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

District Name: Carmel Clay Schools
(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: 01/30/2023
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: Indiana Department of Education

Name of Nominating Authority: Mr. Brian M Murphy

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify to the best of my knowledge that the school meets the provisions above.

[Signature] Date: February 8, 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: December 31, 2023

Public Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1860-0509. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 37 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain benefit P.L. 107-110, Sec. 501, Innovative Programs and Parental Choice Provisions. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20202-4536 or email ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference the OMB Control Number 1860-0509. Note: Please do not return the completed ED-Green Ribbon Schools application to this address.
Carmel Clay Schools (CCS) comprises 11 elementary, 3 middle and 1 high school and serves over 16,500 students and their families in Hamilton County, Indiana. A comprehensive and distributed model of responsibility infuses a sustainability ethic into every aspect of the district culture. The District Strategic Plan prioritizes the expansion of environmentally friendly initiatives through the continuous improvement in the design, construction and maintenance of all facilities, ongoing refinement of the efficiency of daily operations, and the implementation of energy-saving measures in each department that produce positive results for the environment and save money for taxpayers. Since the inception of the Energy Savings Program in 1995, CCS has reduced its energy impact by 1,764,835 MMBtu and the equivalent of 164,488 metric tons of carbon dioxide with a cost avoidance of $22,011,709. Smart Technology includes auto shutoff for lights, water and computers throughout the district. Environmentally-friendly cleaning products are used in every building. To date, transportation has replaced 24 gas-powered buses in its fleet with alternative-fuel (LP) vehicles and recently added the first total-electric school bus in the State of Indiana. The perimeter around each school is “idle-free” and homes within a 1-mile radius of campus are “bus free” to encourage students to walk or ride bikes. School campuses are uniquely-designed green spaces that may include native plants and grasses, footpaths, bike trails, water features, rain gardens, water-collection barrels, community gardens, and outdoor learning labs. School cafeterias compost meal preparation solid waste with nearly 100 pounds composted per week. District-wide, all plastic, cardboard, and paper is separated and recycled. Drinking fountains throughout the district include a bottle refill station. Since 2005, the district has supported the CCS Green Team, a network of parents, staff, and students at each of the 15 school campuses who have a passion for encouraging habits and initiatives that support and protect the Earth and promote an eco-friendly lifestyle. In its 11th year, the annual community-wide holiday lights recycling drive has collected over 11 tons of light strands for recycling. The K-12 curriculum includes myriad opportunities for students of all ages to explore the impact of humans on the natural environment through courses from Project Lead the Way to AP Human Geography. All students receive comprehensive community safety education through a collaboration with the Carmel Police Department that includes training in CPR and Stop the Bleed. The district Wellness Center provides a convenient, no-cost option to employees for acute, preventative and wellness-focused primary care and includes a full-scale doctor’s office, pharmacy, physical therapists, mental health counselors, nutritionists and fitness training. These efforts, in conjunction with high academic achievement, allow Carmel Clay Schools to align expectation and action to the overall mission that Together We Achieve.
Pillar 1: Efforts to Reduce Environmental Impact and Costs

As a district, Carmel Clay Schools (CCS) has endeavored within each of its departments to increase sustainability initiatives thereby reducing our environmental impact while also lowering costs. Since the inception of the district Energy Savings program in 1995, we have a cost avoidance to date of $22,011,709. The Energy Reduction Impact from CCS through 2022 is 1,764,835 MMBtu and 164,488 equivalent metric tons of CO2. As a point of reference, this is the equivalent of 34,268 passenger cars not driven for one year and more than 4,217,631 tree seedlings in the ground for 10 years.

The District Strategic Plan prioritizes the “expansion of environmentally friendly initiatives” from efficiency and refinement of daily operations, and continuous improvement in the design, construction and maintenance of all Carmel Clay Schools facilities. We continue to implement energy-saving measures that produce positive results for the environment and save money for taxpayers. Every building in the district uses “optimal smart” technology as a part of its Energy Management System. This includes auto shut off/on for lights, water, and computers. During the summer months, our buildings operate on a 4-day work week producing significant energy savings. Maintenance of facilities includes a preventative agreement with an outside contractor in place for all facility air handlers, chillers/condensing units, cooling towers and boilers in place to improve efficiency. The district has service agreements in place for our temperature control systems. This service provides on-site assistance with evaluating HVAC system controls for proper operation. Our controls have various alarms that alert us to issues of components not operating within design parameters and these alarms are monitored by maintenance staff with critical alarms being sent electronically to appropriate maintenance technicians. We follow manufacturer recommendations for this maintenance and it is done in-house. We use environmentally-friendly cleaning products throughout all buildings.

