



## District Sustainability Award Nominee Presentation Form

### CERTIFICATIONS

#### District's Certifications

The signatures of the district superintendent on the next page certify that each of the statements below concerning the district's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of the superintendent's knowledge.

1. The district has been evaluated and selected from among districts 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.
2. The district is providing 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.
3. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school district 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.
4. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the school district has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
5. 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 school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or school district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.
6. The district 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.
7. The district has in place and is willing to provide a link to or 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 District Sustainability Award

Name of Superintendent:

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

District Name:

(As it should appear on an award)

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:



## Nominating Authority's Certifications

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

1. The district 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 education.
2. The district 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., 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.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date:   
(Nominati

## 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](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.



# *Cabrillo Unified School District*

California Disadvantaged District Nominee to  
U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools



Prepared By:  
California Department of Education  
School Facilities and Transportation Services Division  
[Green Ribbon Schools Award Program](#)  
January 2024

## **PART II – SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS**

### **Cabrillo Unified School District, Half Moon Bay, Calif.**

#### *Strategic Planning and Partnerships Bolster a District's Environmental Mission*

The Cabrillo Unified School District (CUSD) promotes environmental literacy and sustainability through strategic plans and district-wide initiatives. Teaming up with the local county office of education, CUSD actively supports teachers and staff in designing project-based learning units emphasizing environmental action and justice. To enrich the educational experience, the district has established community partnerships and is committed to providing diverse outdoor learning opportunities for each student. Gardens are integral to the schools, including notable examples like Cunha Middle School's *Little Cunha Farm* and the district's collaboration with the Health, Environmental, and Agricultural Literacy Project's Intensive Garden Program 26-week course for elementary students. High school students benefit from Agriculture Career Technical Education and Future Farmers of America programs, utilizing an outdoor classroom at Half Moon Bay High School (HMBHS). Tri-bin collection systems at each school enhance waste diversion, with students educated on proper sorting. CUSD's 11-year partnership with Safe Routes to School focuses on strategic infrastructure upgrades and events promoting alternative transportation. The HMBHS Environmental Club inspired change in the district with a presentation to the school board about zero waste programs. The presentation inspired the school board to collaborate with the club to form the district's Environmental Sustainability Committee, involving students, staff, board members, and community partners in shaping the district's ecological efforts.

## **PART III – DOCUMENTATION OF STATE EVALUATION OF DISTRICT NOMINEE**

### **Pillar I: Reduce Environmental Impact and Costs**

#### *Element IA: Energy*

- CUSD collaborated with energy management company Syserco to develop an energy conservation plan detailing cost and energy efficiency projects. Initiatives include LED lighting, low-flow fixtures, energy management controls, and solar panels across various sites. The plan is near completion, with a recently approved solar project installation at the CUSD Event Center.
- The district hired a sustainability contractor to develop a climate action plan to reduce energy use and resource consumption. This plan is embedded as a goal of CUSD's new strategic plan, and it aims to build upon the achievements of previous energy conservation efforts.
- CUSD uses the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager and a district utility dashboard to track resource consumption. The district partnered with its electricity provider, Peninsula Clean Energy (PCE), to develop and operate its utility dashboard. The district utility dashboard compiles billing data and generates visual summaries to track consumption. Additionally, the district has a campus utilities dashboard that allows teachers and students to examine their school building's energy usage to support their work.

- The district reports a 38.1% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from 2018 to 2023. The reduction in GHG emissions is the equivalent of 3000 tree seedlings growing for ten years or taking forty gas-powered cars off the road for one year.
- CUSD operates solar energy systems at Cunha Intermediate School (Cunha), Hatch Elementary School (Hatch), and HMBHS. The original installation at Cunha, established in 2013, is being expanded with a new array on the CUSD Event Center rooftop. Over the past decade, Cunha's solar arrays achieved an 84% energy offset, while HMBHS achieved 58%.
- Beyond CUSD solar energy generation, the district receives 100% of its electricity from a community choice aggregation, PCE, that produces energy for transmission by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E). As of 2019, 100% of PCE's electric energy procurement is carbon-free and will be 100% renewable and GHG emissions-free by 2025.
- All schools participate in the *Healthy and Efficient Schools* campaign, which provides recognition and technical assistance to school districts seeking to implement high-impact indoor air quality and efficiency improvements to reduce energy bills and improve student and teacher health.
- CUSD prioritizes increased energy efficiency and sustainability in facility improvements. For example, Farallone View and El Granada incorporate solar tubes, auto-dimming photocells for enhanced daylighting, occupancy sensors for automatic light shutoff, and the prioritized use of sustainable or recycled materials to minimize energy consumption during production.
- In the 2019–20 school year, CUSD used Proposition 39 (California Clean Energy Jobs Act) and bond funding to complete lighting fixture upgrades and energy efficiency improvements. The district replaced all existing lights with light-emitting diode (LED) lighting at every school site, the Cunha Sports Complex, and the Half Moon Bay High School (HMBHS) athletics facilities.
- The district used the California Schools Healthy Air, Plumbing, and Efficiency (CalSHAPE) program to audit air quality and pay for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system upgrades. In addition, the district uses Pelican controls to optimize the heating and cooling of classrooms and reduce energy consumption in HVAC systems.
- CUSD's construction team mitigates the heat island effect by upgrading all rooftops with white elastomeric membranes, commonly known as *white roofs*. Notable examples include re-roofing and applying a white coating to buildings at Hatch, HMBHS, Cunha, Pilarcitos Alternative High School (Pilarcitos), Farallone View Elementary (Farallone View), and El Granada Elementary School (El Granada).
- CUSD is partnering with PCE, PGE, and Highland Electric to design a facility that can support vehicle-to-building connections that will keep the emergency shelter at the high school online in case of a power outage, using the batteries of electric vehicles.

