



## School Nominee Presentation Form

### ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATIONS

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#### 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.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Terrence D. Mullins".

\_\_\_\_\_ Date:

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent:

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



District Name:

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

*Dr. Mary Beth Bowling*

\_\_\_\_\_ Date:

(Superintendent's Signature)

### 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:

Name of Nominating Authority:

(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.

*Billy Bennett*

\_\_\_\_\_ Date:

(Nominating Authority's Signature)

### 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](mailto: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.

### **Summary Narrative:**

Ascension School is a fully accredited Catholic elementary and middle school in the Archdiocese of Louisville offering an unparalleled education grounded in the Catholic faith. Nestled within the St. Regis Park neighborhood of Louisville, Kentucky, since 1965, Ascension has a current enrollment of 233 students in grades preschool through eight. We recognize the uniqueness of each student in a caring, disciplined environment, which exemplifies Christ's command to serve one another. Our pastor, nineteen faculty, five assistants, guidance counselor, learning coordinator, two administrators, secretary, custodial and cafeteria staff work jointly to ensure students are prepared to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world, and to live cooperatively as critical thinkers and problem solvers in a global society. Love of God, human dignity, justice, service to others, stewardship and excellence are among the values lived at Ascension.

The reputation of the school continues to grow as a leader in technology, differentiation, project-based learning, critical thinking and problem solving. In 2018, Ascension was awarded the National Blue-Ribbon School of Excellence. We are striving to also become known as a school dedicated to being a leader in educating our students in sound practices to reduce our negative impact on the earth. As humans, we are concerned by the worsening environmental condition of our irreplaceable home and, as Catholics, we are encouraged by Pope Francis to take swift action to "care for our common home".

By departmentalizing grades 3-8, students have the opportunity to learn with teachers who are passionate about the subject they teach. In 2016, Ascension became the first Catholic school in Kentucky to train every faculty member in project-based learning. To date, faculty collaborate in cross-curricular projects, which include gardens, composting and global classrooms. Weaving through all of this is the encouragement of students to ask questions, think critically and solve problems daily.

Reducing environmental impact is an objective that began under our new administration in 2013 with the faculty and staff at Ascension working collaboratively to transition from outdated ideologies of education to embracing 21<sup>st</sup> century realities of learning. We have taken great strides to achieve this objective by installing energy efficient windows to replace ones that are not well insulated, encouraging students to bring reusable water bottles to school, using washable trays, glasses and utensils in our cafeteria, promoting a school-wide awareness of opportunities to be energy efficient and recycling and utilizing technology to reduce paper waste.

The overall health and wellness of the students and staff is promoted as Ascension has embraced the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model. Meeting our students' physical and mental health needs is a priority. All classes from preschool through grade 8 participate in physical education classes weekly. We offer a wide variety of school sports to meet the varied interests of the students, provide healthy lunches in the cafeteria selections using fresh ingredients provided in part by our school garden, and utilize a mindfulness program to effect a few moments of calm as needed to allow the student's mind to slow down and focus. Students and staff benefit from a full-time, certified school

counselor who assists students with coping skills and supports the staff with monthly morale boosters. Faculty and staff are encouraged in healthy lifestyles and may participate in Go365 through Humana Insurance and an annual 5K hosted by the Archdiocese of Louisville. The entire Ascension community has benefited from the installation of an air filtration system in each classroom. As part of the larger Ascension Church community, Ascension School families are invited to participate in many community events.

Environmental and sustainability education is a focus of the entire Ascension faculty through real-world projects borne from the Project-Based Learning curriculum. Our fifth grade works each year to promote an Idle-Free campus hosting qualified speakers to talk about gasoline waste and air pollution. Fourth grade plants a vegetable garden which they harvest the next school year and use to prepare a meal, along with maintaining the compost bin. Students worked in cooperation with the Louisville Nature Center to plant and maintain a butterfly garden. Middle school students will have the opportunity to learn about maintaining a beehive and collecting honey with bee hives that have been obtained this year. Second grade participates annually in the Journey North Tulip Test Gardens while fourth and fifth grades have guest speakers from the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife. Hatching baby chicks as part of the third-grade science curriculum is something that all faculty, staff and students look forward to each year. An after school Green Club has been initiated this year for grades 4 - 8 and started strong with students and faculty/staff members working to prepare the butterfly garden for next year's butterfly migration. Our Librarian works diligently to ensure the school Library maintains a collection of updated books about climate change and environmental issues that can be utilized by students when doing projects

Ascension staff and administration, supported by Ascension Church, are encouraging students to become proactive in addressing the challenge of developing environmentally-friendly habits and lifestyles in our local and global community.

