



School Nominee Presentation Form

ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATIONS

School and District's Certifications

The signatures of the school principal and district superintendent (or equivalents) on the next page certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of their knowledge. *In no case is a private school required to make any certification with regard to the public school district in which it is located.*

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades early learning to 12.
2. The school has been evaluated and selected from among schools within the Nominating Authority's jurisdiction, based on high achievement 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.
8. The school or its district has in place and is willing to provide a link to or a copy of a non-discrimination policy, upon request. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a nomination and/or rescind an award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools

Name of Principal:

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name:

(As it should appear on an award)

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space*

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

(Principal's Signature)

Date:

Name of Superintendent:

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in official records)



District Name: *Escuela Verde*

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature)

Date: *2.15.2022*

Nominating Authority's Certifications

The signature by the Nominating Authority on this page certifies that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of the Authority's knowledge.

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades Pre-K-12.
2. The school is one of those overseen by the Nominating Authority which is 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. The school meets all applicable federal civil rights and federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.

Name of Nominating Agency: *Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*

Name of Nominating Authority: *John W. Johnson, PhD*

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify to the best of my knowledge that the school meets the provisions above.

(Nominating Authority's Signature)

Date: *02/24/2022*

SUBMISSION

The nomination package, including the signed certifications, narrative summary, documentation of evaluation in the three Pillars, and photos should be submitted online according to the instructions in the Nominee Submission Procedure.

OMB Control Number: 1860-0509

Expiration Date: December 31, 2023

Public Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1860-0509. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 37 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain benefit P.L. 107-110, Sec. 501, Innovative Programs and Parental Choice Provisions. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20202-4536 or email ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference the OMB Control Number 1860-0509. Note: Please do not return the completed ED-Green Ribbon Schools application to this address.



Escuela Verde

U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Summary of Achievements

Escuela Verde is a school founded on ecopedagogy that is constantly striving to live out a vision of creating a just, peaceful, and sustainable future. To this end, environmental literacy is embedded in their physical plant, curriculum, and many opportunities for student learning.

Escuela Verde's building highlights their commitment to reducing their footprint on the environment. From vegetarian lunch food to tables made of recycled doors to rooftop solar panels, the school exists in a space that is designed with efficiency and sustainability in mind. An adjacent school-based coffee shop enterprise is also transforming into a space that is effortlessly yet thoughtfully earth friendly.

As a project-based learning school, students explore how science and ecology connects to many other domains and subjects. Each project is tied to the school's sustainability themes, which form the basis of our shared language around environmental literacy and decision-making. This is borne out in the topics of many of the student's senior thesis projects. Students choose a topic that they are passionate about, and complete a year-round, 300-hour project that involves a community partner. In recent years these topics have included leading nature hikes and forest bathing, improving health and wellbeing through biking, camping, mindfulness, and art therapy, and improving the school community by organizing neighborhood cleanups, building a chimney swift tower in our backyard, and distributing bird houses to community members. The emphasis on improving health showcases the culture of Escuela Verde is being constantly co-created by students.

While opportunities for new learning and new opportunities come and go, the school always sustains a connection with the park and the river just outside the school building. Students and staff have discovered that simply going down and playing along the river allows for relaxation, exploration, learning, and new connections. The foundation for any environmental consciousness is to first love a special place in nature, and the Escuela Verde community is deeply rooted in love for their building, their park, and their city.

Pillar 1: Reducing Environmental Impacts & Costs

Escuela Verde's physical building & campus procedures center around sustainability and environmentalism. These practices are both embedded in the building and student-facing.

In 2017, Escuela Verde joined the Milwaukee Better Buildings Challenge, and the building

received an Energy Score of 94. The Energy Use Intensity (EUI) of 37 kBtu/ft²; the national median EUI is 68.1 kBtu/ft². In addition, the school building has energy efficient windows, lighting, and heating/cooling systems. Both lighting & heating/cooling systems have automatic settings that are pre-set to use less energy during times when the building is not in use.