### *Element IB: Water and Grounds*

- CUSD meters outdoor and indoor water separately at all but one school. The district documents a 2.5% reduction in indoor water use from 2019 to 2023 and a 10.9% reduction in outdoor water use from 2019 to 2021. This reduction is documented in the CUSD Utilities Dashboard by the sustainability consultant and Business Services Department.

- CUSD has water efficiency as a goal in the District's Facilities Master Plan and takes the following actions to reduce water use:
  - Water leak detection, remediation, and ongoing monitoring at Cunha. There has been a significant reduction from 98 gallons/hour to 13 gallons/hour with leak repairs.
  - CUSD installed low-flow fixtures on all plumbing at Pilarcitos, Hatch, Cunha Intermediate, Kings Mountain Elementary (Kings Mountain), and HMBHS.
  - CUSD replaced the two largest athletic fields in the district with artificial turf, resulting in lower water consumption.
  - CUSD installed drought-tolerant plants around Cunha buildings and decomposed granite paths and beds to allow water to permeate. The district also installed new time clocks for outdoor water irrigation.
  - Farallone View, El Granada, and HMBHS have rainwater capture systems ranging from 50 to 400-gallon tanks. CUSD partnered with the *Flows to Bay* program to complete these installations. The Hatch Garden has a 50-gallon rainwater harvesting barrel. Cunha Intermediate School also secured funding to install rainwater catchment systems and utilize the existing stormwater runoff infrastructure.
- The CUSD Maintenance Department installed an irrigation system and ditch to address flooding at Cunha during storms, allowing water to flow into the existing soil and preventing highway erosion and pollution from entering Pilarcitos Creek. Mulching was placed on approximately 80% of landscaping to increase water and carbon capture. All landscaping plants across the district are water-efficient and regionally appropriate.
- In the 2020–21 school year, CUSD installed water bottle refill stations at all sites to promote hydration, reduce plastic use, and provide filtered and clean water.

### *Element IC: Waste*

- CUSD records a diversion rate of 77.7% through composting and recycling. The district's business service personnel track and calculate waste and recycling diversion rates and costs in a district-wide sustainability dashboard.
- Five of the nine CUSD school sites have garden programs with small-scale (six to twelve cubic yard capacity) on-site composting systems. Yard waste and food scraps generated from the gardens are composted in these systems and used to demonstrate closed-loop cycles to students.
- Since 2020, CUSD has collected food waste from lunchtime waste generation. As of the 2022–23 school year, all school sites have organic waste collection services, and student leaders for site-level zero-waste projects educate all school community members on sorting practices with videos and assemblies. School sites also have recycling bins in classrooms and multi-use spaces, with monitoring responsibilities shared among school site leaders, custodial staff, and green teams.
- District maintenance teams collect yard waste from landscaping and reuse it on-site as mulch or bring it to local organic waste collection sites for commercial composting. A local tree company also provides mulching and wood chips to school garden sites. Additional green materials not being used on-site are collected by the district's waste hauler and taken to the commercial composting facility.
- Farallone View's student Green Team raised funds to pilot the use of reusable utensils in school lunches. The students organized multiple fundraisers and bake sales to raise

enough money to purchase metal utensils for all 170 students. The school's building modernization project is installing a tri-bin sink in the cafeteria kitchen to support the reusable utensil program.

- As part of its ongoing efforts to modernize the campus, CUSD is installing modular buildings, repurposing classrooms, and reusing existing structures to save natural resources, transportation, and energy costs.
- CUSD's construction manager significantly reduces waste from construction and renovation projects by reusing materials on-site when possible, identifying vendors that will recycle deconstruction materials, and working with vendors who use prefabrication construction methods.
- The Facilities Department utilizes the County Public Health Department's *Small Generator Recycling Program* to drop off hazardous waste for safe disposal. Additionally, CUSD retrieves e-waste from every site.
- CUSD requires vendors to certify that construction materials are properly recycled. For example, when the district removed an unusable old schoolhouse, a company deconstructed it to recycle and resell the lumber. In addition, when construction workers remove soil from construction sites, it is repurposed to repave roads.
- Aligned with the district's preferred purchasing policy endorsed by the school board on Earth Day in 2023, CUSD is exploring best practices and policies related to environmentally friendly purchasing for maintenance and school operations. Implementing an action plan during the 2024–25 school year will guide these efforts. Maintenance practices include the procurement of compostable bags for on-site compost bins, the substitution of vinegar for herbicides, and the use of single-ply compostable paper towels.
- The district partners with Republic Services, its waste provider, to educate students on their waste footprint and increase diversion from landfills. Educational resources include stickers, posters, assemblies, and grade-level trips to the local landfill. The County Office of Sustainability and the County Office of Education support the partnership.
- CUSD educates all students and staff on proper composting and recycling practices. There is also a clean-up campus day at each school where student teams walk the campus and clean up litter on their lunch breaks.

