



## 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., 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.

**Kyle Tutterow** Digitally signed by Kyle Tutterow  
Date: 2024.02.12 14:27:35 -05'00'

Date:

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent:

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



District Name: Plainfield Community Schools

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

Scott Olinger Digitally signed by Scott Olinger Date: 2024.02.09 15:33:04 -05'00' Date: 12/13/2023

(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: Indiana Department of Education

Name of Nominating Authority: Ms Felicia Harrison (Specify: Ms., 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.

Felicia Harrison Date: 2/7/2023

(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: October 31, 2026

**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.

## Plainfield Community Middle School Summary Narrative

Plainfield Community Middle School, situated just southwest of Indianapolis, takes pride in fostering a community guided by core values, with a strong emphasis on environmental stewardship. Beginning in 2017, the school embarked on a comprehensive initiative to modernize its 50-year-old facility, aligning it with rigorous energy-efficient standards. This endeavor involved a meticulous energy audit to identify areas for improvements in energy efficiency. The implementation of updated HVAC systems, water heaters, and SMART lighting with automatic shut-off mechanisms has significantly diminished our environmental footprint.

In addition to these advancements, the school is dedicated to sustainable practices, exemplified by our commitment to recycling and reusing materials. Weekly, we recycle approximately 1,200 pounds of plastic, paper, and cardboard. This year marked the inception of our community holiday light recycling drive, resulting in the collection and recycling of over 600 pounds of holiday lights. The utilization of environmentally friendly cleaning products by our custodial staff is standard practice throughout the building. Our IDEALab STEM space empowers students to repurpose materials for various STEM projects.

Furthermore, the incorporation of compost bins in strategic locations across the school and cafeteria has significantly reduced daily food waste. The compost generated is used to cultivate milkweed plants, contributing to the creation of Monarch Waystations in the school and the community. These areas not only emphasize the importance of invertebrates, particularly monarch butterflies, in the ecosystem but also encourage students to actively participate in conserving an endangered species.

Over the past five years, PCMS has forged a successful partnership with the Indianapolis Zoo, engaging in their animal enrichment challenge. This beloved student activity involves investigating endangered species housed at the zoo, creating enrichment items from recyclable materials, and connecting with expert animal keepers to better understand the animals' environments and behaviors.

PCMS remains steadfast in promoting the health and well-being of our students and staff. We address mental health issues through various means, from therapy sessions led by our on-site therapists to the establishment of peace centers providing a calm environment for stress reduction. A recent addition to our support system is Newt, our service dog, available throughout the school day to assist students with emotional regulation. Moreover, we offer free and low-cost health clinics for school employees and staff TLC lounges, equipped with massage chairs and comfortable seating, promoting moments of relaxation during demanding school days.

## Pillar 1 - Plainfield Community Middle School's Efforts to Reduce Environmental Impacts and Costs

Situated in a community that values a commitment to shared principles, Plainfield Community Middle School has increasingly embraced environmentally conscious measures to minimize our ecological footprint. With our overall student population of 1,333 students we are one of the largest middle schools in the county. The building itself was constructed in 1956 and used as Plainfield High School for over 50 years. The move from high school to middle school occurred at the start of the 2008/2009 school year, with this move came many changes for the student body and also the school. The building includes more than 234,000 square feet and over the years, we've made significant strides towards transforming our school into a more sustainable and energy-efficient environment.

Living in a suburban community allows the use of environmentally friendly transportation modes in order to get to school. Many of our students are able to walk and bike to school due to their close proximity and Plainfield, as a whole, incorporates biking and hiking trails throughout the district. The middle school has been working with the town of Plainfield to enhance our sidewalks and crosswalks around the school to facilitate even more students going green by walking and biking to school when it is possible.

In 2017, a comprehensive energy audit marked the beginning of our journey. This assessment identified areas requiring energy-efficient improvements, prompting upgrades to all boilers with state-of-the-art, energy-efficient models. Furthermore, our Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) units received a substantial overhaul, featuring enhanced chillers, lower-energy ECM motors, and Variable Frequency Drives (VFD) for precise motor speed control. These enhancements collectively boosted HVAC efficiency by an impressive 65-75%. Not stopping there, water heaters were also replaced with more energy-efficient models, and a dedicated systems expert was hired to continually monitor and optimize energy usage.