Following the energy audit, a solar panel array was installed on the roof. The 20.3 kilowatt solar array directly supplies the school building with renewable energy and will offset about 32% of the school's electrical use. Students were directly involved in the research and installation of the panels and have helped monitor it since.

Escuela Verde's energy efficient infrastructure also includes practices that students are directly involved in. This includes offering trash, recycling, and compost options for waste disposal. The school shares a compost service bucket with the business next door (the Urban Ecology Center) and carefully monitors the amount of food ordered to minimize food waste. In previous years, students have taken ownership of the compost system and have sought to improve their classmate's understanding of and engagement with composting.

Automatic bottle filling stations on bubblers (or drinking fountains for those not from Wisconsin) allow students to use reusable water bottles or metal cups throughout the day. In addition, reusable cloth towels and mops are used to clean up spills rather than paper towels. At all school events either reusable/washable plates, cups & silverware or compostable serving ware are used. These measures are both cost effective and less environmentally impactful.

This year, Escuela Verde began a school enterprise: Newline Escuela Verde Community Cafe. This coffee shop, located next to Escuela Verde and staffed by students, is another showcase of some of these sustainable practices. There is composting available for food scraps, coffee grounds, and paper towels. In addition, the to-go cups are compostable and in the future a discount will be offered when customers use mugs rather than to-go cups. There are also plans in the future for students to research fair trade and single-origin coffee, and make decisions relating to how the cafe participates in these impactful programs.

Many of Escuela Verde's currency practices at their physical plant revolve around energy efficiency and sustainability and they continually seek to improve student engagement with and innovation in these practices in the years to come.

Pillar 2: Improving Health & Wellness

Escuela Verde works consistently to improve and maintain student health and wellbeing. Students have 30 minutes of wellness built into each day's schedule, with activities offered ranging from soccer, basketball, salsa dancing, trail walking, yoga, meditation, biking, Dance

Dance Revolution, juggling, guitar, piano, and more! The school fleets of bikes, skateboards, and snowshoes are frequently in use. All students can find peace on the water through school canoeing trips. During virtual learning, many students participated in online meditation & yoga led by our staff. Now back in-person, students have participated in both rowing and rock climbing with local organizations, and students have taken the lead on starting after-school basketball and volleyball teams.

Mental health is a perennial concern, especially since the beginning of the Covid pandemic. The school hired a part-time social worker to provide additional support in mental health and other life challenges. The social worker has provided resources for food, housing, post-secondary planning, and guidance for other crises. A referral process allows students to connect with a mental health professional either in person or virtually. Staff take a proactive approach in wellness checks and communication with parents & families. In addition, much of the curriculum focuses on individual growth and social-emotional learning through the project-based learning model and restorative justice.

Staff health is supported through daily team check-ins, guaranteed prep time for each advisor, and an increased encouragement for work-life balance. Having a social worker on staff also reduces the burden on advisors for supporting students in complicated situations.

The pandemic has also led to an increased focus on cleaning and safety within the building, and all new cleaning products used to fight Covid have carefully researched and selected products to strike a balance between being low-impact and being effective. Bleach is not used to protect air quality, and while the HVAC system already operated at a high rate of efficiency, the building's air filters & rate of fresh air circulation have both been improved as of March 2020. Currently, fresh air is fully circulated through the building three times per hour, which improves air quality and helps keep the school community safe from Covid.

Escuela Verde has a commercial kitchen space that is inspected regularly. This space includes a high-efficiency dish sanitizer and a gas stove with a hood vent. The school contracts with a pest control company who does not use chemicals to control rodent or insect populations and all-natural pesticides such as neem oil are used on any houseplants that become infected with insects.

The range of health & safety measures at Escuela Verde range from inconspicuous to openly celebrated, with primary objectives being to maintain a school that is physically and mentally healthy for all community members, and to encourage students to pursue ongoing wellness practices in their own lives.

Pillar 3: Increasing Environmental Literacy

Escuela Verde's environmental and sustainable practices extend through every part of the

curriculum and are showcased in the special events held throughout the year. Escuela Verde's guiding curriculum is based on sustainability themes, which have been adapted from The Cloud Institute's Education for Sustainability Standards & Indicators. Each quarter, the advisory curriculum is rooted in one of these sustainability themes. Students read a selection from the collection of nature writing, "American Earth" and create products that link it to contemporary issues. Each of the quarterly workshops and students' senior thesis projects also connect to these sustainability themes in a concrete way.

