



Michigan Request for Applications U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools

Overview

The aim of [U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools](#) (ED-GRS) is to inspire schools, districts, and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to strive for 21st century excellence by highlighting promising school sustainability practices and resources that all can employ. To that end, the award recognizes schools, districts, and IHEs that:

- Reduce environmental impact and costs;
- Improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff; and
- Provide effective environmental and sustainability education.

Combined progress in ALL three of these areas, known as Pillars, serves as the basis for recognition. It is part of a U.S. Department of Education (ED) effort to identify and communicate practices that result in improved student engagement, academic achievement, graduation rates, and workforce preparedness.

Encouraging resource-efficient schools, districts, and IHEs allows administrators to dedicate more resources to instruction rather than operational costs. Healthy schools and wellness practices ensure that all students learn in an environment conducive to achieving their full potential. Outdoor, environmental, and sustainability education helps all students engage in hands-on, authentic learning; hone critical thinking and collaboration skills; stay active and fit; and develop a solid foundation in many disciplines.

Recognition Process

Becoming a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School (ED-GRS) is a two-step process. The first step is to complete and submit this application to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). MDE will select up to 5 nominees based on responses and documentation of progress under the Pillars and Elements, listed below. If selected as a nominee for ED-GRS by MDE, then ED will conduct a final review to ensure that schools, districts, and IHEs 1) are making progress in all three Pillars and every Element; 2) comply with all applicable federal civil rights, student aid and federal, state, local, and tribal health, safety, and environmental statutory and regulatory requirements; and 3) meet high academic standards. This federal review will determine the national cohort, which will be announced in the spring and recognized at an annual ceremony in the fall.

Please note that the recognition award conveys no ED funding to states, districts, schools, or IHEs.



State Review Criteria and Process

Selection will be based on documentation of the applicant's high achievement in the Elements outlined in each of the three ED-GRS Pillars:

Pillar I: Reduce environmental impact and costs.

- Reduced or eliminated greenhouse gas emissions, using an energy audit or emissions inventory and reduction plan, cost-effective energy efficiency improvements, conservation measures, and/or on-site renewable energy and/or purchase of green power;
- Improved water quality, efficiency, and conservation;
- Reduced solid and hazardous waste production through increased recycling and composting, reduced consumption, and improved management, reduction, or elimination of hazardous waste; and
- Expanded use of alternative transportation, through active promotion of locally-available, energy-efficient options and implementation of alternative transportation supportive projects and policies.

Pillar II: Improve the health and wellness of students and staff.

- High standards of [Whole School Whole Community, Whole Child health](#), including health, nutrition, and outdoor physical education; health, counseling, and psychological services for both students and staff; family community involvement; and an [integrated school environmental health program](#) that considers occupant health and safety in all design, construction, renovation, operations, and maintenance of facilities and grounds.

Pillar III: Provide effective environmental and sustainability education, incorporating STEM, civic skills and green career pathways.

- Interdisciplinary learning about the key relationships between dynamic environmental, energy, and human systems;
- Use of the environment and sustainability to develop STEM content knowledge and thinking skills to prepare graduates for the 21st century technology-driven economy; and
- Development of civic engagement knowledge and skills and students' application of such knowledge and skills to address sustainability issues in their community.

Applicants that demonstrate achievement in **all three** Pillars will receive the highest rankings.

Furthermore, MDE will also take into account demographic and geographic diversity and success in closing achievement gaps in their selections, as ED will do the same in the federal review, aiming for a diverse cohort of nominees, representative of the full spectrum of schools and early learning centers across the state.



Preparing for the Application Process

In Michigan, eligible applicants this nominating cycle are public and private school buildings and early learning centers.

A team should be assembled to document concrete achievement (See Appendix A for a list of possible evidence). This team might include: your facilities manager, physical education director, food services director, curriculum director, finance department representatives, teachers, and students. You should consult the [ED-GRS](#) webpage 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. Additional information is available on the [Green Strides Resources](#) page.

The questions in this application will help you demonstrate your achievement in these Pillars as well as provide space for you to include pertinent documentation. An email stating an intent to apply is due Tuesday, December 17, 2020 and should be submitted to MDE-ED-GRS@michigan.gov. This will allow us to target communication and technical assistance to those interested in applying.

Applications are due **by 5 pm on Thursday, January 23, 2020** via email to MDE-ED-GRS@michigan.gov. MDE will review applications, select nominees and submit them to the U.S. Department of Education by February 14, 2020.

If selected for nomination to ED-GRS, the school principal and district superintendent must certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades Pre-K-12.
2. The school has been evaluated and selected from among schools within the Nominating Authority's jurisdiction as highest achieving in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental and sustainability education.
3. Neither the nominated public school nor its public school district is refusing the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district wide compliance review. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) is not subject to the jurisdiction of OCR. The nominated DoDEA schools, however, are subject to and in compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements to comply with Federal civil rights laws.
4. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the public school district concluding that the nominated public school or the public school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan to remedy the violation.
5. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the public school or the public school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
6. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the public school or public school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or public school district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.



7. The school meets all applicable federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.

In addition, if selected for nomination for ED-GRS, nominees will be asked **to submit 5-10 photographs** with descriptions including who, what, when, and where. Photos should be action shots, not posed and must be captioned using descriptive language. For example, "Students conduct water quality tests in outdoor classroom with science majors from nearby university." These will not be scored. By sending these photos, you are giving your state nominating authority and the U.S. Department of Education permission to use them in our newsletter and social media.