Fast forward to 2019, major construction provided an opportunity for further enhancements. LED lights replaced outdated incandescent and fluorescent bulbs during classroom remodeling. Motion sensors, present in 90% of rooms, were introduced to intelligently manage lighting and reduce energy consumption. Our temperature control systems were automated to adhere to district standards, optimizing energy usage when students are present and minimizing heating/cooling needs after school hours. Water fountains were equipped with filters and dispensers so students could easily refill their water bottles throughout the day, therefore reducing the amount of plastic water bottles that were being disposed of on a daily basis. Each water fountain calculates how many

plastic bottles have been saved from landfills and in the 5 years since we have had the water fountains at the middle school we saved approximately 158,770 water bottles. Water conservation is also adhered to in the schools bathrooms. Every sink is equipped with a metering faucet to reduce the amount of water that is used each time a student washes their hands. Water quality checks are performed monthly through our maintenance department and, if needed, outsourced to a local company to check for lead and other heavy metals.

Our commitment extends beyond energy efficiency to include responsible waste management. Recycling bins for paper products are present in every classroom, and our students actively participate in the recycling process. As a school we recycle an average of 1,200lbs of paper, plastic and cardboard every week. Unused paint finds new life through a partnership with our local Sherwin Williams store. Our IT department collaborates with GreenWave Recycling to safely recycle electronic devices within the school and the community. Community involvement takes center stage in our initiatives, exemplified by our inaugural Holiday Light Recycling Drive. In collaboration with Electronic Recyclers International, this event successfully diverted over 600 lbs of electronic waste from landfills, a project we aim to expand annually.

The PCMS IdeaLab serves as a hub for creativity and sustainability. This space facilitates the transformation of donated materials, such as cardboard, styrofoam, and art supplies, into STEM projects that students collaboratively work on throughout the school year. Weekly pickups by our local waste management company ensure that materials slated for recycling are responsibly managed.

Our custodial and cafeteria staff actively contribute to our waste reduction initiatives. The cafeteria encourages students to donate unopened items for reuse, while vegetable scraps find a purpose as feed for our school turtle, Squishy. Compost bins strategically placed in teacher lounges and prep stations further reduce paper and food waste. Custodial staff use environmentally friendly cleaning supplies over 90% of the time, and monthly checks ensure mold and mildew prevention.

This school-wide effort to minimize material consumption while promoting reuse and recycling has fostered a heightened awareness of the importance of sustainability among both students and staff. Plainfield Community Middle School continues to champion eco-friendly practices, embodying the values of our environmentally conscious community.

## Pillar 2 - Plainfield Community Middle School Health and Wellness Initiatives

Plainfield Community Middle School has been at the forefront of addressing mental health and social-emotional learning, a commitment that predates the heightened awareness brought by the challenges of the Covid era. Each grade level benefits from a dedicated guidance counselor, ensuring the daily needs of our students are met, be it discussing personal issues, managing schedule changes, or accommodating the needs of our IEP population.

In the last five years, we've taken a step further by incorporating additional mental health support. Mrs. Jen Bigelow and Mrs. Eileen Czerwinski, both licensed clinical social workers (LCSWs), play a crucial role. They provide a mental health clinic model within the school, offering counseling, psychological services, and social support. Mrs. Bigelow focuses on tier 3 students, those with high ACE scores, and the higher-risk population, managing a caseload of 70 students with weekly sessions. Mrs. Czerwinski collaborates with high-risk students through Cummins Behavioral Health, especially those with Medicaid, enabling a secondary provider and integrative care. For crisis situations, a dedicated team is on call, ready to assist students contemplating suicide. This two-tiered mental health approach surpasses the norm, and we aspire for it to be a model for schools seeking to enhance their mental health support.