#### *Element ID: Alternative Transportation*

- In surveys conducted throughout the district, CUSD recorded that 13% of their students walk to school, 11% carpool, 6% use public transportation, 5% use human-powered modes of transportation (i.e., bike, scooter, skateboard), and 1% use the school bus.
- CUSD developed a partnership with the Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS) in the 2012–13 school year. Since then, CUSD has designated an SRTS coordinator to promote safety practices, advocate for safer roadways, and organize student and family-focused awareness events. CUSD receives funding through the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) SRTS program, which funds the following:
  - Bike racks at all schools, with some possessing skateboard and scooter racks.
  - All schools have safety signage posted and murals to encourage safe driving.
  - A multi-modal trail connecting the city of Half Moon Bay to El Granada Elementary. CUSD worked with the County of San Mateo and provided an easement to the county to complete the planned part of the coastal multi-modal

trail to that campus with some dedicated pathways to the school from the trail to encourage safe biking and walking access.

- A high-visibility crosswalk at HMBHS to improve walking, rolling, and biking safety.
- The district conducts several awareness events to promote SRTS, including the following:
  - In the 2020–21 school year, CUSD hosted 15 assemblies to promote SRTS.
  - Five CUSD schools annually participate in the International Walk to School Day or Week.
  - Three CUSD schools participate annually in Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day. The annual event, celebrated on November 14<sup>th</sup>, aims to end racism and promote unity nationwide.
  - Four schools participate yearly in National Bike to School Day.
  - Since 2020, SRTS has partnered with El Granada's after-school program to schedule an annual two-day bike program for students.
  - SRTS hosts an annual Family Bike Event at Cunha Intermediate School with free bike repair, youth bike safety, book and bike helmet giveaways, raffles and prizes, and food.
- In July 2023, CUSD organized a Farmworker Family Bike Event to promote bike safety and provide free bike safety resources. The event included participation from community groups involved in farmworker outreach and affordable housing. Various entities joined this collaborative initiative, including the SMCOE, the City of Half Moon Bay, the Sheriff's Office, and the California Highway Patrol.
- CUSD operates a small fleet encompassing service vehicles, landscaping equipment, and school buses. To enhance sustainability, the district replaced two gas-powered golf carts with electric carts. Nine school buses currently use a mixture of diesel and gas. CUSD applied for grant funding to replace the existing diesel school buses with electric buses.
- CUSD partners with the local public transportation, SamTrans, to assist students with home-to-school bus routes. The district also arranges for the easy sale and distribution of discounted bus tokens and youth passes.
- The Advanced Placement (AP) Environmental Science class at HMBHS conducted a study with Stanford University to determine hazards for students who walk or roll to school. The study led to a meeting of board members, district staff, students, high school leaders, the City of Half Moon Bay head engineer, and a transportation consultant. This meeting included a walk of the campus and an audit that provided actionable steps to improve student safety while reducing traffic, idling, and dangers. The meeting also presented data necessary for applying for and securing a grant to enhance infrastructure. For the 2023–24 school year, students are collaborating with SRTS staff and SMCOE on projects using information from the audit, including expanding the biking and walking path leading to the school, reducing idling, and improving the school drop-off procedure.



## **Pillar II: Improve the Health and Wellness of Students and Staff**

### *Element IIA: Environmental Health*

- District personnel actively monitor sites, inspect for pest infestations, and promptly address staff and student pest reports. Upon detecting evidence of pests, the district promptly contacts its contracted pest control company to ensure proper and effective removal. Pesticide application occurs only as needed and strictly after school hours when children are not present.
- CUSD requires all staff to complete yearly Integrated Pest Management (IPM) training. CUSD maintains records of pest maintenance and removal in accordance with the California Department of Pesticide Regulation.
- CUSD posts signs prohibiting tobacco use on campuses and buses. In the 2022–23 school year, the district used Tobacco Use Prevention Education Grant funding for district-wide tobacco use prevention education.
- The district is surveying all sites for fuel-burning combustion appliances eligible to apply for CALSHAPE replacement funding. CUSD is also conducting a comprehensive review of all its gas appliances with the help of the SMCOE to determine replacement plans for electric appliances.
- The district checks for asbestos when they remodel schools and implement mitigation measures at any building that contains asbestos. The same goes for lead and other dangerous chemicals.
- Construction contractors line the ground with radon-resistant membranes to prevent radon gas exposure on all new projects. The district checks for radon at each site every three months. There are no wood playgrounds containing chromate copper arsenate on any campuses.
- HMBHS science teachers and maintenance staff follow a chemical purchasing policy, undergoing yearly chemical handling and storage training. In addition, school-trained staff securely store hazardous inventory in locked locations, with on-site inventory lists. Maintenance staff and science teachers also follow cleanup and disposal procedures outlined in the training.
- Custodial staff utilize sprayers and disinfectant wipes for disinfection, applying them only when staff and students are not present. Custodians use motorized floor mops to clean after each lunchtime, creating a safe and clean eating space for students.
- During the global pandemic, the district collaborated with the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) and the County Department of Health to develop new air quality procedures to enhance district-wide ventilation systems. The new procedures incorporate Pelican control systems that wirelessly alert the maintenance team to any issues with school ventilation systems, with a system exchange rate of five to six air changes per hour. The district will continue to follow the guidelines to improve the ventilation systems across the district henceforth.
- CUSD combines Pelican controllers with minimum efficiency reporting value (MERV) 13 filters and purifiers to ensure ideal indoor air quality (IAQ). To avoid asthma triggers, all offices and classrooms have portable air scrubbers and purifiers that reduce particulate matter. In addition, custodial staff perform yard work such as mowing and blowing early in the morning before students arrive or late in the afternoon after students leave campus.