### **Pillar I: Reducing environmental impact and costs:**

The goal of lessening our impact on the environment is one that is evident throughout the Ascension School culture. We have worked to reduce our consumption of non-renewables, reuse what still has a useful life and increase efficiency of energy usage.

One of the most recent ways Ascension School has reduced our energy usage is by having new energy-efficient windows installed. The old windows were original to the school and were not well insulated. In order to understand why new windows were needed, the science students took inside temperature readings by both the old and the new windows. They discovered that the temperature of the old windows was only a few degrees different from the outside temperature, thus indicating a lack of insulation, while the new windows demonstrated a much greater temperature difference showing how the new windows improved energy efficiency.

In 2013, Ascension School embraced the use of technology in the classroom by providing each student in grades K-8 with an iPad. Utilizing this technology has allowed us to reduce our daily paper consumption by nearly 50%. To manage any remaining paper consumption, Ascension implemented a school-wide paper recycling program that is run by our eighth-grade students. Each classroom as well as the office and copy room has a recycle bin for any discarded paper. Students gather these recyclables and put them into the outside receptacle which is collected weekly by Anytime Waste.

Our school cafeteria staff began taking steps to reduce waste. During the daily lunch service, we are using reusable trays, utensils and cups to reduce the amount of paper, plastic and styrofoam consumed. In order to ensure sanitation of these reusable items, our school dishwasher reaches temperatures high enough to kill any viruses or bacteria. If necessity dictates, we have 100% biodegradable trays to use on a temporary basis. A refrigerated milk dispenser was purchased which eliminated the need for individual milk cartons. Students use washable cups to get their milk or water. The milk dispenser is refilled by locally sourced milk. In addition, all boxes used to deliver and store food are broken down and recycled, fruit & vegetable scraps are used as compost for the school garden and left-over food is given to the Franciscan Kitchen. All these steps allow us to have as close to zero waste as possible from our cafeteria.

Reducing vehicle emissions is being highlighted as we promote Ascension as an Idle-Free campus. With the combined effort of faculty and students, we have campaigned during afternoon carpools to ask people to turn off their engines as they wait for school to be dismissed. Also, while we have many students who walk or ride their bike to school each day, on Earth day, April 22, 2022, we will sponsor a Walk or Bike to School Day. Our goal is multifaceted. We want to encourage fewer drivers, reduce vehicle emissions and improve the overall health and well-being of our students.

Water bottle refill stations were installed last year to encourage the use of reusable water bottles. Students bring water bottles from home and are able to refill them throughout the day at these stations. To date, we have saved over 50,000 water bottles. Additionally, students who bring lunch or snacks are encouraged to use reusable snack bags and lunch containers. They are taught that this helps protect the environment when we are able to recycle or reuse items.

Teachers at Ascension have been trained in project-based learning, which encourages collaboration between the curriculum departments. This has increased the number of STEAM projects that have been completed at Ascension. Many of these projects involve making something out of recyclables. For example, after learning about sound, the first-grade class made musical instruments using recycled materials. Bringing recyclables into art and science lessons allows the student to see firsthand how they can have a positive impact on the environment even in small ways.

Staff and students are conscientious about ensuring lights are turned off in the classroom when not needed, and we are in the process of converting to LED light bulbs throughout the building. Currently, about 30% of our lighting is energy efficient. We hope to be at 100% by the end of the school year.

## **Pillar II: Improving the health and wellness of students and staff:**

Ascension School has fully embraced the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model in our approach to improving the health and wellness of students and staff. Every student participates in physical education classes weekly. Additionally, opportunities for shorter periods of exercise called PE pockets are offered to the students daily. Students are encouraged to grow healthy bodies and minds by participating in the many school sports teams available to them. For all students, kindergarten through eighth grade, soccer, cross country and track are offered. Additionally, first through eighth grade students can participate in swimming, girls' volleyball, basketball and flag football. Third through eighth graders can also join in archery, field hockey, baseball and boys' volleyball teams. Our third through eighth graders have the opportunity to participate in local CSAA golf and tennis tournaments as well. Family life classes are taught every year to our fifth-grade students which include lessons about health, nutrition and overall caring for their bodies.

Many of our students and faculty live near the school and take advantage of this by riding bikes or walking to and from school each day. For some of our families this creates an environment where they can get daily exercise by walking or riding to school together. We will be sponsoring a Walk or Bike to School Day on Earth Day, April 22, 2022. We hope to see fewer drivers, reduce vehicle emissions and improve the overall health and well-being of our students by encouraging as many students as possible to ride their bikes or walk to school on that day. It is our hope that this will inspire more students to walk or ride to school more often, promoting healthy bodies through exercise and a healthy environment.

