

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 Pre-K-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 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.

U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools

Public Charter Title I Magnet Private Independent Rural

Name of Principal: **Mr Michael Burgos**

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

Official School Name: **Elms Elementary School**

(As it should appear on an award)

Official School Name Mailing Address: **780 Patterson Road, Jackson NJ 08527-3497**

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

County: Ocean State School Code Number *: 2360 035

Telephone: 732-833-4680 Fax: N/A

Web site/URL: <https://www.jacksonsd.org/Domain/9> E-mail: mburgos@jacksonsd.org

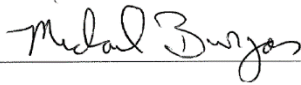
**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space*

Name of Principal: **Mr. Michael Burgos**

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

School Name: **Elms Elementary School**

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: 02/25/2022

Name of Superintendent: **Ms. Nicole Pormilli**

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

District Name: **Jackson School District**

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: 02/25/2022

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.

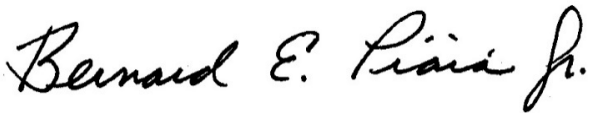
1. The school has some configuration that includes grades Pre-K-12.
2. The school is one of those overseen by the Nominating Authority which is highest achieving in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental and 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: **New Jersey Department of Education**

Name of Nominating Authority: **Bernard E. Piaia, Jr.**

(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: 2/28/2022

SUMMARY AND DOCUMENTATION OF NOMINEE'S ACHIEVEMENTS

Provide a coherent summary that describes how your school is representative of your jurisdiction's highest achieving green school efforts. Summarize your strengths and accomplishments in all three Pillars. Then, include concrete examples for work in every Pillar and Element. Only schools that document progress in every Pillar and Element can be considered for this award.

SUBMISSION

The nomination package, including the signed certifications and documentation of evaluation in the three Pillars should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to green.ribbon.schools@ed.gov according to the instructions in the Nominee Submission Procedure.

OMB Control Number: 1860-0509

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.



District and School Contact and Other Information

School Name: Elms Elementary School District: Jackson
 Street Address: 758 Patterson Road
 City: Jackson State: NJ Zip: 08527-3497
 Website: www.jacksonsd.org Facebook page: N/A
 Principal Name: Michael Burgos
 Principal Email Address: mburgos@jacksonsd.org Phone Number/Ext.: 732-833-4600
 Lead Applicant Name (if different): John Blair
 Lead Applicant Email: jblair@jacksonsd.org Phone Number/Ext.: 732—833-4600- ext.4380

Level <input type="checkbox"/> Early Learning Center <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elementary (PK - 5 or 6) <input type="checkbox"/> K - 8 <input type="checkbox"/> Middle (6 - 8 or 9) <input type="checkbox"/> High (9 or 10 - 12)	School Type <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private/Independent <input type="checkbox"/> Charter	How would you describe your school? <input type="checkbox"/> Urban <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rural	District Name Jackson Largest 50 Districts in the nation? No # FTE* Enrolled: 689 # Sch. Buildings: 1 *Full Time Equivalent
Does your school serve 40% or more students from disadvantaged households? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	% receiving FRPL <u>13</u> % limited English proficient _____ % minority <u>17</u>		Graduation rate: <u>100%</u>

Pillar I: Your Efforts to Reduce Environmental Impact and Costs

Elms Elementary School's sustainability efforts support district-wide initiatives. The District Board of Education adopted a Sustainability Policy in 2017, prioritizing health and wellness, environmental and sustainability education, and preservation of resources. The school also follows an Energy Policy created by the district and the Energy Master Plan is updated yearly. In recognition of the school's efforts, Elms was awarded Silver Certification in 2018 from Sustainability Jersey for Schools, only one of 22 schools that have received this recognition.

Transportation mileage has been decreased in response to a district-wide audit. The audit increased efficiency and led to the creation of a new, centralized transportation system with a fleet of district own busses and two electric-powered garbage trucks (1 for recycling and 1 for regular garbage).

