



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.

(Nominating Authority's Signature) Date:

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.



New Mexico

Cuba Independent School District

Location: Cuba, New Mexico

Type and School Level:

Demographic: 100% Free and Reduced Lunch; 23% Special Education; 78% Native American, 21% Hispanic
2% other; 43% ELL

Enrollment: 743

Part I: Summary Narrative

Cuba Independent School District (CISD) serves a student population of rural and Indigenous communities. Cuba Independent School District is deeply committed to fostering a sustainable and healthy environment for our students and staff while delivering effective social-emotional, environmental, and sustainability education. Across all ED-GRS Pillars and Elements, we have embarked on a comprehensive journey towards a greener and more resilient future. In the Pillar of Environmental Impact and Cost Reduction, we have implemented in-house food growing operations, reducing our carbon footprint and saving on shipping and operational costs. We've initiated waste reduction programs, such as repurposing and composting, resulting in a significant reduction in landfill waste and lowering disposal expenses. In the Health and Wellness Pillar, we've prioritized the well-being of our community by promoting physical activity through outdoor classrooms and green spaces, enhancing the hydration of our students by providing reusable water bottles and filtered water refilling stations, and providing access to nutritious meals utilizing our District-grown produce. Finally, our commitment to Environmental and Sustainability Education has led to the development of a robust curriculum that integrates environmental topics across subjects, empowering our students with the knowledge and skills needed to be responsible stewards of the planet. Our overarching goal is to create a sustainable, healthy, and environmentally conscious educational ecosystem that enriches the lives of our students and staff while contributing positively to the world we all share.



Part II: Documentation of State Evaluation of District Nominee

Pillar I: Reduced Environmental Impact and Costs

Our district recognizes the critical importance of sustainability and environmental responsibility in today's world. We are committed to reducing our environmental impact, improving the quality of our resources, and embracing eco-friendly practices.

Element IA: Energy

- CISD buildings use automatic lighting and HVAC systems to reduce wasteful electricity usage
- CISD teacherages are located close enough to campus to allow teacher-residents to walk to work instead of driving, reducing greenhouse emissions
- CISD teachers who live in Rio Rancho and Albuquerque have the option to use the Rio Transit bus and carpooling options to reduce greenhouse emissions
- CISD grows produce in the Greenhouse for the Food Service Department, reducing the dependency on shipping/transporting vegetables
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Element IB: Water and Grounds

- CISD issued reusable water bottles to all students to reduce plastic waste on campus. The District has also installed filtered water dispensers to provide our students with healthy water sources.
- CISD Ag Animal Barn will feature rainwater barrels for water conservation.
- Water diversion actions are planned to develop a natural rainwater pond for ag-animal usage.
- Filtered water refill stations on campus are automated to reduce water waste and provide high-quality filtered water for staff and students.
- We aim to minimize water waste, capitalize on rain runoff, capture nutrient-rich manure for livestock grass fertilizer, and integrate environmental conservation units with hands-on animal care education.

Element IC: Waste

- Our district-wide composting program diverts organic waste from landfills and transforms it into nutrient-rich compost used for landscaping and gardening. All food service green waste is composted on campus and is maintained by our students for hands-on learning about the methods and benefits of composting.
- Mr. Levi Casaus' Horticulture classes collect grass and weed clippings from the groundskeeping staff to compost, insulate outdoor garden beds, and build horticulture mounds.



Element ID: Alternative Transportation

- Cuba Independent School District (CISD) serves a student population of rural and Indigenous communities. The small municipality of Cuba offers few housing options; thus many teachers commute from Rio Rancho and Albuquerque.
- The Rio Metro bus system is a lifeline for our District, providing an affordable and environmentally friendly option for our teachers who live outside of the Village of Cuba. Additionally, the District owns multiple teacherages to accommodate teachers who want to move to Cuba and live within the District and in our community. These teacherages are close enough to campus that several staff residents opt to walk to campus, reducing their carbon footprints and demonstrating health-conscious decision-making.