Our faculty and staff have several opportunities to improve their health and wellness. They are encouraged to increase wellness by participating in Go365 through Humana Insurance. Each employee is encouraged to reach silver status which would mean obtaining 5000 points earned by a combination of participating in exercise challenges, personal exercise goals, getting regular medical check-ups or doing regular health assessments. Ascension also offers a biometric screening every year to allow employees to monitor their blood pressure, BMI and glucose levels. Additionally, the Archdiocese of Louisville encourages our faculty and staff to participate in an annual ArchLou 5K race.

Healthy lunches are provided by our exceptional cafeteria chef and staff. Ascension has embraced the farm to table model in our "Farm to Tray Cafe". Many of the selections are prepared using fresh ingredients, some of which are provided by our very own school garden. Each month a different fruit or vegetable is highlighted as the "Harvest of the Month". These produce selections are given special designation on our school menu and students are encouraged to try the seasonal produce dishes. This provides students with the opportunity to explore and sample foods they might not normally eat.

With the assistance of recent alumni completing their Eagle Scout service project, Ascension has installed a Corsi-Rosenthal air filtration system in each classroom. This device uses MERV 13 air filters which capture small particles in the air, including viruses. With the challenges faced by the current

pandemic, these devices are very useful in helping us maintain a healthy environment for both the staff and students. In an effort to continue our focus on health in the school building, Ascension has also installed touchless sink faucets in each bathroom. Not only does this decrease water usage, but it also helps reduce germs by limiting unnecessary shared touched surfaces. Air hand dryers are in place in order to reduce paper towel usage and reduce the spread of germs.

To improve focus on the whole child, many of the Ascension faculty have been trained in CALMA, a mindfulness program to help teachers create better learning environments for their students. As our students' lives become more fast-paced and their days include more time in front of a screen, CALMA gives teachers a few moments of calm and quiet to allow their students' minds to slow down and focus. Teachers are encouraged to start the day with a short period of mindfulness using silence or quiet music as the background. CALMA mindfulness practices are especially useful before standardized testing to help relax students and increase focus.

Ascension has a full time, certified school counselor on staff. Each week students participate in guidance classes taught by our school counselor focusing on mental health, coping skills, mindfulness and well-being. For our Middle School students, special attention is given to suicide prevention lessons using the Signs of Suicide curriculum. Training and additional resources are also made available to faculty and staff in order to ensure each teacher is equipped and prepared to respond if students reach out about thoughts of self-harm. She supports students in small group settings by tailoring topics to their specific needs like leadership, mental health awareness and anxiety. Our school counselor provides support for the faculty and staff as well. She organizes monthly morale booster events like a bagel and coffee room service day and utilizes quarterly mental health check questionnaires to check in on their emotional well-being.

Ascension School exists as a ministry of the Church of the Ascension Catholic Parish. With this unique partnership there are many opportunities to enhance the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of our students, their families and the surrounding community. There are many events offered to bring families together for fellowship, spiritual growth and encouragement. These include family movie nights, Vacation Bible School, our annual Summer Festival, a Halloween trunk-or-treat event, community fish fries, breakfast with Santa, breakfast with the Easter Bunny and even a family star-gazing night. Through shared values and fellowship these activities promote the spiritual, social and emotional well-being of the entire Ascension community.

### **Pillar III: Offering effective environmental and sustainability education.**

The Ascension faculty utilizes the Project-Based Learning teaching method in order to help our students learn by engaging in projects that both relate to the real world and that are personally meaningful to them. This project-based approach is utilized when offering effective environmental and sustainability education to our students.

Our fifth-grade class works each year on a project inspired by the US EPA Idle-Free Schools Toolkit in order to promote an Idle-Free Campus at Ascension. A representative from Kentuckiana Air Education (KAIRE) visits the school to educate our students on the impact of idling vehicles on our environment. They highlight not only the excessive amounts of gasoline wasted by idling but also the large amounts of pollutants put into the air every year by cars that idle. School carpool lines are known “hot spots” for greenhouse gas emissions. Students take this knowledge and make posters and flyers to pass out in the carpool line promoting an Idle-Free campus. In order to educate our parents a day is set aside each year for this promotion. Permanent signs have been put up in the carpool areas as an additional reminder to the environmental impact of idling cars and our commitment to be an Idle-Free campus.

Each year our fourth-grade students plant a vegetable garden. As this is a multi-year project, that class is then responsible for harvesting the vegetables during the following school year. They also have the opportunity to plan and cook a meal using the fresh vegetables they grow. Through this project the students gain a first-hand understanding of where their food comes from. They also have the responsibility of maintaining a compost bin on our campus. They collect the scrap vegetables from the school cafeteria for our bin and then use the soil created from the compost in the vegetable garden. Students are learning how to identify compostable materials, how to use compost properly in the garden and why it is so beneficial to create nutrient-rich soil.

