



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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LEXINGTON SCHOOL NAMED NATIONAL GREEN RIBBON WINNER

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – A Kentucky public middle school is among 64 schools, districts and postsecondary institutions nationwide recognized for focusing their students on sustaining the environment and promoting personal health and wellness as a part of their everyday lives.

Morton Middle School (Fayette Co.) is the lone Kentucky winner of a 2017 U.S. Department of Education (USED) Green Ribbon School Award. Those selected exemplify three main pillars:

1. Reduce environmental impact and costs;
2. Improve the health and wellness of the school, students, and staff; and
3. Provide environmental education, which crosses many disciplines, and is especially good at effectively incorporating STEM, civic skills, and green career pathways.

“The USED Green Ribbon Schools Award recognizes a school’s dedication to teach important values and life skills that encourage students to grow into responsible, compassionate and contributing adults,” Commissioner of Education Stephen Pruitt said. “I commend Morton Middle School for its leadership in facilities, health and environmental education. It is this type of instruction that engages students and encourages thinking, collaboration and problem-solving skills that future careers will require.”

Morton’s green schools efforts started 11 years ago.

The entire school is involved with a weekly recycling program. Money raised is used to supply bird seed for the many bird feeders found on campus, which are designed and built by students in the technology education classroom. Plastic lids are turned into furniture for the outdoor classroom.

Morton monitors energy costs by conducting monthly energy audits working with the NEED Project and E=USE. The school has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 29 percent and energy use by 49 percent over six years. Money from energy savings is put into a fund for new sustainability projects. Morton was the first middle school in Fayette County to initiate a no-idling campaign and it does not use water for outside irrigation.

Morton’s Wellness Committee has developed an overall plan for the school. Each year, the school participates in the spring World Fit Campaign, during which all students and staff walk regularly, and time walked is monitored and recorded.

Morton offers both boys’ and girls’ clubs that teach self-help skills, communication, and self-confidence; two clubs set up for peer mentoring; and a Girls on the Run program. The school employs a nurse and a behavioral

therapist, and implements an asthma management plan, as well as an indoor air quality program.

The school plants two raised garden beds with tomatoes, strawberries, catnip, and mint. Students are able to take home the produce and they also use it to feed the school's pets. Chickens are raised in classrooms as an observational tool. Once they are mature enough, the chicks are transferred to a teacher's chicken coop, where students are encouraged to continue to care for the birds and can take the eggs home to eat.

Each content area teacher offers opportunities to write and conduct hands-on experiments on such topics as deforestation, pollution, water quality, energy and botany. Language arts classes commonly move outdoors to read and hold class discussions.

Morton has partnered with both Trout Unlimited and Food Chain to learn about the nitrogen cycle, life sciences, and aquaponics. Students have cultivated three trout farms. After raising the fish from eggs to fingerlings, the trout are released in a cold water stream at the Red River Gorge.

Morton has teamed with Bluegrass Greensource for students to learn about water quality, air quality, recycling and energy efficiency. The school participates in the Kentucky Green and Healthy Schools nine goal program, and also has partnered with a local elementary school to mentor green schools efforts.

Students in both the 7th and 8th grade learn how to write grants, which have funded a water bottle refilling station, power strips, and a butterfly garden for the school.

Morton Middle School will be honored along with other U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools at a Washington, D.C. ceremony in July.

Kentucky has participated in the USED Green Ribbon Schools Program since its inception in 2011.

All Kentucky public schools are encouraged to participate in the 2017-18 school year program. For more information on the nomination process, check the [Green Ribbon Schools page](#) on the Kentucky Department of Education website. More information on the 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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