

# 2025 State Level Green Ribbon School Honorees



**Center for Green Schools**

# Helen Keller School

## Talladega, Alabama

The Helen Keller School is being honored for its strong commitment to reducing environmental impact, improving energy efficiency, and advancing environmental education. The school has implemented effective programs to reduce water and energy use, including improvements in its cafeteria that have saved nearly \$1,500 annually in energy costs.

In addition, the school runs a successful shredding and recycling program in partnership with local organizations. Students participate in hands-on environmental learning by planting and growing crops to share with the local community. The school is also engaged in composting, collecting organic waste from the school and cafeteria to fertilize its garden beds, creating a sustainable campus environment. These efforts showcase the Helen Keller School of Alabama's dedication to environmental stewardship and innovative, inclusive education.



# Vinemont High School

## Vinemont, Alabama

Vinemont High School, located in the Cullman County School System, has been officially awarded the Alabama Green Ribbon School Award for its outstanding commitment to improving energy efficiency, reducing environmental impact, and enhancing environmental education. The school has implemented an innovative automatic lighting system to reduce electricity usage and relies on propane-powered school buses to minimize greenhouse gas emissions related to student transportation. In addition, the school supports local agriculture by partnering with area farmers to provide students with fresh, healthy foods, which benefits both student wellness and the local economy. Vinemont students also participate in advanced STEM learning activities that strengthen academic skills and promote awareness of science, technology, and sustainability, preparing them for future success.



# Bella Mente Montessori Academy

Vista, California

Following a 2018 energy audit, their Energy Action Plan promotes efficiency with student-led projects like “Energy Guardians,” solar panels, LED lighting, and advanced HVAC systems, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and costs. Water conservation includes xeriscaping, low-flow fixtures, and stormwater management. Waste reduction focuses on recycling, composting, and minimizing single-use materials, supported by student initiatives. Eco-friendly transportation is encouraged through bike racks, carpool incentives, and a no-idling policy. The school uses environmentally safe cleaning products and enhances indoor air quality with HEPA filters and natural lighting. Wellness programs, such as garden-to-table and Fit Fridays, support physical and mental health. Environmental literacy is integrated through garden education, project-based learning, and STEM activities like hydroponics, aligned with Next Generation Science Standards. Partnerships with local organizations foster stewardship, civic responsibility, and prepare students to address global environmental challenges.



# Laguna Beach Unified School District

## Laguna Beach, California

The district shows strong dedication to sustainability, health, and environmental education through various initiatives. The district plans to reach carbon neutrality by 2030 by implementing renewable energy projects, waste diversion, and water conservation efforts. To support these goals, LBUSD is updating its 10-year Facility Master Plan to align with its Energy Management Plan, creating a clear framework for funding and energy improvements. The district promotes health by maintaining pesticide-free, organic landscaping and improving indoor air quality using non-toxic cleaning products, HEPA purifiers, and UV-filtered HVAC systems. Students and staff benefit from locally sourced meals, garden literacy programs, and nature therapy that integrates outdoor learning into social-emotional education. LBUSD enhances environmental literacy through professional development, interdisciplinary units, hands-on experiences, and programs like Fire, Land, Ocean, and Water (FLOW) and the Poseidon Stormwater Project. Outdoor science gardens inspire critical thinking and connect students to local ecosystems. These combined efforts provide students with the knowledge and skills to address environmental challenges and lead sustainable lives.



# McNear Elementary School

## Petaluma, California

McNear Elementary School embraces environmental stewardship, health, and ecological literacy through a holistic approach connected to its natural and cultural heritage. Situated near the Petaluma River, the school uses its surroundings—Thompson Creek and diverse habitats—as living classrooms to promote environmental responsibility. Sustainability efforts include recycling, composting, drought-resistant landscaping, energy conservation, and alternative transportation programs. Health initiatives feature Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports, on-site mental health services, daily physical education, nutritious meals, and mindfulness activities such as nature journaling by the creek. Environmental literacy integrates land acknowledgments, Indigenous stewardship, and interdisciplinary projects like trout-raising, habitat restoration, and native garden design, combining STEM learning with civic engagement. Facilities like the Arts and Science Center, Maker Lab, and expanded library offer spaces for environmental problem-solving through multidisciplinary projects. Partnerships with local organizations, waste haulers, and Safe Routes to School enrich sustainability efforts and student involvement. McNear leads in fostering resilience, wellness, and sustainability within Petaluma City Schools.