Another fifth-grade project occurred in 2018 when Ascension students worked in cooperation with the Louisville Nature Center to plant and maintain a butterfly garden. Through a grant, we purchased native Kentucky plants that attract pollinators, including milkweed for Monarch butterflies. The students learned about the varieties of native plants that attract pollinators and why pollinators are so important to the environment. At the completion of this project, we were successful in becoming a Certified Monarch Waystation. Every year this garden is used to teach lessons about pollinators and butterfly life cycles. This project has allowed for additional lessons to be taught about seed formation and propagation. The students utilized their problem-solving skills when faced with a setback of aphids decimating the milkweed in our butterfly garden. The students researched and devised a safe and natural way to get rid of the pests. The students continue to help maintain the garden in an afterschool program.

Through a generous donation, Ascension obtained a beehive this past year from Honey Bear Farms, LLC. This hive consists of 3 medium supers and 2 deep hive bodies. The bees will include a mix of Carniolans, Italians and some wildcats, which are a wild bee mix bred in Kentucky. The initial hive will consist of a full 10-frame single bee colony with brood, queen and bees. During the summertime this hive can contain 20,000-80,000 bees. Continuing with the Project-Based Learning model, our middle school students will learn how to maintain the beehive, and our hope is to be able to collect honey from the hive once it is established. The students will have the opportunity to learn about the critical roles bees play in helping the environment. As pollinators are essential to a healthy ecosystem, having both a



beehive and a butterfly garden significantly helps maintain a balanced healthy habitat for them on our campus.

Every year, Ascension's second grade class participates in the Journey North Tulip Test Gardens. This is an exciting project that has participants from all over the Northern Hemisphere. Red Emperor tulip bulbs are ordered and planted in the fall around our campus. We utilize the Journey North website to record when they are planted, when they emerge in the spring, and later when they bloom. On the website students can also then use the map to compare our dates with other schools all over the Northern Hemisphere. Students measure the soil temperature twice a month throughout the winter in order to gain understanding about the relationship between soil temperature and the emergence of the plants in the spring.

Ascension's fourth and fifth graders enjoy visits from the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife each year. A speaker comes five times a year to teach the students about the fish and wildlife found native to Kentucky. They learn about bears, snakes, and fish, as well as many native plants and their relationship to the environment. They have the opportunity to learn about hunting and fishing from an ecological perspective. The students are taught to appreciate nature and what is necessary to keep our environment healthy. Information about conservation efforts being made in Kentucky is shared as students learn about efforts such as bear tagging and the ecological impact of overfishing.

Our annual third grade class project is hatching baby chickens. This project allows the students to learn about life cycles and sustainability. The students learn about where chickens come from and the difference between fertilized and unfertilized eggs. They also learn about the needs of the growing chick and how the incubator mimics the mother hen. This is definitely a favorite project of the entire school! Ascension also arranges for the Mobile Dairy Classroom to visit and teach the students about where the milk we drink comes from. These projects reinforce a greater understanding for students of the food chain in our community.

This year, Ascension started an after school Green Club for students in grades 4 - 8. The Green Club is for students who are passionate about the environment and conservation to be able to make a difference in our community. The Green Club has initiated a number of conservation and education projects on our campus. They volunteer after school to help weed and maintain the butterfly garden. They are conducting a school energy audit by assessing how many classroom lights are on while no one is in the room. They have also been instrumental in assisting with the Idle-Free Campus campaign. They help collect litter around campus and participate in various other conservation projects that are student inspired. With the guidance of teacher volunteers, students are encouraged to take the lead in planning, designing and executing Green Club projects.

Our school library is an extremely useful resource in helping our students acquire additional knowledge about environmental issues. New, updated books about climate change, nature and environmental issues

have recently been added to our library. These resources are often utilized by our students when researching and completing school projects.

This year our school will be participating in a WaterStep shoe drive during February 2022. WaterStep is a global organization improving lives in communities around the world. One way they do this is by obtaining safe drinking water through new well establishment and well repair. A WaterStep-sponsored shoe drive will allow those in the Ascension community to donate gently used shoes to this organization. WaterStep then resells the shoes to exporters in order to raise funds to continue to bring clean water to those in need around the world. The exporters take the shoes to local vendors in the countries where WaterStep is already working to improve water conditions. These local vendors are then able to resell the shoes and so they contribute to growing micro-enterprises in the community and benefit the local economy. This is a sustainable project that not only brings clean water to those who need it, it reduces the large number of shoes that wind up in landfills each year and encourages local economic growth in communities in need. This is a valuable lesson for our students on environmental impact, sustainability, the global clean water crisis and our place as responsible global citizens.