Heating and cooling are provided by a geothermal system. Over the past 12 months, the school has installed LED lighting upgrades with controls, high efficiency transformers, new HVAC controls, plug load controls, and destratification fans in our gym through an Energy Savings Improvement Plan. In addition, a solar array, improved insulation, and new door sweeps at each entrance help to reduce energy use. Three tracking systems including WegoWise, Teamview, and Energy Star Portfolio Manager are used to analyze utility data. The current Energy Star score is 96.

To reduce wasting water, aerators were installed on faucets to reduce the amount of water used by controlling the stream and particles. To eliminate use of disposable water bottle, a [water bottle filling station](#) was installed and an Exclusive Green Ticker tracks the number of 20 oz, plastic water bottles saved from waste by using refillable bottles at the station. Inside the courtyard, rain barrels to collect water to irrigate the sensory garden and replaces water in the 500-gallon aquaponics system lost due to evaporation. The school plans to further track water use with the installation of a meter for the school's well.

Student Green Teams focus on recycling, gardening, energy conservation, and sustainability. Students participate in the [EmPowered Schools Program](#) provided by the Alliance to Save Energy to reduce energy and save money at school and at home through the achievement of benchmark goals which include studying green careers, interviewing energy specialists, and executing environmentally friendly initiatives at our school.

Since students have returned to in-person learning, a grant from our parent-teacher network (PTN) helped kick-start the new recycling initiative by purchasing [recycling bins](#) with signage outlining which materials can be recycled for each office, classroom, hallway, staff lounge, and cafeteria. Teachers, students, administration, and custodial staff have worked together to implement and ensure long-term goals have near-term accountability. A [presentation](#) was given to staff and Student Green Team members on the recycling guidelines from the Ocean County Department of Solid Waste. Student Green Team members then visited each classroom to give presentations introducing the new recycling initiative and drop off the new

recycling bins. In collaboration with the parent teacher network, the school participated in [Crayola's ColorCycle Program](#) to recycle used markers with collection bins placed in every hallway.

To reduce food waste and provide extra nutrition for students in need, students place unwanted whole fruits and prepackaged food items on a [community table](#) in the cafeteria which is available to students during an after-school program. Any remaining is then donated to the Jackson Food Pantry and a local nonprofit animal rescue. A composting station was used in our sensory garden to collect roughly 1-2 cubic yards of compost for mulching in the beds.

To further reduce waste, monthly principal letters and PTN correspondence are emailed to families. The school also partnered with the Jackson Township Department of Public Works in a challenge to collect [500 pounds of plastic](#) by providing students with reusable tote bags to bring in their collections for placement in a bin at the front entrance of the school. The TREX company received the materials for recycling and donated a high-performance composite bench for a 9-11 Memorial at the Jackson Township Municipal Building.

Students also repurposed materials through sponsored eco-projects including converting lunch plastics into gardening pots. In addition to recycling and waste reduction, all purchased paper is PEFC certified to ensure it's created from responsibly sourced timber. In total, approximately 1,000 pounds of single stream recycling material is collected monthly (mostly cardboard, paper, and plastic). This is the equivalent of around 10,000 pounds of material during a 10-month school year.

The Parent Teacher Network and student groups planted native plants, such as the honeysuckle and cardinal flower, to provide local hummingbirds with adequate food resources. The cardinal flower is an attractive native wildflower with reproductive parts that ensure pollen is brushed onto a hummingbird's head and bill each time it consumes nectar from the flower. The plants were installed in the front of the building and in the rear students identified a location of loam soil good for retaining moisture while still allowing sufficient drainage for air to reach roots for planting more natives in Spring.

Due to our vast geographical range (100 square miles) and limited sidewalks, all students are transported by bus or car to school and families are encouraged to carpool. Through the Sustainability Policy, municipal, land-use planning, law enforcement, and other agencies collaborate to plan, construct, and encourage the use of safe, accessible, and convenient pedestrian and bicycle routes to and from school. The no idling policy is communicated with signs in the front of the building for busses and cars.