# Saint Francis High School

## Mountain View, California

Over the past decade, SFHS reduced energy use by 11.3%, installed solar panels supplying 51% of its energy, and added features like auto-dimming LED lights and heat-reflective roofs. Water-saving efforts include low-flow fixtures, drought-tolerant landscaping, and rainwater bioswales. Composting, recycling, and tri-bin systems support waste reduction. Wellness is promoted through MERV-13 air filters, artificial turf that limits pesticide use, and a strong focus on mental and physical health via social-emotional learning, a Wellness Center, retreats, and fitness courses. Environmental education is integrated through AP Environmental Science, Earth Week, and the Environmental Club, which connect STEM, ethics, and civic engagement. Students lead hands-on projects such as creating renewable energy models, robotics innovations, and sustainable food solutions. Global and local service opportunities deepen students' commitment to stewardship and community, reinforcing SFHS's holistic educational approach.



# San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE)

## Redwood City, California

San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) oversees multiple facilities and programs serving diverse students, including community schools, court schools, special education, and outdoor education. Committed to sustainability and wellness, SMCOE has strengthened its efforts by hiring key sustainability staff since 2017, including an Environmental Literacy Coordinator and a Director of Sustainable Facilities. Partnering with Peninsula Clean Energy, SMCOE has installed solar panels and electric vehicle charging stations, reducing energy costs. Their Environmental Literacy and Sustainability Initiative promotes data-driven projects, waste diversion, and staff training. Wellness programs led by Live Well @SMCOE support mental and physical health, often incorporating environmental activities. Students benefit from enhanced mental health resources, physical activity, and nutrition education through local partnerships. Programs like the Environmental Solutionary Teacher Fellowship and Youth Climate Ambassadors empower educators and students to tackle climate change and sustainability. SMCOE's award-winning efforts foster sustainable, equitable learning environments and serve as a model for districts across California.