Pillar II: Improve the health and wellness of students and staff

In Cuba Independent School District, the integration of a comprehensive school environmental health program and the promotion of sound health and wellness practices are fundamental to our commitment to the well-being of students and staff. We continuously strive to improve health and wellness metrics while providing a safe and nurturing learning environment. Our dedication to these initiatives ensures that CISD remains a leader in promoting the health and wellness of our school community.

Element IIA: Environmental Health

- Buildings and campus grounds are routinely inspected each day by the maintenance staff to ensure the safety and well-being of staff and students.
- Classrooms have and utilize ample natural lighting.
- Teachers regularly utilize the outdoor classrooms.
- CISD prioritizes indoor air quality by regularly monitoring and maintaining HVAC systems to ensure optimal performance.
- Classrooms are well-ventilated with natural light sources to create a comfortable and productive learning environment.
- CISD has multiple outdoor classrooms and nature trails to connect students with the environment, promote ecological learning, and provide teachers with alternative environments for instruction. Students benefit from spending time outdoors and engaging in alternative methods of instruction.



Element IIB: Nutrition and Fitness

- Cuba Independent School District offers healthy meal options in school cafeterias, adhering to nutritional guidelines. All students are provided with breakfast, mid-morning Nutrition Break snacks, lunch, and after-school sports teams and tutorees are provided late-afternoon snacks to ensure the nutritional needs of students are met and exceeded while they are on campus, regardless of economic status.
- The high school and middle school cafeterias offer entree salads as a lunch option, and roughly 20% of our high school students opt for this healthy alternative; a number we hope to increase as our students get more hands-on experience growing the produce used in the salads served on campus.
- The District purchases fruits and vegetables through the Agri-Cultura Network (ACN), a non-profit food hub that is part of the New Mexico Grown network, which connects local food buyers with local food growers.
- CISD's purchasing from ACN boosts New Mexico's local economy, decreases the need for out-of-state importing of products, and supports sustainable and regenerative farmers and ranchers to continue their important work.
- Mr. John Hartley, Food Service Director, is working with the New Mexico Department of Agriculture and NM Grown program to provide other local organizations with CISD-grown produce to cut down on shipping needs and the carbon footprint of others in our community.
- By continuing these efforts, improving on-site practices, and embracing future innovations, we aim to be a model of environmental stewardship for our community and beyond.
- Within our Health and Physical Education (PE) classes, our instructor, Mr. Christopher Cavazos encourages students to set attainable goals for their personal physical and nutritional health and helps them learn how to best reach and maintain those goals. The high school freshmen are enrolled in Health and PE concurrently, which boosts their understanding of the relationship between exercise and nutrition, how to use both to maintain physical health and how to best be armed against numerous risk factors associated with poor health.
- Our district maintains safe and clean outdoor spaces, including playgrounds and sports facilities, to promote physical activity.
- While our staff and teachers work to promote healthy lifestyle choices amongst our student population, we encourage our staff and faculty to make those same healthy choices for themselves. The CISD Pool offers free lap swim, open swim, and water aerobics classes to all staff and faculty. Staff are also allowed access to the state-of-the-art weight room, fully equipped with various machines and free weights.
- Considering the smaller student population, CISD has an extensive athletic program. Currently, about 41% of our students participate in school-sanctioned fall sports. Our



Middle School and High School athletes can participate as Dual Athletes, and many of them work hard to rise to that challenge.

