as waste diversion coordinators, sustainable foods coordinators, alternative transportation coordinators and more. The Ecovillage also employs students as gardeners, community outreach coordinators and childcare workers. In addition, the Center for Excellence in Learning through Service (CELTs) enables students to volunteer in local non-profit organizations and schools to solve real-world sustainability problems through actions at the household and community level.

Kentucky has participated in the voluntary Green Ribbon Schools Program since its inception in 2011. Schools are encouraged to participate in the Green Ribbon Schools Program in the 2016-17 school year. For more information on the nomination process, check the [Green Schools page](#) on the Kentucky Department of Education website. More information on the Green Ribbon federal recognition award can be found [here](#). Resources for all schools to move toward becoming green schools can be found [here](#).

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