Over the years, many of the staff have experience in environmental education and are connected with local environmental organizations. Staff is encouraged not just to take students outside, but to truly connect to environmental practices in the classroom, and the school provides professional development to staff to help them understand how to integrate standards through environmental literacy and sustainability.

Throughout the year, Escuela Verde students and staff participate in many events that highlight STEM & environmentalism. A science workshop, Field Research, is just one way. In the past year the topics of these classes have included fish monitoring with the University of Michigan, sturgeon studies with Riveredge Nature Center, and designing a trail cam research project with Upham Woods. An emphasis in science is always participatory and research-focused. To this end, students also participate in the school's annual community science fair, Science Strikes Back.

Each winter staff and students travel to the northern part of the state for a week-long retreat where students engage in place-based environmental education including science content, snowshoeing, skiing, and shelter-building. Many students have shared that this is the highlight of their time at EV! In the spring, students participate in a service-learning week. This often includes outside activities such as invasive species removal or prepping the backyard native plant garden and other spaces. Finally, at the end of each year the school offers a week-long camping trip to a Wisconsin state park.

Each of these events not only exposes students to a wide range of experiences and learning opportunities but strengthens their connections to the amazing natural resources within the city and state. This connection becomes obvious when graduates choose to pursue STEM careers in college. Additionally, many students participate in internship programs such as Cream City Conservation, the Alliance for Climate Education, the Urban Ecology Center Outdoor Leader program, and Teens Grow Greens. Alumni help create a network with students to strengthen long-term relationships with these organizations, and further students' authentic learning in STEM, science, and ecology.

Take a virtual site visit of Escuela Verde: <https://youtu.be/TddqUSrB6mI>.

About the Summary and Scoring:

Green & Healthy Schools Wisconsin collects annual information from schools and partners and compiles this data long-term. The most recent data has been included in the application summary that follows along with additional supporting information provided by the applicant. Each application was ranked by teams of external reviewers and internal reviewers, each with different areas of expertise, using common ranking criteria. In addition, the slate of nominees was forwarded to related state and federal agencies to ensure there were no compliance or regulatory issues.

Pillar I: Reduced Environmental Impacts 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
- Expanded use of alternative transportation, through active promotion of locally available, energy-efficient options and implementation of alternative transportation supportive projects and policies

Policies: Escuela Verde has multiple environmental and wellness focused policies, including:

- providing healthy classroom snacks,
- Food procurement from local and “environmentally preferable” sources, and
- An environmentally responsible products purchasing policy.

Audits: Escuela Verde conducts frequent energy audits, where the students are directly involved with the mechanics of the school’s solar panels and consumption & cost analysis.

The Escuela Verde campus actively strives to be an energy-efficient building with a low environmental footprint on many fronts. In 2017, a solar panel array was installed on our rooftop. This made a large impact on our energy use. Without solar, our building was averaging use of 6,481 kWh per month. Adding the donated solar panels to our roof reduced the average to 5,537 kWh per month. This reduces our kWh by 944 per month, or 11,328 kWh annually! This is particularly impressive since we have added some additional electrical needs, such as building a commercial kitchen and have more electronic devices (laptops & charging stations, etc) in the building. In addition to reducing our carbon footprint, this also saves us over \$1,500 every year, which is the average cost of one of our summer camping trips. In addition, we have natural

landscaping including a backyard that is planted entirely with native plants (plus a gravel pathway) that requires no mowing or herbicide use. Escuela Verde seeks to further reduce our environmental impact by using reusable cups, plates, and silverware during lunch, and offering pens and mugs made of corn plastic rather than oil-based plastic.