- CUSD prioritizes the creation of excellent indoor environmental conditions. The district uses California Division of State Architect-regulated acoustic materials in all new construction projects to ensure acoustic levels remain below 45 dBA. Currently, under-construction classrooms incorporate solar tubes and windows designed to prevent the entry of heat from the sun while providing ample natural light. This energy-saving measure eliminates the need for excessive cooling and contributes to a naturally lit and welcoming learning environment.
- CUSD has a district-assigned administrator who directly communicates with site leaders, teachers, and school communities about air quality and decisions on modified outside activity based on the California Air Quality Index.
- Cunha planted ninety new hedgerow plants to create a wall along the highway to block noise and wind and attract important pollinators. The natural wall also improves air quality on campus by screening highway pollutants from blowing onto the school site.
- School grounds across the district possess nearly 25% ecologically beneficial features, including rain gardens, outdoor classrooms, farms, and gardens. CUSD also assesses ecological landscaping by measuring the percentage of tree canopy at each campus. Kings Mountain Elementary leads with 70% canopy coverage, offering students access to trees, shade, and a cooler environment.
- CUSD employs dehumidifiers to remove moisture when leaks occur, preemptively addressing the issue before engaging a contractor for repairs. The Pelican system alerts district personnel regarding abnormal humidity levels. The district's contracted service repair company addresses any concerns and mitigates potential mold risks when necessary. When mold is present, the district closes the room and contracts a mold abatement company.
- The district regularly conducts soil testing for lead contamination during new construction. CUSD also tests all buildings for lead-based paint and properly remedies tainted areas. All schools have undergone testing and received proper remediation to ensure they are lead-free.
- CUSD conducts water testing for lead and other contaminants every five years, enlisting a water quality company to inspect and ensure the cleanliness of drinking water at all sites. The district replaces water filters every two years at all district sites.

### *Element IIB: Nutrition and Fitness*

- Since 2020, CUSD has participated in the *Healthy Schools Program* from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. The Nutrition Services director is a part of the *Healthy Schools Pathway Program* and the *Farm to School Committee*, both of which are partnerships with UC Cooperative Extension. The district conducts taste testing for students to try unfamiliar fruits and vegetables at every elementary school.
- Food services at HMBHS participate in a *Farm to School* program and the *California Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program* that utilizes federal funds to purchase local fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Pilarcitos' Farm to Table Cooking Program provides students with hands-on culinary arts engagement. Participants create three-course meals to feed the students and staff using locally sourced farm ingredients. This program establishes a meaningful connection between learning and the home environment, as the students share their prepared meals with staff and fellow students.

- There are staff welcome barbeques and luncheons with food provided by Nutrition Services. Since 2018, CUSD has partnered with TomKat Ranch, a regenerative agriculture ranch that donates local, organic beef products for school events.
- CUSD contracts an outside food service provider, LunchMaster, for breakfast and lunch services offered at K-8 sites. LunchMaster is a local company based in San Mateo. They provide an entree, fresh fruit, vegetables, snacks, and cold beverages. Meals adhere to the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, California Department of Education Nutrition Services Division, and Adult Care Food Program. Registered dietitians design meals prepared from scratch using fresh, local ingredients.
- The district provides annual nutrition education for staff, students, and families. Nutrition education is provided each year for staff, students, and families through various channels, including partners like the Health, Environmental, and Agricultural Literacy (HEAL) Project, wellness committee meetings, and guidance from LunchMaster. This educational effort encompasses reading labels, nutrition lessons tailored to different age groups and grades, creating healthy plates, and incorporating exercise. Additionally, schools reinforce balanced nutrition through posters displayed in each lunchroom.
- CUSD participates in the MyPlate program, which requires a balanced serving of fruits, vegetables, grains, and milk for school meals. The nutrition team meets regularly to discuss student meal patterns and the most desirable foods.
- From 2011 to 2014, the Hatch Elementary School Garden earned the Farm Systems Alliance Silver Award for School Gardens. This San Mateo County Food Systems Alliance award recognizes exemplary school gardens based on content, accessibility, and liveliness.
- All district elementary schools, in partnership with The HEAL Project, have native plant garden programs that focus on nutrition, health, and science curriculum. Farallone View Elementary School has an outdoor classroom and a native plant garden for science classes. Second and third-grade students across the district engage in the HEAL Project Intensive Garden Program. This 26-week program aligns with California's Next Generation Science Standards (CA-NGSS), teaching students about health, agriculture, and nutrition. It fosters environmental stewardship and sustainability for a healthy ecosystem.
- Cunha Intermediate School (Cunha) began planning in 2019 for its *Little Cunha Farm*. This area hosts a class now available to all students, integrating science courses with soil science and animal husbandry. The farmhouse has twelve chickens, multiple chicken coops, and a designated picnic area with picnic tables. Cunha also recently purchased three new bin composting systems to improve efficiency and cleanliness.
- Cunha collaborates with local businesses for educational field trips. Seventh-grade students visit Impossible Foods and Hidden Villa to learn about sustainable farming. Eighth-grade students visit Garden Apothecary to explore local farming concepts taught at HMBHS. Lastly, sixth and seventh-grade students visit Feed and Fuel in downtown Half Moon Bay to learn about raising baby chicks.
- Teachers and staff at HMBHS actively facilitate two gardens. The Agriculture Career Technical Education (CTE) Program manages the first garden along with the Agriscience Lab/Farm, while the other garden is under the operation of the Special Education Department. In the 2023–24 school year, the school is actively renovating its Agriscience Lab/Farm, incorporating two new greenhouses connected to rainwater barrels for drip irrigation.