- Mr. Marc Valdez initiated the E-Sports Team at CISD, offering a sanctioned student-athlete opportunity for an alternative group of students (non-traditional athletic participation).
- Athletic Director, Mr. Frank Cordova, expanded student athletics to the elementary level, with about 35% of our elementary students participating in the newly formed Soccer program.
- Mr. Richard Armentrout's Karate club is a school-sponsored club offering our students an opportunity to engage in physical activity and self-discipline.
- There are a wide variety of clubs and unofficial teams on campus, offering additional opportunities for our students to find their niche and engage in physical and social activities with their peers. The camaraderie and feeling of belonging offered by these sports teams, clubs, and organizations do wonders for our students' overall educational experience and physical and mental health.
- Cuba Independent School District has implemented district-wide Social Emotional Learning (SEL), and SEL Director, Mrs. Tricia Delgado, has developed a variety of programs to support all students and staff with this endeavor.
 - "Panorama" is an SEL curriculum supplement that focuses on the "whole-child" system of support.
 - "Peekapak", a digital social-emotional learning platform, uses an interactive "story-world" and is being implemented as a supplemental literacy program in our elementary classrooms.
 - "Leaps for Schools" is an SEL supplemental curriculum focused on the development of our students' micro-skills. Social-Emotional Learning is a daily class, and in the high school level, we utilize the Character Development and Leadership curriculum, aimed at developing students' "soft skills", interpersonal communication skills, character, and leadership experiences.
- Students in athletics work with the Character Development and Leadership curriculum carry an optional student-athlete program, which targets our students with athletic-based examples and activities for character and leadership experience development.
- CISD awards Students of the Month and Student Athletes of Character. The acknowledgment of these students ensures that our students feel seen and appreciated for what they do and how they interact with their peers and teachers.
- CISD conducts "Student Voice" surveys, interviews, and events throughout campus and the year. These interviews put our students in an open-minded and safe discussion space, in front of our superintendent, administrators, and teachers. They can freely express their opinions and suggestions to improve student life in our district, and the inclusion of Student Voice in administrative decisions aids in our student's sense of ownership and belonging.



- Last year, CISD instituted the Ram Pals pen-pal program. This district-wide pen pal program increases our student’s writing skills, letter-writing skills, it fosters cross-campus friendships and develops mentorship/social interactions between young students and upperclassmen.
- To get parents, guardians, and community members more involved in the school community, Mrs. Raphaelita Phillips, Director of Indian Education, instituted “Parent University”. These monthly meetings bring our community together to educate parents/guardians about school policies as well as connect them with resources that are lacking in extreme rural communities. This engagement strengthens the relationship between parents and CISD by involving parents/guardians more deeply in their students’ learning experiences. The Parent University workshops give parents/guardians the tools they need to further support our students and their families outside of the classroom.

Element IIB (cont.): Coordinated School Health, Mental Health, School Climate, and Safety

- At Cuba Independent School District, we are committed to fostering a safe, healthy, and conducive learning environment.
- This commitment is exemplified through the integration of a comprehensive school environmental health strategies, social-emotional learning programs, and the promotion of sound health and wellness practices.
- Presbyterian Medical Services has an on-campus clinic, providing our students with free medical, dental, and mental health services.
- We provide access for our students to school nurses and counselors for their physical and mental health needs. CISD prioritizes indoor air quality by regularly monitoring and maintaining HVAC systems to ensure optimal performance.
- In addition to the on-site social workers, CISD’s Cuba Cares department offers additional support and family services for students facing emotional and social challenges. Ms. Victoria Dominguez, Director of Cuba Cares, and Ms. Donnica Dunlap, McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison, both work with our neighboring communities and Navajo Nation Chapter Houses to address the broader social issues impacting our students when they leave our campus.
- Cuba Cares has also implemented the Motivational Mondays program, inviting CISD Alumni to speak to the student body about their upbringing, education/training, and current careers. The goal of the Motivational Monday program is to encourage students to dream big and work hard to achieve their ambitions, and to show them that where they come from does not limit the possibilities available to them.



Pillar III: Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education

Our school district is committed to providing a comprehensive and integrated approach to education in general, and that extends to environmental and sustainability education. We recognize the pressing need to equip our students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to understand and address complex environmental challenges.