Water is another important part of both environmental and physical health. Our drinking fountains (or, as folks in Milwaukee call them, bubblers) with bottle fillers are popular with staff & students, and everyone has access to either reusable metal cups or water bottles. We do not have on-site vending machines, but students are able to access water at any point during the day and are regularly encouraged to drink water. The current count for the bottle fillers is 36,000 plastic bottles diverted on the first floor and 48,000 on our second floor. This does not include water consumed or bottles filled from the drinking fountain.

During construction of Escuela Verde, all lead pipes & fixtures were removed from our building. As a part of our City of Milwaukee contract, and out of concern for our community's health, we test our water for lead every year. None of our drinking water or kitchen sinks have ever had any lead in the water. Only two areas have tested with any lead, one is a sink that is only used to fill mop buckets and the other is in the science lab due to the type of faucet. This is most likely due to the use of lead water pipes elsewhere in the city. We plan to replace those faucets next year.

Nationally, transportation accounts for 29% of carbon emissions. As a small school, we have some control over reducing our emissions. We have a fleet of 3 vehicles, including a modified city bus, and we provide limited bus tickets to students in need, so they take public transit, which also reduces emissions. This reduces our need to hire large, diesel-powered school buses for trips. Many of our students walk or bike to school, and we help students learn & use our city bus system or to coordinate carpools. While at school, students walk frequently, both for enjoyment and to access our nearby neighborhoods & community spots. We also have a fleet of bikes (both road bikes and BMX bikes) and skateboards. These bikes are used for exercise during daily wellness periods and for other special opportunities. One student designed a bike camping trip for their senior thesis project and led a group of staff and students to a campsite 27 miles away. This fall, students attending a college class at the Milwaukee Area Technical College have opted to bike 3.5 miles to the campus rather than drive, which shows their advocacy in the area of alternative transportation, and a recognition that it is a feasible form of transportation for them. One of our Advisors has taught several bike repair workshops, enabling our students to have greater independence in repairing their own bikes and increasing their ability to rely on bikes for transportation in the future. We will continue to seek out opportunities to increase our bike fleet and move more students through pedal power!

Energy: Regarding energy efficiency methods, Escuela Verde has energy efficient kitchen/office equipment, has thermostat temperature setback for unoccupied building times, and the school

harvest photovoltaic (PV/solar) light through the solar panels on the roof, which offsets 32% of the school's energy use.

Here is a video that demonstrate Escuela Verde's commitment to reduce our environmental impact: Solar Panel installation project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MISAPQMKnvg>

Composting: Escuela Verde participates in composting landscape and garden waste, cafeteria waste, and classroom waste through an organics waste hauler. All school events require the use of reusable or compostable serving ware and the student-run community cafe composts food scraps, coffee grounds, and paper towels. In addition, the to-go cups are compostable and in the future a discount will be offered when customers use mugs rather than to-go cups.

Water Conservation Measures: Escuela Verde's water conservation methods include educating students and staff about what should and should not go down drains, low-flo or hi-low flush valve toilet features installed, faucets with properly timed automatic shut-off, and water-efficient dishwashing equipment.

Eco-friendly Landscaping: Eco-friendly landscaping methods used at Escuela Verde include water efficient or native-plant landscaping and there are no fertilizers or the careful application of fertilizers to reduce runoff impact.

Snow: Escuela Verde removes Snow and Ice before salt is applied. The school occupies a generally small portion of a city block shared with the Urban Ecology Center, resulting in minimal salting for ecological purposes.

IPM: Escuela Verde has an integrated pest management program which was developed with the help of a community partner.

Pillar II: Improved 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, including cleaning and maintenance; mold and moisture; chemical and environmental contaminants; ventilation; and pests and pesticide.

Since the very start of Escuela Verde, 10 years ago, there has been an emphasis on food and food justice. It has taken many forms over the years, and there are many plans and visions still in progress. Escuela Verde's school lunch program has always been vegetarian. In the past, local

restaurants provided food on a rotating basis. Since 2018, we have participated in the National School Lunch Program. This has increased student access to whole grains, fruit, vegetables and milk. Offering universal breakfast has allowed students to eat fresh fruit, juice, and milk each morning. We were able to continue to provide school breakfast and lunch throughout our time in virtual learning due to the Covid 19 pandemic. It has been difficult to find contractors that will provide vegetarian options, but we have maintained that as an expectation for our service provider. Each year we utilize a specialized curriculum to engage students with the personal and global benefits of a plant-based diet.