- Pilarcitos partners with a local non-profit farm, Potrero Nuevo, to provide job training on sustainable agriculture practices. Although the Pilarcitos campus does not have space for an outdoor garden, its teachers and students care for an indoor aquaponics growing space and maintain bioswales with native plants bordering the campus.
- CUSD has a physical education (PE) program utilizing the outdoors and integrating health measures into curriculum and assessments. For example, elementary schools have a trained PE specialist who provides PE to different grade levels. In addition to physical skills, these classes teach social skills intended to transfer to recess time.
- CUSD believes that providing students with opportunities for activity and teaching behavior tools are keys to a safe, productive recess environment. Therefore, recess supervisors coordinate and guide students in collaborative playground activities. For example, El Granada Elementary contracts an external organization, *Playworks*, to provide organized play activities for all students during recess. These activities support students' social, emotional, and physical development and help students with decreased behavioral incidents. In addition, Hatch Elementary School (Hatch) contracts with the organization *Kinder Movement* to provide organized physical education to its youngest students and offer classroom sessions that teach the importance of being active.
- Athletics programs at HMBHS and Cunha Intermediate School see strong student participation, including football, track and field, soccer, baseball, softball, volleyball, swimming, and wrestling. Additionally, students at Cunha Intermediate have after-school access to turf fields to engage in many intramural and interscholastic recreational sports managed through a longstanding partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of the Coastsides.
- Cunha leadership coordinates and leads the student body in games, events, and competitions, including capturing the flag and relay events with grade-level teams. The HMBHS Agriculture program's greenhouses provide a space for students to learn about soil cycles and food production.
- Coordination of Services Teams include administrators, counselors, and other support staff who assemble bi-weekly to discuss strategies to assist students demonstrating the need for either or both intervention and support because of grades, behavior, or mental wellness concerns.
- CUSD supports after-school initiatives with its annual *Expanded Learning Program*, teaching students about environmental sustainability through brief lessons, daily activities, play, and collaborative storytelling. Additionally, the program engages students in the *Walking Classroom*, an audio-based curriculum connecting them with nature.
- Established at the onset of the global pandemic, CUSD provides a monthly virtual wellness group for staff that centers on mental health and building resiliency.
- CUSD staff work together through individual interests and social committees on wellness activities. At Cunha Intermediate School, a staff member leads a weekly yoga class just for other staff members. Other schools' social committees host after-hours hikes and walks to connect with the outdoors, and there are also weekly snack days for team building at numerous schools.
- CUSD offers all staff and family members access to a referral organization, Care Solace, to help match them with a mental health care provider at no cost.
- District wellness teams distribute newsletters with environmental safety education about sun protection and ultraviolet (UV) radiation dangers. Additionally, CUSD provides guidance to school personnel and families when air quality concerns exist due to wildfire smoke.

- CUSD utilizes a Multi-Tiered System of Support framework for coordinating student health issues. This framework includes systems for understanding needed interventions and a district-wide support system for students using tier 1 (general supports), tier 2 (targeted supports), and tier 3 (intensive supports).
- The district employs a registered nurse who works district-wide and visits schools when needed. The registered nurse provides district-wide coordination to all staff that support student health-related programs. Elementary schools have identified and trained health technicians; front office staff members also receive medical training. Middle and high schools have health staff trained in basic medical care, mental health, and anxiety.
- In the 2021–22 school year, CUSD launched a virtual medicine program, Hazel Health, aiming for equitable access to health care. This telehealth program allows students and families to receive health care for minor health issues and allows students to return to the classroom quickly. In the 2022–23 school year, Hazel Health received over 900 visits, resulting in lower absences from school. The district documents that the average return of students to class was 78%, with 1965 classroom hours saved and 48% of the district’s socioeconomically disadvantaged CUSD families participating. Staff and parents were surveyed and provided a satisfaction rating of 4.87 out of 5.
- CUSD has partnerships with organizations, ensuring holistic student care. Notable partnerships include the following:
  - Adolescent Counseling Services provides counseling and mental health support for youth.
  - El Centro De Libertad offers outpatient substance abuse prevention and healing services.
  - The County of San Mateo Behavioral Health Department offers support for substance abuse or mental health needs.
  - Star Vista specializes in family counseling for early childhood crisis prevention.
  - Sonrisas Dental Clinic serves as a community dental health center, conducting yearly in-school screenings to identify children in need and providing a full range of dental treatment and education, regardless of patient income.
  - The Department of Rehabilitation Services offers support services for students with disabilities.
  - The San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office ensures student safety and provides Sheriff’s Activities League enrichment.
  - The Incident Command System is an organization that coordinates school safety plans.
  - Hazel Health provides school-based online medical consultation.
- CUSD provides various initiatives led by district staff, site-level leadership teams, or wellness committees to foster student mental health and improve school climate. These initiatives include the following:
  - In 2022, CUSD used the *San Mateo County Mental Health Student Services Act Grant* to support kindergarten through twelfth-grade curriculum on five components of social-emotional learning and a quarter-time counselor at Pilarcitos.
  - The district uses the *Safe School Ambassador Grant* to fund staff and students training in healthy ways to resolve conflict.
  - The district uses its Health and Wellness Center as a place where students can receive necessary counseling support.