Pillar 2: Your Efforts to Improve the Health and Wellness of Students and Staff

Nutrition and fitness are interwoven into a daily meeting initiative. Elms provides healthy school meals featuring locally sourced food from regional farms. More than an acre of fields provides space for student recess and yearly activities. Students stay active in the expansive courtyard with a garden and tent that serves as an outdoor learning space. The school's media specialist provides students the opportunity to grow vegetables in the aquaponics system and sensory garden. Lessons about nutrition and environmental impacts accompany these practices in the instructional media center. Students harvest, touch, smell, and eat bok choy, lettuce, mint, tomatoes, squash, lavender green beans, and purple basil they grow, and families have reported students eating more vegetables at home as a result. Families also propagate spider plants from clippings brought home. During the summer, students and their families participate in healthy eating through special events like the visit with the local supermarket's nutritionist that included creating their own healthy yogurt parfaits

The school's full-time counselor plans week-long celebrations including Safe Schools Week, Red Ribbon Week, and [Random Acts of Kindness Week](#), and runs school groups, activities, and anti-bullying programs to promote mental health. Elms also has a school-wide ["Pawsitive" program](#), which is the school's character education initiative that promotes, models, and recognizes students that strive to create a welcoming, rewarding, and safe environment. Daily meetings take place in every classroom to ensure student wellness and a

positive classroom community. Also, occupational and physical therapists collaborated on the installation of sensory paths on both floors of the building.

The Climate Committee is dedicated to ensuring a safe and healthy environment for students and staff. They plan and organize school-wide events, including community days which allow students and staff to encounter each other outside of their normal cohorts.

Elms has a very active parent-teacher network (PTN) that enhances school life for students, families, and staff. The PTN fundraises on a regular basis so that they can award grant money to teachers who use it to fund efforts such as our Student Green Team, environmental field trips, and Bash the Trash assemblies. PTN efforts complement social and emotional learning by creating opportunities for Daddy/Daughter Dances, Mother/Son Sports Nights, and monthly food pantry collections. Recently, the PTN funded an indoor rock wall for the gymnasium and two outdoor Gaga courts.

Elms partners with community organizations and programs including Sustainable New Jersey, Hatponics & Drop the Beet Farms, PowerSave Schools, the Jackson Police Department's initiatives including DARE, bike safety, gun safety, Internet safety, and ALICE training, the Jackson Fire Department's fire safety and smoke house programs, as well as local Boy and Girl Scout groups.

Each night the custodial staff is responsible for effectively cleaning each classroom to reduce the number of allergens. With the introduction of COVID-19, Elms has increased its health and wellness efforts. Custodians regularly apply disinfectants to high-touch surface areas and clean eating areas after each lunch period. The night crew is tasked with disinfecting the building every evening, and every weekend they deep clean with a fog machine. The installation of a hands-free water refill station provides access to filtered, safe drinking water without spreading germs so students and staff stay hydrated.

Any student that is identified as having asthma or allergies is communicated to the teacher, and a meeting is held with the nurse to develop an action plan. Students are given inhalers before all physical activities, and asthma

medications are held in the nurse's office with the child's Asthma Action Plan. Further, the school does not permit smoking on campus or school buses.

Daily inspections by staff ensure that the school controls moisture from leaks, condensation, and excess humidity and promptly removes any visible mold. Monthly inspections are performed for all HVAC systems and filters. Additionally, the air in each room is exchanged every 45 minutes in accordance with ASHRAE Standard 62.1.

The district developed a Green Cleaning Program designed to protect the environment, provide a healthy environment, increase the lifespan of facilities, and protect the health of staff and students. All the cleaning supplies and equipment are Green Seal Certified, ensuring that all products and services meet the rigorous performance, health, and environmental criteria in Green Seal's environmental leadership standards. Elms uses a device called Square Scrub to remove the wax from our floors in the summer using hot water instead of a stripping chemical. The school has multiple plans to address the management of chemicals, including a Chemical Hygiene Plan and Chemical Disposal Plan. All building equipment is regularly scheduled for preventative maintenance. For example, all HVAC filters are changed every three months.

All construction occurs at night to minimize student and staff exposure. Large renovations, such as light retrofitting and painting, take place over the summer months to limit exposure as well.