Students not requiring enhanced mental health support can still engage in various groups. Grief groups, meeting every six weeks, offer support to those who have suffered a loss. Social and emotional learning (SEL) has been integrated into the curriculum through our DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program for all 6th-grade students, focusing on topics like the importance of being drug-free, along with lessons on perfectionism, competitiveness, and stress. Red Ribbon Week is observed throughout the entire school, reinforcing our commitment to a drug-free campus. Health classes for 7th and 8th graders provide a platform to discuss anxiety, the dangers of vaping, and the significance of nutrition and healthy habits. The newest member of our staff, our rescue therapy dog named Newt, is available during school hours to assist students in need of emotional regulation. Newt can be found with his owner, and our resource officer, in the hallways during passing periods or in the resource room during class time.

Our dedication to SEL isn't confined to specific classes; it's a mindset embraced school-wide. Introduced by Mrs. Bigelow, Wellness Wednesday has become a school-wide initiative with a monthly themed curriculum focused exclusively on social and emotional learning. This curriculum is accessed by teachers through google classroom and is usually utilized during our morning announcement period. The

curriculum during the month of December was Kindness/ Giving in association with Disability Awareness. Mrs. Bigelow creates a short slide presentation using Pear Deck which allows for data collection and interactive activities and videos. These slides create an opportunity for open discussion, if time allows for it or a short yet insightful lesson. An example of these slides can be found [here](#) and [here](#). Additionally, Peace Rooms located throughout the building allow students to self-regulate in a safe environment before rejoining their classmates. The Peace Center is a restoration station that any student can utilize when they are feeling anxious, sad, or dysregulated in general. The purpose of the space is to provide sensory calming activities such as fidgets, journaling centers, calming sandboxes, music, and weighted objects to help bring their nervous systems back to a regulated state that is ready to learn. Most students spend from 5-20 minutes in the Peace Center where they practice their regulation "menu" items before returning to class. Over time, students are able to successfully translate the skills they practice in the Peace Center to the classroom setting so that they utilize the Peace Center less and less over time.

Community outreach is integral to our health and wellness initiatives. We collaborate with Susie's Place and Sheltering Wings for suicide prevention training and discussions on dating violence signs, respectively. To foster community involvement, our staff actively participates in Christmas giving for needy families, where teachers anonymously buy presents for students, ensuring a positive holiday experience.

Our school boasts an active Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (SEPAC), advocating for the inclusion of all students. Through SEPAC, special education students experienced our first sensory-friendly rec night at the school, adapting a regular event to accommodate all students. Students with a helping heart can become cadet helpers in our life skills and Excel classes, fostering positive peer interactions.

Staff well-being is also a priority. Access to a free and low-cost healthcare clinic through Hendricks Regional Health is available for staff and their family members. Staff TLC lounges, equipped with massage chairs and comfortable seating, offer a space for relaxation throughout the day. Mrs. Bigelow also provides counseling sessions as needed.

Professional development sessions include guest speakers addressing topics such as stress management through yoga. PCMS has been a district leader in SEL learning and mental health awareness. We continually seek to expand our outreach, with plans to initiate a food savers club led by our student ambassadors in the next year.

In terms of the physical environment many updates and checks are adhered to throughout the school year. Our HVAC system was updated in 2018 with a system that uses HEPA safe filters to ensure as many contaminants as possible are removed from the air in the building. While janitorial staff are working in the building they are using environmentally friendly cleaning products for 90% of their supplies. Monthly checks for mold, pests, and asbestos ensure a safe and healthy learning space for our students. If a suspicious mold, mildew or pest is discovered during these monthly checks a third part, Environmental Alliance Services, is brought in to test the area and remove the contaminant.

Our commitment to mental health and wellness encompasses students, staff, and the wider community, reflecting our dedication to creating a supportive and thriving educational environment.



### Pillar 3 - Plainfield Community Middle School's Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education

Sustainability is a cause that PCMS is deeply committed to and this vision is an ever-evolving and dynamic force on our campus. At the heart of this commitment is the IDEALab, a cornerstone of our ability to develop sustainability content and lessons that resonate with both our students and community members. The lab embraces the use of recycled materials in the majority of student projects, with generous donations from individuals and community partners contributing materials such as cardboard and PVC. Our IDEALab takes an active role in promoting sustainability through initiatives like recycling drives for holiday lights and spearheading a school-wide composting effort.