- Leadership students and administrators across the district coordinate an annual *Kindness Campaign* to prevent bullying.
- A student-led high school group called *Safe Space* focuses on student mental health concerns.
- Since 2022, CUSD has hosted a monthly family engagement night to support student mental health and provide community resilience training for parents and guardians.
- CUSD conducts free training for parents about raising resilient, healthy students.
- Las Platicas is a Spanish-speaking forum designed to engage Latino families in working with CUSD leadership to address their needs for safe and supportive schools.
- CUSD annually sponsors two district-wide wellness fairs featuring mental health provider resources, raffles, dancing, and refreshments.
- A restorative justice (RJ) coordinator trains district and site staff at all sites in RJ practices both for community building and alternatives to exclusionary disciplinary practices.
- Elementary schools engage in restorative justice games, leading to student-led child-directed play.

### **Pillar III: Provide Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education**

#### *Element IIIA: Interdisciplinary Learning*

- On Earth Day 2021, CUSD adopted its Earth Day Proclamation. The proclamation acknowledged the importance of environmental literacy in the education system and documented CUSD's commitment to engaging students in learning through environmental action. As part of this commitment, CUSD pledged to promote environmental sustainability and protect the environment throughout the year.
- The district has developed an *Environmental Literacy Scope and Sequence* that provides every student with quality environmental education experiences. The district's environmental literacy requirement states that students will participate in four district-wide experiences at every school site to gain knowledge, skills, positive attitudes, and civic responsibility. CUSD believes that through its environmental literacy efforts, every student at CUSD will receive high-quality outdoor education that informs their understanding of how their actions impact the natural world and how the spheres of the living environment coexist.
- In CUSD's 2021 – 2024 *Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)*, the district commits to providing gardening education for all second and third-grade students. In addition, the LCAP outlines a science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM) enrichment goal that integrates environmental literacy. This integration extends beyond hands-on learning experiences, encompassing collaborations with local partners to serve second through fifth-grade students.
- CUSD customizes programs to meet student needs by integrating CA-NGSS Environmental Principles and Concepts (EP&Cs) across schools and grade levels. Garden education is integrated into elementary school classes, while middle and high schools offer garden and agriculture programs that include CA-NGSS EP&Cs. Teachers collaborate with community partners for field trips, classroom presentations, and comprehensive units of study focused on the environment and sustainability.

- The district’s sustainability consultant, in collaboration with the SMCOE, is crafting a Climate Action Plan (CAP) that integrates environmental literacy into a green schoolyard master plan. The pre-development committee, including key educational figures, has completed the initial draft. The CAP is scheduled for presentation to principals in January. The district will then share it with staff and students to engage all interested parties. The school board will review and approve the finalized CAP during April 2024 to celebrate Earth Day.
- CUSD collaborates with the SMCOE to engage 15 teachers and staff in the *Environmental Teacher Solutionary Fellowship*, empowering educators to develop project-based learning units focused on environmental action and justice. Additionally, one administrator and CUSD’s Science Specialist participated in *SMCOE’s Sustainable and Climate Resilient Administrators Fellowship Program*.
- In 2023, CUSD fully implemented an *Environmental Scope of Experiences*, fostering knowledge about environmental sustainability and students' roles in maintaining ecological balance. Through this effort, CUSD now integrates environmental and sustainability education across grade levels and subjects. Specific examples include the following:
  - Transitional kindergarten (TK) and kindergarten students at El Granada and Hatch Elementary Schools focus on a clean energy unit supported by PG&E.
  - TK through first-grade students at Kings Mountain undertake a project-based learning research project focused on fire ecology and soil health.
  - Second and third-grade students at all elementary schools participate in the *HEAL Project Intensive Garden Program*.
  - Fourth and fifth-grade students at Kings Mountain undertake a unit on food systems and sustainable grazing in California.
  - Fourth and fifth-grade students at El Granada, Farallone View, and Hatch engage in field trips to guide nature journaling and native plantings with *Coastside Junior Land Stewards*.
  - Fifth-grade students at El Granada undertake units of study focusing on recycling.
  - Sixth and seventh-grade science requirements include an Earth Science course with a climate change unit.
  - Sixth through eighth-grade students attend agriculture science electives.
  - Ninth through twelfth-grade students can take AP Environmental Science, Marine Ecology Honors, or a CTE Agriculture Program.
- CUSD offers co-curricular programs that enhance environmental education opportunities throughout the district. At elementary schools, the HEAL Project hosts lunchtime garden clubs for fourth and fifth-grade students. Additionally, elementary sites have student-led green teams and student voice movements that promote well-being and environmental action. These groups have taken ownership of the waste sorting program to improve diversion rates. Club members engage in garden tasks or explore garden spaces with supervision.
- Cunha’s *Earth Club* helps lead community awareness initiatives on zero waste and environmental stewardship. The *Cunha Green Club* also helps with campus greening efforts.
- Since 2016, the *HMBHS Environmental Club* has regularly focused on sustainability efforts. During the 2018–19 school year, students began improving waste management

systems at HMBHS and applied for and received a grant for new recycling bins. Students implemented the improved waste management system during the 2019 – 2020 school year. Additionally, the CUSD School Board and *HMBHS Environmental Club* co-facilitate a district-wide *Environmental Committee* that meets bi-monthly.