The school's Integrated Pest Management Plan was recently updated in September 2020, and the school uses a full range of management options, using non-pesticide methods whenever possible. Additionally, no fertilizer is used on the property.

Pillar 3: Efforts to Ensure Effective Environmental, Sustainability, & Climate Change Education

Elms has a strong commitment to educating a generation of children that are aware and care about the environment. The K-5 curriculum engages students

in a science curriculum aligned with the NJ Student Learning Standards for Science that centers around STEM principles and environmental design. Students conduct experiments and conclude every unit with a design challenge that incorporate engineering principles and multiple green technologies are introduced throughout. Sustainability and environmental challenges include:

- Grade K
 - Trough Times: As students explore the idea of collecting rainwater to meet the needs of an agricultural business, they learn about the importance of water conservation.
- [Grade 2](#)
 - Pacific Plastic Problems: This unit focuses on human waste management and the increasing concern of plastic accumulation in oceans. Students explore ways to better dispose of waste and look for solutions to clean areas that have been impacted.
 - Pollination Power: This unit focuses on the negative human impact on natural pollination through the decline of worldwide bee populations.
 - Save the Beach: This unit focuses on the impact of earth's natural forces on human communities. Students explore ways to protect regions through environmentally friendly concepts and sustainable methods.
- Grade 4
 - Clean Cars: This unit focuses on the study of clean, renewable forms of transportation. Students explore easy to use these alternative energies to power transportation of the future.
- Grade 5
 - Snake Invaders: This unit focuses on how environmentalists evaluate and tackle the issue of invasive species and their impact on native wildlife. Students explore ways to remove these invasive species while not destroying the local ecosystem.
 - Water For All: This unit focuses on the need for global access to clean fresh water. Students learn about societies that struggle to access this resource and innovative ways to provide this resource to impoverished communities.

In 2019, Elms received a [School Leader Award](#) from the New Jersey School Boards Association for the elementary science [curriculum](#), one of four school districts recognized in the state for successfully creating and implementing an innovative program. Programs were selected based on their level of innovation, meeting the specific needs of students, relationship to the state's curriculum standards, and program results. Elm's science program focuses on teaching students engineering practices for creatively solving environmental challenges.

Elms has embedded sustainability into an interdisciplinary curriculum that is engaging, transformative, and supports existing course learning objectives. For example, in literacy, students read about environmental challenges in Scholastic News to provide background information on alternative energy and sustainability. During computer classes, students create presentations on these principles. Cross curricular connections provide for a richer, deeper learning experience.

The [Elms learning garden](#) has been a successful initiative for over ten years. Students participate in gardening and outdoor learning activities including the creation of compost, reading in the outdoor library, using rain barrels, and growing plants. Students study the life cycle of plants and how to safely sustain the agricultural industry. The preschool disabled students and multiple disabled students visit the sensory garden regularly with teachers and related services in a strategic effort to provide sensory stimulation, promote physical activity, reduce agitation and aggression, and increase relaxation, mental clarity, and stress relief. Students receiving occupational therapy services benefit from being able to touch, smell, and see the various plants as they walk through the pathway. A "story walk" was incorporated to encourage students to learn safely while outdoors during the pandemic.

Additional efforts in the media center are provided for students in grades 3-5 to gain hands-on experience in climate change, the environment, and sustainability. The intermediate students maintain an indoor aquaponics system, learning sustainable farming practices and a balanced ecosystem for plants, bacteria, and animals. Rain is captured in barrels to replenish the aquaponics system for the fish, filter, and plant trays. The aquaponics curriculum addresses

real-world issues through problems (with algae and tank maintenance) and developing solutions (creating ways to stake tomato plants indoors). Students help take care of and cultivate the system as key topics such as environmental degradation, aquaculture, food sustainability and indoor gardening are introduced. Fifth grade students select individual research projects related to aquaponics or environmental science. The students also participate in the NJ Trout in the Classroom program. Students raise rainbow trout fry, maintain aquatic balance, and participate in a release at the Jackson Forestry Center. Discussions ensue regarding the effects of human-created pollution in natural waterways and how this results in a changing ecosystem for the NJ state fish, the brown trout, and other lifeforms.