# Avalon Elementary School

## Orlando, Florida

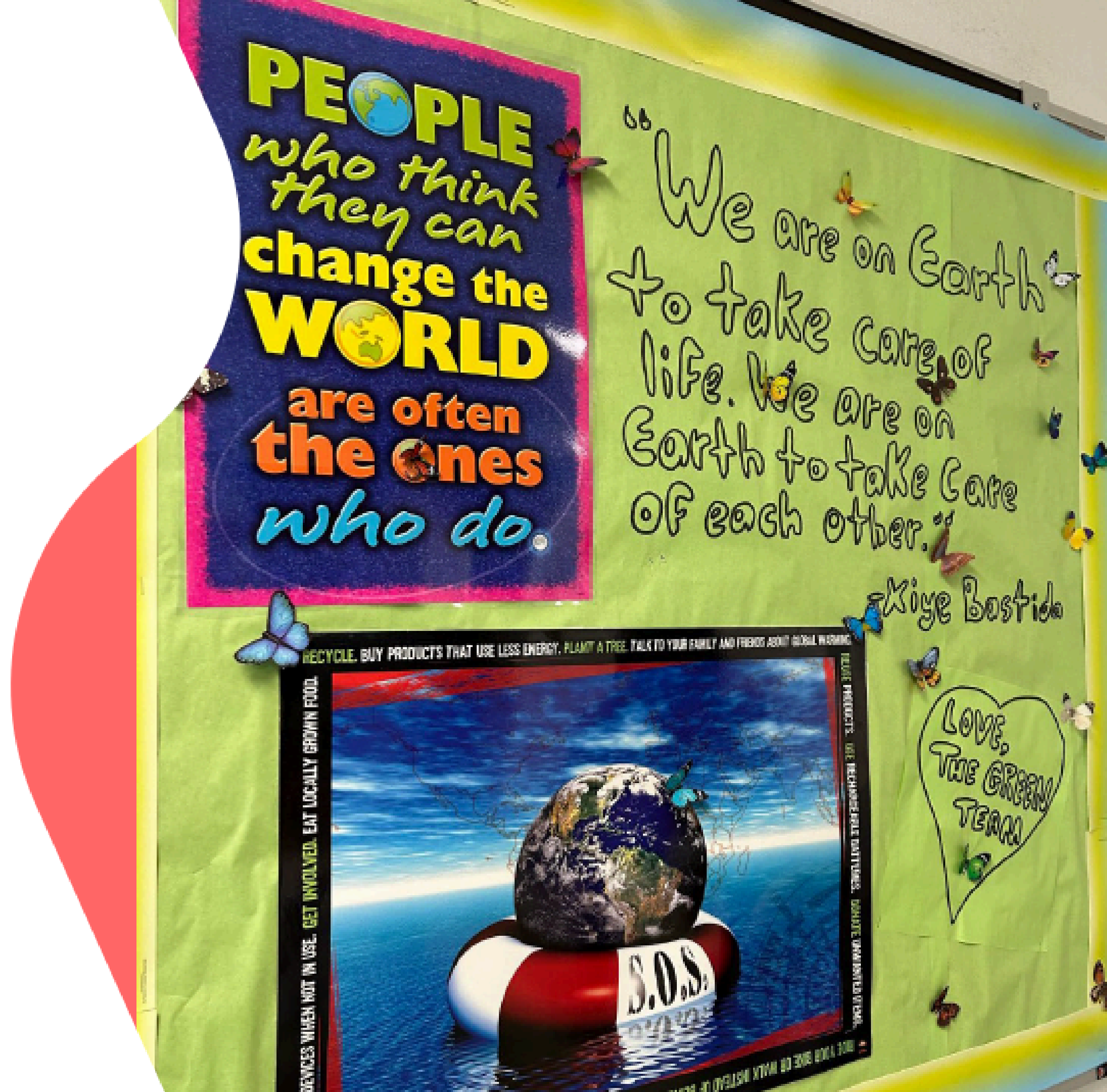
Avalon Elementary School is a leader in sustainability, with gardening and nutrition as central pillars of its green initiatives. The school boasts an outdoor Edible Kitchen Garden, hydroponic Tower Garden, wildflower and pollinator gardens, and an outdoor classroom—all pesticide-free and organically maintained. These spaces provide hands-on learning about conservation, nutrition, and ecosystems, encouraging students to grow, harvest, and cook healthy meals. Community partnerships and grants support these initiatives, including seed-to-table education and cultural lessons through growing medicinal herbs. Water conservation methods like drip irrigation, ollas, and hydroponics teach students efficient water use. Avalon also leads in waste reduction, composting over 20,000 pounds of food waste annually and promoting upcycling. Wellness is promoted through outdoor events like Walk n' Roll, Run Club, and Story Stroll. Students engage in real-world environmental stewardship, supported by local experts and alumni volunteers.



# Edgewater High School

## Orlando, Florida

Edgewater integrates sustainable thinking into every aspect of school life, known as the "Eagle Way." Students engage in hands-on environmental learning through partnerships like the UCF CEELAB project and 4Roots, working with mangroves and greenhouse-grown local foods. On-campus gardens support pollinators and teach seasonal planting. Sustainability is a shared effort, supported by staff, students, and the wider community. Initiatives include clothing swaps, supply shares, composting, use of durable items, carpooling events, and interclub community cleanups. Communication through social media, wall displays, and newsletters keeps the community involved. With sustainability embedded in the classroom, extracurriculars, and school culture, Edgewater High fosters lifelong environmental stewardship and empowers students to actively protect the planet through education and action.