- CUSD partners with local community-based organizations to provide environmental education field-based learning for students, including the following:
  - Fourth-grade students at Hatch, Farallone View, and El Granada Elementary Schools participate in the *Coastside Junior Land Stewards* program with Coastside Land Trust, focusing on environmental literacy and stewardship.
  - Second and third-grade students annually visit local farms through the *HEAL Project* (e.g., visits to Elkus Ranch, Potrero Nuevo Farm, Andreotti's Family Farm, and others).
  - Students take field trips to regenerative agriculture farms and local companies like HiddenVilla and ImpossibleFoods.
  - Kindergarten through second-grade students take annual trips to local farms where students plant pumpkins and later harvest those pumpkins to engage with sustainable agriculture in Half Moon Bay.
  - Fifth-grade students at El Granada Elementary participate in field trips with Sea Odyssey and Skyline Ridge/Daniel's Nature Reserve.
  - Various grade levels engage in field trips with the Marine Science Institute, including beach clean-up events.
  - Students visit the Monterey Bay Aquarium and Fitzgerald Marine Reserve in a joint field trip.
  - Students take weekly field trips to document monarch butterfly numbers in the Wavecrest open space area.
  - Pilarcitos students engage in hands-on learning at Potrero Nuevo farm, utilizing farm equipment to facilitate produce growth and harvest. Students also learn practical cooking skills that are integrated into the learning process.
  - Students catalog plant species and examine the natural environment at Francis Beach State Park. Students focus on botany, plant identification, and the positive impact of reducing invasive plants.
  - A 2023 pilot program by Pilarcitos staff in partnership with MM Horses, LLC and Moss Beach Ranch. Students learn equine care, grooming, training techniques, and optional Western horseback riding.
  - All CUSD sixth-grade students participate in a one-week field study at Jones Gulch YMCA Camp, exploring local ecosystems and farm-to-table awareness.
  - Teacher-led units culminate in solution-based action projects, addressing community awareness and education. Examples include energy conservation, beach clean-ups, sustainable agriculture, and youth science education.

### *Element IIIB: STEM Content, Knowledge, and Skills*

- CUSD employs a dedicated science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) teacher to teach fifth-grade students practical environmental problem-solving through STEM skills. Students design models of real-life situations, analyze energy, physics, and life cycles, and solve environmental problems like deforestation, climate change, and



energy consumption. Students showcase their problem-solving skills at an annual science fair.

- The middle school STEAM elective course integrates the arts into STEM, encouraging creativity in solving environmental problems with activities like creating art installations and designing eco-friendly products. In addition, in the Agriculture Science course, middle school students engage in a curriculum that intertwines biological sciences with practical applications in agriculture. This elective equips students with knowledge about plant biology, agricultural technology, and sustainable farming practices. Through hands-on activities, such as planting, studying soil quality, and experimenting with sustainable farming techniques.
- Middle school students investigate climate change through STEM and ecology in the *Vanishing Ice* phenomenon. In this Earth Science unit, students engage in data analysis on temperature trends and climate model simulations. Life Science units engage students in beach cleanups, wildlife conservation, and climate action plans to explore the impact of climate change on ecosystems and living organisms.
- The *Sustainable City Project Designs* Unit combines engineering with sustainable urban planning, prompting sixth through eighth-grade students to design models for green rooftops and create plans for sustainable water and waste management systems.
- CUSD's high school students in the *Agriculture CTE Program* combine agricultural science with practical STEM applications, including in-field agricultural practices, soil and water quality experiments, and studying local environmental phenomena. In advanced courses like AP Environmental Science and Marine Ecology Honors, students integrate STEM principles with environmental studies on ecosystems, biodiversity, and conservation. Students participate in marine ecology field research, execute environmental projects, and engage in local conservation efforts.
- CUSD connects environmental literacy in middle and high school programs with regional experts and green careers, including:
  - The *Little Cunha Farm* provides valuable insights into green careers, fostering hands-on engagement by students. Established in 2019 as an outdoor classroom, the farm is a three-year middle school program covering soil science, regenerative agriculture, farming, and construction. The farm has key partnerships with the Resource Conservation District and *Flows to Bay* program, contributing to composting installations, education, and rain capture systems.
  - Half Moon Bay High School hosts the *Agriculture CTE Program*, which strongly emphasizes sustainable agricultural practices. Experiential learning is facilitated through on-site gardens and greenhouse facilities, providing students hands-on green career experience. The program collaborates with the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department and the Science Department to integrate sustainability plans into the curricula.
  - *Pilarcitos Farm to Desk Program* immerses students in business, marketing, and hands-on science lessons at Potrero Nuevo Farm. Through active involvement, students take on responsibilities in running the farm, creating and selling products, and utilizing the harvested produce to prepare healthy meals. This program offers a comprehensive learning experience combining practical skills and real-world applications.
- During the 2021–22 school year, Cunha Intermediate School secured a K12 Strong Workforce Program grant to develop a CTE Green Career Awareness module for seventh and eighth-grade science classes. As a result, students at Cunha were exposed

to multiple green career modules throughout their science courses. More than 40 HMBHS Agriculture CTE students organized a Green Careers field trip to support the program.