Elms facilitates student-driven interventions for sustainable behavior change. The Student Green Team focuses on recycling, gardening, energy conservation, and sustainability. The team develops presentations for the entire school community. The team also participates in the [EmPowered Schools Program](#), which provides training, guidance, tools, and resources for saving energy and money at school and at home through the achievement of benchmark goals. Benchmarks include studying green careers, interviewing energy specialists, and executing environmentally friendly initiatives at our school. This group of third and fourth graders created a school-wide contest in which grade levels compete to meet energy goals with right lighting, proper closure of doors and windows, and use of appliances. At the start of each meeting, members conduct a school-wide audit and report back their findings to the group. The following morning the results are shared with the school over morning announcements. Members created fliers and posted them around the school. A [checklist](#) was also provided to each classroom teacher to remind students and staff of the audit criteria. Fourth grade team member Samantha Pouliot remarked, "I think it is really fun and smart, because it is about saving energy and our planet. Before I was on the Green Team, I didn't really recycle a lot, and now because of the Green Team I recycle things. I'm super careful to make sure they are always clean and dry and I make my family recycle, too!"

Students in all grade levels participate in local nature-based field trips, including Cattus Island, Manasquan Reservoir, Jackson Forest Resource Education Center, and Jenkinsons Aquarium. At each location, students are

introduced to local flora and fauna, while exploring the environment and learning about ways to care for it. On school grounds, students help to care for the natural environment by deadheading daffodils in the spring, “waking up” the outdoor learning garden, and cleaning up trash using grabbers and gloves on a weekly rotation. The Student Green Team follows a [rotating schedule](#) to take turns cleaning up outside. This attention and care to the immediate environment encourages students to take the time to attend to these important matters.

High School members of the Science National Honor Society prepared and delivered informative [presentations](#) on recycling and upcycling to Elm's students. Following the presentations, Elms hosted an upcycling event where families had the opportunity to use recycled materials to create new things.

Elms has an active STEM Club comprised of second and third grade students. The STEM Club engages students in science, technology, engineering, and math. Through bi-weekly design challenges, students imagine, plan, design, and test their designs. The goal is to inspire students, build their confidence, extend their knowledge of environmental and sustainability issues, and prepare them for more advanced STEM pathways. Environmentally conscious materials, such as recyclable Ball aluminum cups and biodegradable paper straws, were purchased for the design challenges.

Summary Narrative: An Overview of Your Work Encompassing All Three Pillars

Elms Elementary School is part of the Jackson Township School District, in Ocean County, New Jersey. The school is situated in a suburban setting and has various program offerings to address over 640 general and special education students. In recognition of the school's efforts, Elms was awarded Silver Certification in 2018 from Sustainability Jersey for Schools, only one of 22 schools that have received this recognition.

Elms Elementary relies on a variety of cost-cutting and energy efficient methods to operate its facility. As part of the district Green Strategic Plan and board

approved sustainability policies, major emphasis is placed on reducing the environmental impact on the surrounding community. The 130,000 sq. ft. building obtained 40% of its renewable energy from the operation of its 980,000 kW solar field. Main lobby TV monitors advertise these incredible cost-savings. In addition to solar, the building runs off geothermal heat pumps. As a result, greenhouse gas emissions have been lowered by as much as 25% over the past 4 years. A recent energy audit revealed a 33% reduction in overall energy consumed. In summer 2020, all the building's lighting needs were converted to highly-efficient LED bulbs. New motion sensors automatically turn lights out when no one is present. Three energy tracking systems including WegoWise, Teamview, and Energy Star Portfolio Manager are used to analyze utility data and the school has an Energy Star score of 96.

Roughly 40% of the grounds are green spaces including areas dedicated to native plants to support wildlife.

The district has just constructed a new transportation facility in the heart of the community to reduce the mileage of bus routes, save on fuel costs and reduce our emissions.

With a grant from the parent-teacher network (PTN), recycling efforts have increased with recycling bins with signage in classrooms, offices, and hallways. After attending a presentation by the Ocean County Department of Solid Waste, Student Green Team members gave a presentation to each classroom introducing the recycling initiative. The school also participates in [Crayola's ColorCycle Program](#) and partnered with the Jackson Township Department of Public Works in a challenge to collect [500 pounds of plastic](#). As a result, the TREX company donated a high-performance composite bench for a 9-11 Memorial at the Jackson Township Municipal Building. Student eco-projects promoting the repurposing of materials and community recycling events have resulted in approximately 1,000 pounds of single stream recycling collected monthly.