# Frontier Elementary School

## Loxahatchee, Florida

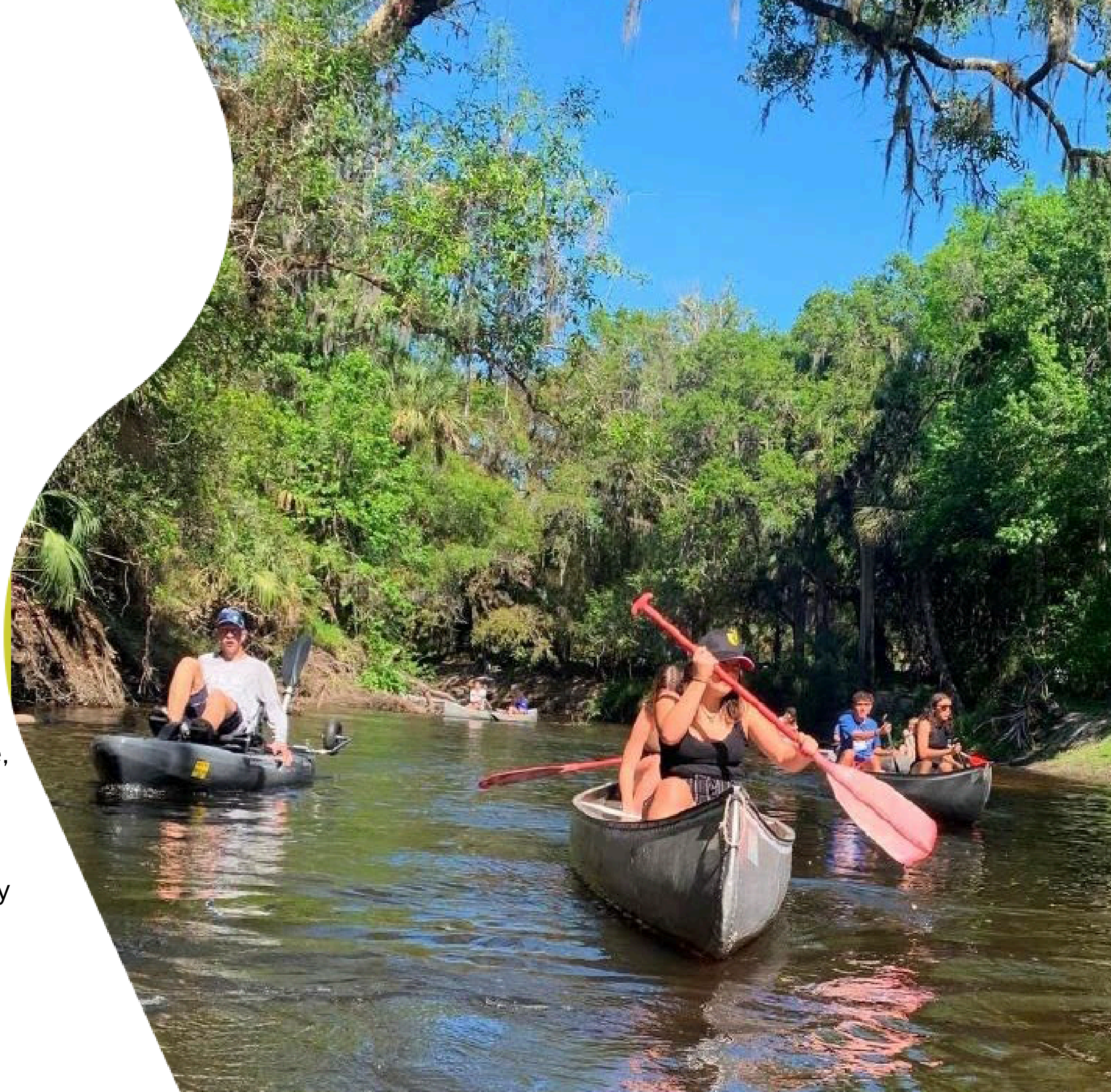
Frontier Elementary School offers a unique K–5 Environmental & Animal Sciences choice program that teaches students about conservation, plant and animal life cycles, and sustainability. As a certified Guy Harvey Conservation School, students engage in conservation efforts by prioritizing campus clean ups as well as celebrating Earth Day with a beach clean-up. Outdoor learning is emphasized with a wildflower garden, herb garden, and butterfly garden. Picnic tables encourage outdoor activities and learning. Students grow herbs and sell them at the “Fresh From Frontier” market, supported by a local grant. The school actively participates in the District’s Sustainability Schools Initiative, forming a Green Team to promote waste reduction and energy conservation. All classrooms promote recycling by recycling paper products in our school-wide recycling area. Light switches are also decorated with a ‘Turn off the Lights’ sticker to help remind students and staff to conserve energy when the room is vacant. Frontier also focuses on wellness, offering staff challenges, a relaxation room, and student-led initiatives for a positive culture. Health events like Field Day and Walk to School are prioritized, along with nutritious rewards like salad parties and nature-based activities. Hands-on STEAM projects, such as the coral reef art installation and turtle cap art project, reinforce environmental learning.