### *Element III C: Civic Knowledge and Skills*

- CUSD students engage in environmental initiatives focusing on implementing positive change in their local communities. For example, in 2022, eight students from HMBHS engaged in the *Youth Climate Ambassadors Program (YCA)*, empowering students in San Mateo County to take action. Through bi-monthly workshops, retreats, and diverse learning experiences, they developed collaboration and leadership skills to implement solution-oriented projects. CUSD's YCA projects involved establishing a native plant garden, documenting the project through film, and participating in native plant restoration.
- Fourth-grade students participate in coastal habitat restoration projects along with the Coastside Land Trust Junior Stewardship Program.
- CUSD's diverse service-learning projects include initiatives like fourth-grade students' participation in the *Coastside Junior Land Stewards* program and Kings Mountain Elementary students engaging in litter pick-ups and beach clean-ups. Cunha Intermediate School integrates service learning with environmental themes into its *Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)* student elective. HMBHS's *Real Life Learning* program aids students in fulfilling a 35-hour service-learning graduation requirement, focusing on environmental sustainability goals.
- CUSD high school service-learning program partners with local community organizations to promote healthy ecosystems and food systems. Students must engage in service and support throughout the community as citizens in outdoor learning through habitat restoration and maintaining local community gardens. HMBHS's *Real Life Learning* program service-learning coordinator also connects students with environmental sustainability volunteer opportunities. Internships include a variety of opportunities, including local farm and ranch internships.
- Elementary students participate in Oceans Week, which celebrates and explores various aspects of the world's oceans. Elementary schools provide in-depth learning opportunities and co-curricular activities using ocean science as thematic integration across language arts, math, and social studies.
- For the 2022-23 school year, the Cunha environmental lead teacher engaged students and staff in building an outdoor classroom space. In addition, HMBHS students, under the direction of staff, built an outdoor learning space used daily by the school community.
- CUSD has many partnerships that advance the greater community towards a more sustainable future. Students and staff partner with non-profit organizations and local businesses in the City of Half Moon Bay and San Mateo County. These include the following:
  - The *Flows to Bay* program educates students on expanding water resilience and installing water capture systems.
  - The HEAL Project offers nutrition and farm education, dedicated garden time, and nutrition lessons.
  - Coastside Land Trust promotes land stewardship in elementary and high school students by removing invasive plant species and planting native plants.

- Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve provides ocean and tidepool education.
- The San Mateo County Resource Conservation District and San Mateo County Office of Sustainability collaborate to offer ongoing professional development for teachers.
- CUSD partners with Half Moon Bay to support climate action. They collaborate to help the city reduce greenhouse gas emissions and advance CUSD's climate programs.
- The Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary organizes field trips for students.
- The California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Marine Science Institute, University of California, Santa Cruz, and California State Parks collectively arrange student field trips.
- CUSD Superintendent Sean McPhetridge is actively involved in state-wide initiatives to promote environmental literacy. He co-chaired a national program for superintendents to take action on environmental education and climate action. He is a California Environmental Literacy Initiative District Innovation Hub member, which aims to increase access to environmental literacy programs in K-12 education. Additionally, he participates in the California Department of Education's California Green Ribbon Schools Working Group.
- Many CUSD students, teachers, and administrators have all participated in SMCOE county-wide sustainability programs such as the *Environmental Solutionary Teacher Fellowship* program, *Youth Climate Ambassador* program, and the *Sustainable and Climate Resilient Administrator* program. These programs connect CUSD staff members with people in other school districts in San Mateo County, helping to further drive local momentum towards climate action and sustainability.
- As part of HMBHS's Agricultural CTE pathways, CUSD and HMBHS partner with the local San Mateo Community Colleges to support college and career opportunities. This includes dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, and access to CTE pathways pertinent to environmental sustainability.
- The Cabrillo Education Foundation (CEF) Endowment Fund provides long-term and stable funding for the district's science, STEM, and environmental sustainability programs. Through the foundation's support, CUSD has maintained a full-time science teacher in fifth grade, added middle school STEM electives, and engaged in a district-wide science collaborative of elementary, middle, and high school science teachers. The district science collaborative meets monthly for vertical articulation and to share STEM, Environmental Sustainability, and other enrichment lessons and resources.
- In April 2021, to recognize Earth Day, the HMBHS Environmental Club presented to the school board regarding their desire to develop zero waste programs. Inspired by the students' presentation, school board members worked with the high school club to start a district-wide *CUSD Sustainability Committee* in the Spring of 2021. Members of the CUSD Sustainability Committee include the Superintendent, HMBHS's Principal, students, teachers across the district, members of the CUSD school board, the district sustainability coordinator, and participants from supporting community groups. The *CUSD Sustainability Committee* developed a district-wide *Environmental Sustainability Scope of Experience* with plans for all grade levels to engage in activities or field trips related to environmental sustainability.