Pillar IIIA: Interdisciplinary Learning

- We have developed effective environmental and sustainability education throughout our curriculum, promoting interdisciplinary learning, fostering STEM content development and CTE learning, cultivating civic engagement, and strengthening our students' College and Career Readiness.
- We understand that environmental issues are multifaceted, involving complex interactions between dynamic environmental, energy, and human systems. Therefore, we integrate interdisciplinary and project-based learning into our curriculum to help students comprehend the interconnectedness of these systems.
- We firmly believe that environmental and sustainability education provides an ideal platform for developing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) content, knowledge, and thinking skills, as well as developing CTE (Career and Technical Education) opportunities for an evolving workforce.
- Our District has traditional Navajo hogans on campus, which offer a means of reinforcing the students' cultural identity to their education. In addition, our non-Navajo students benefit from the hogan as an opportunity to experience diversity in their educational process.

Element IIIB: STEM Content, Knowledge, and Skills

- CISD has created numerous opportunities to infuse these concepts into our students' traditional and vocational education while emphasizing their relevance to environmental issues. We recognize that environmental and sustainability concepts should not be isolated but integrated into many subjects where appropriate.
- Our holistic approach to environmental education ensures that all students graduate with a deep appreciation for the environment and the knowledge and skills needed to address pressing environmental issues. Some examples of our in-class teachings and project-based skill development include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Our high school-level Animal Science classes cover the use of animals and animal by-products within various animal and agricultural industries. We discuss topics of range management, ecosystem harmony, and sustainable and regenerative ranching/animal-raising practices.
 - Being a rural community, many students in the District live within ranching/agrarian communities. Learning from their families, in the classroom,



and from their own experiences with livestock, and how best to maintain these animals without harming the natural environment, provides a well-rounded perspective.

- We also cover the environmental impacts of factory farming and the regenerative agriculture movement. CISD is in the process of building and developing a Livestock Educational Building with environmental and sustainable practices at the core. We aim to minimize water waste, capitalize on rain runoff, capture nutrient-rich manure for livestock grass fertilizer, and integrate environmental conservation units with hands-on animal care education.
- The middle school Animal Science class covers environmental relationships and ecosystems by integrating biology, geology, geography, and environmental science in the material. Students study the native grasses and plants, wildlife, and grazing permitting of our region. By examining these relationships, students develop a holistic understanding of their environment, and how to be stronger stewards of the land on which they live.
- The Introduction to Agriculture classes cover sustainability and natural resources by looking at different planting methods, biodiversity, soil health and parts of soil, watershed management, and clean energy options.
- Our Horticulture & Greenhouse management classes utilize permaculture practices in all beds in the greenhouse and in outdoor gardens. These classes are implementing “hugelkultur” mounds for permaculture project-based learning. Students assist with on-site composting of all green waste from the cafeterias, greenhouse, and groundskeeping clippings and pine straw. Students are currently learning about practices of no-till beds, broadforking, and worm tillage to maintain healthy topsoil.
- The Environmental Science & Geology course content includes fossil fuels formation, fossil fuel exploitation, and the many uses of fossil fuels in our civilizations. The curriculum contrasts that with teaching about the long-term consequences of using these non-sustainable resources.
- Students also learn about the pros and cons of sustainable energy sources, i.e. wind, solar, and geothermal. Additionally, students learn about sustainable practices such as land and water conservation, carbon management, and the benefit of long-term infrastructure changes.
- The goal of all sustainability teachings is to relate the subject back to the experiences of students and their families, since so many of them deal daily with topics of land and water conservation.
- Our Carpentry and Welding classes are committed to recycling and repurposing materials whenever possible to divert these items from landfills.



Element IIIB: Civic Knowledge, and Skills

- Student-interns work with the local US Forest Service and Soil & Water Conservation offices; learn about the importance of these departments in our community and the role they can play in sustainability efforts.
- Students are invited to participate in Forest Stewards Youth Corps summer program, and we have sent students to this Corps in the past to better understand their role in the community and conservation.
- We ensure that students understand the relevance and applicability of these concepts in their daily lives. Environmental and sustainability education at CISD goes beyond theory; we aim to develop responsible citizens who can actively contribute to environmental solutions.
- We incorporate civic knowledge and skills into our curriculum to empower students to engage in environmental advocacy and stewardship. By doing so, we prepare our students not only to understand the complexities of environmental challenges but also to actively contribute to a sustainable and environmentally responsible future.
-