# Riverview High School

## Riverview, Florida

Riverview High School is committed to sustainability through waste reduction, energy efficiency, and environmental education. The school recycles an average of 20 tons of paper annually, encourages paperless assignments, and provides recycling bins in all classrooms and offices. Composting is practiced individually. Energy-saving measures include LED lighting, auto shut-off fixtures, high-efficiency air filters, and a no-idling policy, along with low-flow faucets and toilets. Health and safety are prioritized through regular inspections, banned chemical phase-outs, and moisture monitoring to prevent mold. Hygiene practices are emphasized to reduce illness. Riverview also offers strong environmental education with courses like Environmental Science, AP Environmental Science, and AICE Environmental Management, giving students real-world, hands-on learning experiences. Outside the classroom, the Environmental Club and Green Team organize sustainability events such as beach clean-ups, recycling drives, and tree planting, often with support from groups like the Sierra Club.



# Twin Lakes Elementary School

## Hialeah, Florida

Twin Lakes Elementary School demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainability, health, and environmental education through eco-conscious operations, student and staff wellness programs, and hands-on learning. Energy-efficient lighting, sensor systems, and high-efficiency HVAC units have reduced energy use by 20%, while water conservation efforts—like low-flow fixtures, rainwater harvesting, and xeriscaping—have cut water usage by 20%. The school's waste reduction efforts, including recycling, composting, and safe electronic waste disposal, have decreased landfill waste by 15%. Transportation initiatives like Walk and Roll and carpooling also reduce emissions and promote healthy habits. Health and wellness are prioritized through clean air practices, biodegradable cleaning products, nutritious menus with Food Forest produce, and mental health programs. Students explore ecosystems, sustainability, and environmental justice through interdisciplinary, experiential learning. Extracurriculars like Robotics and Environmental Club, along with field trips and regional sustainability challenges, deepen student engagement. Staff training ensures sustainability principles are integrated throughout the curriculum, empowering students as environmental leaders.



# The Avery Coonley School

## Downers Grove, Illinois

This school integrates sustainability into every aspect of student life and learning. Student-led clubs use AI-powered vertical gardens to grow produce for smoothies, connecting health and energy conservation. The school engages students in real-world environmental research. A research permit partnership with the Maple Grove Forest Preserve has enabled eighth graders to study the effects of climate change on local ecosystems. The school's annual TEDx event elevates young voices in environmental advocacy and has featured a pre-K student who was one of the world's youngest TEDx speakers.

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# John M. Palmer Elementary School

## Chicago, Illinois

Palmer Elementary School has implemented a comprehensive, schoolwide approach to sustainability that integrates environmental practices and education into daily operations and instruction. The school has increasingly focused on its sustainability efforts starting with the construction of a LEED Silver-certified annex in 2020. Three outdoor classrooms, native landscaping that requires no additional watering, outdoor composting, and both indoor and outdoor gardens have been added since then. The school promotes sustainability education through community partnerships, enabling students to engage in food education, waste reduction, and career exploration in sustainability fields. Notably, the school reduced its cafeteria waste from 15 bags per day to just one, thanks to student-led composting and recycling efforts.



# Kildeer Countryside Community Consolidated School District 96

## Buffalo Grove, Illinois

Kildeer Countryside Community Consolidated District has embedded sustainability throughout all seven of its schools, which are named after native landscapes and surrounded by the wetlands and forests of Lake County. The district powers its buildings with up to 85% solar energy and incorporates real-time solar tracking into student learning. Beyond energy, KCSD96 promotes sustainability through water conservation, paperless operations, pesticide-free groundskeeping, and native landscaping. Its focus on wellness includes daily physical education, eco-conscious school meals, and staff well-being programs. Students engage in cross-disciplinary lessons — from analyzing solar data in STEM classes to creating nature-inspired art on solar panels — demonstrating the district's commitment to experiential learning.



# Cohasset High School

## Cohasset, Massachusetts

Cohasset High School (CHS), has made significant strides in environmentalism and sustainability. The school has formed strong partnerships with local organizations and transformed its 1950s building into an eco-friendly space. Their Green Team grew from 12 members in 2012 to over 100 in recent years, representing a quarter of the student body. Students actively participate in discussions about food literacy, climate change, and sustainability within courses, as well as engage in initiatives like recycled art displays, composting, collecting used footwear, and repurposing Halloween costumes. CHS's commitment to environmentalism extends beyond the school, with students advocating for eco-friendly practices throughout the community, including the implementation of electric vehicle charging stations and enhanced recycling efforts. CHS students' dedication to environmental stewardship embodies the motto "Think Globally, Act Locally," and their efforts to make the school and town more sustainable set them apart as leaders in sustainability.



# Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District

## Spencer, Massachusetts

Over the past several years, the Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District (SEBRSD) has made a strong, concerted effort to reduce its environmental impact and reduce costs. This has been achieved through the launch of a Master Energy Plan aimed at enhancing resource efficiency in key areas such as lighting, controls, building envelope, and energy management systems. SEBRSD promotes and supports environmental education through STEAM initiatives for students in Grades 2–8, as well as through community events, and local partnerships within their Environmental Sciences and Technology Career Technical Education (CTE) program for Grades 9–12.



# Lansing School District

## Lansing, Michigan

Recognized with the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Champions Prize (2023) and the Efficient and Healthy Schools Program (2024), the district now aims for the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools award. Key initiatives include a district-wide solar project installing five megawatts across 12 sites, projected to save \$11 million, replacing diesel buses with electric ones, and implementing energy-efficient upgrades. Health-focused efforts include HVAC improvements, expanded wellness programs, and the appointment of a Director of Health and Wellness. The district also offers hands-on environmental education through project-based learning and green career pathways at schools like schools like Wexford Montessori, Forest View and North Environmental Science Magnet schools, and Lansing Technical High School.. Partnerships with MSU provide real-world experience. With a graduation rate increase from 62% to 86% and GreenLink Education guiding its sustainability plan, the district shows a deep, ongoing commitment to a greener future.



# West Maple Elementary School

## Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

West Maple Elementary School takes a holistic approach to education, using its unique design—which includes courtyards, gardens, and large outdoor learning spaces—to promote sustainability and hands-on learning. The school partners with community organizations to teach students how to grow and live sustainably, focusing on reducing waste of food, water, and energy. Emotional well-being is also a priority; staff and students are supported through yoga, exercise, counseling, and meetings centered on self-care and connection. The school’s “Wolf Packs” program reinforces core values of empathy, kindness, responsibility, and integrity, which are integrated into all areas of the curriculum. Morning meetings and classroom activities emphasize health, safety, and emotional intelligence. West Maple also promotes problem-based, cross-curricular learning that connects students with their community and families. With a strong emphasis on technology and critical thinking, the school prepares students for a STEM-driven future while instilling lifelong values of stewardship, empathy, and personal growth.



# John Thomas School of Discovery

## Nixa, Missouri

John Thomas School of Discovery (JTSD) emphasizes sustainability as part of its mission to create "STEAMazing critical thinkers for life." Students engage in real-world, hands-on learning through projects that explore environmental impact and resource conservation. Their outdoor garden and 10 hydroponic tower gardens significantly reduce water usage, while providing fresh produce used in the School Garden to Cafeteria initiative.

Upper grades research local environmental efforts and collaborate with organizations to create public service projects that promote resource protection. Students analyze their own water, energy, and food waste, and have implemented a cafeteria composting program that supports on-campus chickens and compost tumblers. Younger students study Missouri native plants and organisms, deepening their understanding of ecosystems and wildlife conservation. At JTSD, sustainability isn't just taught—it's practiced daily through science-driven action.



# Forsyth School

## St. Louis, Missouri

The school's unique campus, six historic homes repurposed for educational use, features a large courtyard with gardens, green space, and play areas where students spend significant time outdoors. Over the years, Forsyth has upgraded facilities with energy-efficient windows, LED lighting, light sensors, and water-saving fixtures.

Their "Go Green Forsyth" team, active since 2010, and a newly formed parent Green Team, have helped foster a strong culture of sustainability. All staff completed sustainability training, and the school developed a mission focused on environmental responsibility and integrating sustainability into the curriculum. Forsyth uses tools like the START benchmarking system and partners with organizations for composting, solar energy tracking, and utility monitoring to reduce their environmental impact. They also serve as mentors for other Missouri Green Schools.



# Bridgeway Elementary School

**St. Louis, Missouri**

Bridgeway Elementary uses sustainability to foster a strong sense of community and belonging. Its outdoor learning space includes 12 garden beds with built-in irrigation, a sensory path, a Little Free Library, and reading benches. Food from the garden is shared freely through a “Take What You Need” produce stand, with weekly harvests year-round. A retention pond manages stormwater and supports native plant habitats, while repurposed tires create sensory and seating areas.

Bridgeway’s outdoor space also supports field trips, family events, and a 5th grade camping program. Their sustainability efforts include composting, recycling, solar panels, LED lighting, a new boiler, and a no-idling policy. These initiatives reduce waste, energy use, and emissions, while teaching students the value of caring for each other, their environment, and the interconnectedness of all living things.