Having a commercial kitchen at our school has allowed for many smaller endeavors related to food & nutrition. We have partnered with local organizations such as Just Roots, who hosted “conflict lunches.” This program studied countries around the world that were in conflict, then created vegetarian meals traditionally from that country to highlight people living in conflict. This year we are partnering with a local Botanical garden to teach about gardening, garden design, and protecting pollinators. Teens Grow Greens is hosting a new food justice internship at Escuela Verde and will be guiding students through the process of gardening from start to finish. This will connect students not only to the nutrition benefits of gardening, but also to the larger business and economic considerations for gardening and urban farming. One student is already planning on bringing the content of this internship to other students as part of their senior thesis project.

Another ongoing Senior thesis project is Sabor Verde. This student-led pop-up cafe seeks to provide healthy & culturally relevant vegan and vegetarian food to our school community. Students work to prepare food with guidance from a local chef. This project has been passed down to different students from year to year, and we expect it to continue into the future. Currently, we are seeking to hire a kitchen lead position, who will work with staff to develop educational programs for students around food initiatives, such as cooking, meal planning, composting, gardening, and food donations. They will also assist, support, and work closely with advisor collective, and other team members in providing health and educational benefits for students, particularly in areas of food and nutrition. Our food and nutrition initiatives are under constant development, and our big dream for Escuela Verde is to someday have a student-run kitchen providing nutritious, local, and culturally relevant food for our entire school.

Wisconsin does not require radon testing and Escuela Verde is located in an area where 82% of homes tested were below the 4.0 pCi/L threshold.

Pillar III: Increased Environmental Literacy

- 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;
- Development of civic engagement knowledge and skills and students' application of such knowledge and skills to address sustainability issues in their community.

Escuela Verde's commitment to environmental literacy and sustainability is evident in their school's mission statement: *Escuela Verde cultivates a community that is participatory, just, sustainable, and peaceful. We live our vision through graduating reflective high school students prepared to live happy, healthy, meaningful lives.*

Green teams: Escuela Verde does have a green team or equivalent.

Clubs: Escuela Verde offers a Field Research Team Workshop as well as having daily wellness and advisories that focus on sustainability themes which are integrated into the schoolwide curriculum.

Sustainability Staff: A staff position exists within Escuela Verde dedicated to sustainability efforts.

Student leadership offerings for advancing G&H practices: Our school model is student-led project-based learning. We offer opportunities for students to drive our curriculum through advisories and town hall meetings.

Learn more about how Escuela Verde pollinates the future of land stewardship:

https://youtu.be/W8PhAe_w9y0

Professional Development: In the past 12 months, Escuela Verde staff have participated in professional development or trainings related to green and healthy concepts, including a week-long training on Lake Michigan studies, staff-led activities around biking, and more.

Outdoor Spaces/classrooms: The school frequently utilizes outdoor spaces (see narrative) including for activities like biking, skateboarding, nature hikes, gardening, and outdoor gathering in the Urban Ecology Center space and the connected park, (Three bridges?). Outdoor spaces include a food garden, a habitat garden, an outdoor classroom, and a 24-acre park behind the school with access to kayaking, canoeing, fishing, and other urban outdoor recreational opportunities.

Learn more about science at Escuela Verde: <https://youtu.be/EcSk8fWfa8s>

Communication: Escuela Verde communicates green and healthy practices and accomplishments to staff, students, and families through quarterly parent meetings and community nights.

Events: Escuela Verde hosts an annual "Science Strikes Back" community science fair that aims to encourage community members in Milwaukee to critically analyze environmental issues and solve problems in their community.

Escuela Verde is a leader in ecopedagogy and their approach was published in the article "[Implementing Ecopedagogy as an Experiential Approach to Decolonizing Science Education](https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1263158)" in the Journal of Experiential Education (Zocher JL, Hougham RJ., 2020;43(3):232-247. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1263158>).