Jackson Township is a community grounded in agriculture. Most students live on a farm, near a farm, or have a portion of their yard dedicated to growing plants or raising animals. Elms provides healthy school meals featuring locally

sourced foods and students stay active in the fields and courtyard garden that serves as an outdoor learning space. The media specialist provides students the opportunity to grow vegetables in the aquaponics system and sensory garden supplementing with lessons about nutrition and environmental impacts. Students harvest, touch, smell, and eat bok choy, lettuce, mint, tomatoes, squash, lavender green beans, and purple basil they grow, and families have reported students eating more vegetables at home as a result. Students also propagate spider plants from clippings brought home. During summer, the local supermarket's nutritionist provides family programs that conclude by creating healthy yogurt parfaits.

Week-long celebrations including Safe Schools Week, Red Ribbon Week, and [Random Acts of Kindness Week](#), and school-wide anti-bullying programs and a [PAWS-itive Program](#) character education create a welcoming, rewarding, and safe environment. Occupational and physical therapists created sensory paths on both floors.

The PTN funds Student Green Team projects, environmental field trips, Bash the Trash assemblies, and the installation of an indoor rock wall and two outdoor Gaga courts.

Elms partners with community organizations and programs including Sustainable New Jersey, Hatponics & Drop the Beet Farms, PowerSave Schools, the Jackson Police Department's initiatives including DARE, bike safety, gun safety, Internet safety, and ALICE training, the Jackson Fire Department's fire safety and smoke house programs, as well as local Boy and Girl Scout groups.

The Green Cleaning Program uses Green Seal Certified products and chemical free cleaning alternatives.

Elms has a strong commitment to educating a generation of children that are aware and care about the environment. The K-5 curriculum engages students in a science curriculum aligned with the NJ Student Learning Standards for Science centered around STEM principles and environmental design. Students conduct experiments and conclude every unit with a design challenge that incorporates engineering principles and introduce multiple green technologies.

Sustainability and environmental challenges examine ideas like water conservation while students experience problems like collecting enough rainwater to meet the needs of an agricultural business. Students also create solutions to decrease plastic accumulation in oceans, increase pollinator populations, save beaches from erosion, test renewable transportation alternatives, reduce impacts by invasive species on wildlife, or increase access to clean water globally.

In 2019, Elms received a [School Leader Award](#) from the New Jersey School Boards Association for the elementary science curriculum, one of four school districts recognized in the state for successfully creating and implementing an innovative program. Programs were selected based on their level of innovation, meeting the specific needs of students, relationship to the state's curriculum standards, and program results. Elm's science program focuses on teaching students engineering practices for creatively solving environmental challenges.

The [learning garden's](#) activities include the creation of compost, reading in the outdoor library, water collection with rain barrels, and growing plants. The preschool disabled students and multiple disabled students visit the sensory garden regularly with teachers and related services in a strategic effort to provide sensory stimulation, promote physical activity, reduce agitation and aggression, and increase relaxation, mental clarity, and stress relief. A "story walk" was incorporated to encourage students to learn safely while outdoors during the pandemic.

The indoor aquaponics system challenges students to create sustainable farming practices and an ecosystem balanced to support plants, bacteria, and animals. Students also explore topics such as environmental degradation, aquaculture, food sustainability and indoor gardening and participate in Trout in the Classroom. The Student Green Team focuses on recycling, gardening, energy conservation, and sustainability. Students focus on energy through the [EmPowered Schools Program](#), which provides training, guidance, tools, and resources for saving energy and money through the achievement of benchmark goals. Students learn about green careers by interviewing professionals including the school's energy specialists and practice leadership

by executing environmentally friendly initiatives and school-wide challenges. Finally, students enjoy nature-based field trips including visits to Cattus Island, the Manasquan Reservoir, the Jackson Forest Resource Education Center, and Jenkinsons Aquarium.