# Bronxville Union Free School District

## Bronxville, New York

Bronxville Unified School District has shown steps towards environmental sustainability by completing NYSERDA-recommended energy audit improvements and utilizing a Building Energy Management System to enhance energy efficiency. The district has implemented water conservation efforts, including a rain-sensor-equipped irrigation system for the front lawn and water bottle refilling stations throughout the campus, even at the football field. A comprehensive Wellness Policy supports healthy lifestyles by promoting nutritious meals, physical activity, and nutrition education. Environmental education is emphasized through composting programs, chemical management practices, and partnerships with organizations such as the Greenburgh Nature Center. Bronxville also features an outdoor classroom and learning garden, which are integrated into project-based learning across all grade levels. The Bronx River serves as a living laboratory, allowing K–12 students to engage in hands-on river studies that explore water quality, ecosystems, and human environmental impact. These experiences equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to become responsible citizens and environmental stewards.



# Putnam Valley Central School District

**Putnam Valley, New York**

Putnam Valley Central School District is working toward becoming a fully fossil fuel-free HVAC district by installing geothermal systems and solar arrays, and continues to explore zero-emission energy opportunities. The district integrates wellness, environmental responsibility, and civic duty into its educational programs. Young students engage in project-based STEM learning through Science 21 and the Innovation Lab, while middle and high school students follow an IB curriculum focused on global and environmental awareness. High schoolers also conduct Science Research Projects and participate in conservation efforts through the Science National Honor Society. Sustainability education is supported by events like a Sustainability Fair and Youth Climate Summit, along with partnerships such as the one with the Center for Environmental Education, which enhances learning through the Wellness Center, Trail, and school garden projects.



# Belmont Elementary School

## Woodbridge, Virginia

Belmont Elementary is a diverse, minority-majority school in Prince William County serving students from 21 countries and speaking 22 languages, with over half being English Language Learners and many receiving special education services. The school emphasizes environmental literacy through hands-on learning, outdoor classrooms, and community partnerships, supporting student achievement and stewardship. Belmont has demonstrated strong academic gains, earned full accreditation, and was named a 2024 National ESEA Distinguished School for closing achievement gaps. Their sustainability efforts include recycling programs, energy conservation, water-saving initiatives, and recognition as a Virginia Naturally school for promoting environmental awareness.



# Cardinal Ridge Elementary School

**Centreville, Virginia**

Cardinal Ridge Elementary School is a large, community-focused school in Loudoun County known for its strong commitment to environmental literacy and outdoor learning. Since opening in 2014, CRE integrates outdoor, place-based education through programs like the Peterson Field Guide Experience and maintains outdoor classrooms to enhance student engagement with nature. The school emphasizes energy efficiency, achieving significant reductions in energy use and costs through conservation efforts and a rooftop solar array, while also promoting sustainability with electric school buses. CRE's environmental initiatives serve as a model for other schools and contribute to the broader development of an Environmental Literacy Plan for the entire school division.



# Mahone Middle School

## Kenosha, Wisconsin

Mahone Middle School exemplifies how a school can make a meaningful environmental impact on a limited budget. Centered on the Circle of Courage's four tenets, belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity, the school fosters academic growth, career readiness, and social responsibility. These values are reflected in student volunteerism and especially through the Eco Club. This student-led group promotes sustainability through digital presentations, "In a Green Minute" video segments, upcycled crafts, and participation in community events like Fall Fest and Earth Day fairs. A major achievement was the construction of an outdoor classroom, a two-year project led by the Eco Club and embraced by the entire school. This space offers a technology-free sanctuary to connect with nature and support mental well-being. Weekly social-emotional learning builds a sense of belonging, while initiatives like water conservation, rain gardens, and public transit use help reduce Mahone's environmental footprint. Through cross-curricular integration, students become active stewards of sustainability.



# West De Pere High School

## De Pere, Wisconsin

West De Pere High School leads by example in its commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainability. The school reduces greenhouse gas emissions through facility improvements, revamped waste and transportation practices, and a holistic approach to indoor air quality. Students at the school benefit from sourcing local produce and taking part in outdoor physical education, helping to deepen their connection with the Earth. Students also take part in hands-on learning experiences, including watershed data collection and recycling drives, giving them the knowledge and skills needed to address environmental challenges in their own communities.