We are constantly exploring avenues to enhance sustainability and environmental education across various classes. An exciting development this year is the expansion of the tech squad, a class based in the IDEALab, which will cultivate native plants and gardens for use within and around the school premises. This initiative aims to replace traditional grassy areas with native plants, fostering an environment that attracts diverse invertebrates to our campus. The resulting native garden will serve as an integral part of our "outdoor learning lab," offering invaluable opportunities for science classes to observe and study ecosystems. Moreover, it will be a tranquil space for both students and community members to connect with nature while engaging in activities like reading or schoolwork. Notably, we aspire to focus on fostering the growth of milkweed and monarch butterflies in this outdoor sanctuary, aiming to transform PCMS into a certified "monarch waystation." The monarch waystation program is part of the monarch watch organization. Waystations can be as simple as planting milkweed and nectar plants in existing gardens with as little as 10 plants, however PCMS is hoping to expand on this idea by not only planting milkweed and nectar plants at our school but also growing and handing out milkweed to mothers in our community during the week of mother's day. Mom's, milkweed and monarchs would focus on planting throughout the community to give monarchs many opportunities to eat, mate and lay their eggs in Plainfield. Over the last several years there has been a noticeable decline in the number of Monarch butterflies seen around our school. This is consistent with most areas of the US where milkweed and nectar plants have been in decline due to habitat destruction and use of herbicides in farming and landscaping. Creating a Monarch Waystation is a small yet critical role that a school can do to help these endangered species. Waystations can be registered with the website [monarchwatch.org](http://monarchwatch.org) and included in their interactive map.

The integration of environmental and sustainability curriculum seamlessly aligns with our science class objectives. Science standards encompass critical topics like climate change, natural resource management, and keystone species. A noteworthy collaboration has flourished since 2018, as the 7th-grade enriched science class partners with the Indianapolis Zoo for the Animal Enrichment Initiative. This project sees students working on enrichment projects for endangered or threatened animals at the

zoo, emphasizing the significance of protecting these animals in their natural habitats.

Sustainability projects are not confined to science alone; the social studies department actively incorporates the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals into its curriculum, particularly focusing on African and Southeast Asian countries. This approach provides a template for students to understand the multifaceted challenges stemming from climate change and the unchecked use of natural resources.

Starting in 2019 every class participates in “Green Week,” a dedicated week in March where environmental and sustainability are put into focus. Math classes learn about [recycling](#) and participate in a recycling relay. They then calculate the amount of trash that is thrown away at the middle school. English classes read and discuss what a carbon footprint is and identify how big their own [carbon footprint](#) will be in the community. They then write about ways that they can reduce this carbon footprint and how that will impact the environment. Art classes create posters for Earth Day that can be placed around the school.

The overall goal for Green Week is to show students that they can create positive environmental change in their lives by making small, simple changes. We hope to empower every child to initiate these changes now and talk with their families about why these changes are important.

Field trips are a cherished component of our curriculum, offering students tangible experiences to reinforce the importance of a technology and STEM mindset. During September, all 8th-grade students participate in JA Job Spark, immersing themselves in various career fields through hands-on activities hosted by vendors from eight different STEM concentrations. Meanwhile, 7th-grade students embark on a field trip to the Indiana State Museum, gaining insights into how society utilizes rocks, minerals, and other natural resources while emphasizing the importance of conservation in our daily lives. Notably, our tech squad, comprising 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, actively participates in the Indiana State Museums Eco-Science Challenge, addressing global climate issues through innovative projects aligned with the goals of our IDEALab. These projects range from implementing rain barrels in areas lacking water spigots to advocating for composting as a waste reduction solution within the school. Additionally, students champion the transformation of traditional grass lawns into lush ecosystems of native Indiana habitats.

The dedication to sustainability at Plainfield Community Middle School extends beyond the classroom, providing a holistic approach that resonates with students, staff, and the broader community. As we continue to nurture this commitment, we envision a future where environmental stewardship becomes ingrained in the mindset of every student, shaping a generation ready to tackle the complex challenges of our world.