Our Facilities department has systemic processes in place to reduce solid waste in every building; recycling of all paper products and cardboard boxes, and elimination of plastic products as much as possible. In each of the 15 schools, central offices and transportation facilities, all solid waste is separated into trash and recycling bins, including food waste, paper, plastic and glass, in cooperation with Ray’s Recycling as the local trash service provider. All co-mingled recycling is transported to their facility for processing. Installation of electric hand dryers throughout the district has reduced paper towel waste. Custodians use washable cloths that are reused rather than throw-away paper. The Information Technology department provides specific paper recommendations including double-sided printing and printing pages limits for both students and staff. Through a partnership with Ricoh, monthly audits are conducted on district copiers and copy centers with an emphasis on page reduction. All toner cartridges are recycled. The district participates in the Green Delivery program through both Dell and HP. This program bundles computers into the most efficient packaging for shipment and uses only sustainable, recyclable materials. All obsolete technology is donated to a non-profit organization called Net Literacy which retrofits, reuses and provides low-cost or free equipment to those in need. Net Literacy in turn recycles technology hardware to their partner eScrapinc, a local company that specializes in
the logistics of removing, recycling, and reselling used computers and electronics, including the safe removal of lead, mercury, and cadmium in accordance with federal regulations. Curriculum Coordinators work with teachers to select digital textbooks, curricular materials, and online resources, further reducing paper consumption and the impact of solid waste. Food Services have recently conducted a composting pilot program in both the high school and elementary cafeterias. During the pilot, the high school cafeteria composted 100 pounds of food preparation waste per week through Earth Mama, a local composting company. This past December, Carmel Clay Schools received a $15,000 grant award from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management to establish composting efforts in every cafeteria across the district, with the intent to maintain the program within the budget in subsequent years. In addition, all cafeterias have reduced plastic and styrofoam in serving lines and replaced those with either paper, or in several schools, reusable silverware and trays. Students are encouraged to bring their own water bottles and water filling stations are installed throughout the district next to water fountains.

Transportation continues to pursue alternative-fuel school buses and is steadily replacing traditional buses with propane. Currently there are 24 buses powered by LP gas. In partnership with the City of Carmel and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, and in cooperation with Blue Bird Bus Company, we added the first zero-emissions electric school bus in the State of Indiana in June 2020. District bus routes are designed for efficiency, with passenger capacity considerations, routes and schedules created to reduce mileage and thus reduce costs.

Twice a year, the district hosts a community-wide Shred-It Day on school campuses in partnership with City of Carmel Utilities, Crimestoppers, and the Carmel Police Department. Planners work with a variety of local recycling partners to create a one-stop destination for all sorts of recyclable materials, including: prescription medications, shredable items, electronics, and bulk items like carpets, lawn equipment, grills and mattresses. This event continues to grow each year as a service to community members and in support of comprehensive city-wide sustainability initiatives.

Each of the 15 school campuses includes intentional green spaces designed with ecology in mind. The district landscape plans include native plants and grasses, footpaths, water features, rain gardens and outdoor learning labs. Several schools have community gardens. Last year, we designated a mile-wide circle around each school as a “walking zone”; there is no bus service within the zone and students are encouraged to walk to school. In collaboration with the City of Carmel, there is an ever-increasing number of bike pathways that connect neighborhoods to each school as well as to the downtown district. Schools are increasing the number of bike racks and awareness of bikers to their sites. In front of each elementary school is a designated Idle-Free zone to encourage waiting parents in carpool lines to turn off vehicles and reduce harmful emissions around the schoolyard.
For nearly 15 years, the district has supported the Carmel Clay Schools Green Team, a group of parents and staff at each of the 15 buildings who have a passion for encouraging habits and initiatives in the district that support and protect the Earth and promote an eco-friendly lifestyle. The district provides an annual stipend to Green Team teacher representatives. Each school hosts a Green Team student club that promotes education, awareness, and sustainability practices within the school. One example of the city-wide initiatives of the Carmel Clay Schools Green Team includes the annual Holiday Lights Recycling drive. For the past 11 years, we have worked with our partnering school district, Hamilton Southeastern, the local Ace Hardware stores, the City of Carmel Utilities, Technology Recyclers and the Indianapolis Zoo, to host the Holiday Lights Recycling Drive. This year alone, the drive enabled the collection and recycling of over 14,918 pounds of light strands—and over 10 tons in total—that would otherwise go to the landfill. We recently collaborated with the City of Carmel as a collaborator in the Carmel Climate Action Plan, which is a comprehensive plan to address climate change across a variety of sectors; including, public education, energy and built environment, transportation, water and wastewater, solid waste, local food and agriculture and greenspace.
Carmel Clay Schools is strategic in its efforts to improve the overall health and wellness of students and staff. This effort begins with a clean and safe learning environment, including clean air, mold mitigation, and pest removal. To improve indoor air quality the district services all HVAC units regularly for proper operation, cleaning and repair through service with an outside preventative maintenance company. This service occurs at least as often as required by manufacturer maintenance recommendations or more frequently as needed due to age of equipment or other operational specific parameters. We also have a service agreement with an outside contractor to maintain our HVAC system filters. This service includes changing of all air handler filters several times per year as required by the specific equipment and school operations. We also have ongoing preventative maintenance work orders through our online work order system for the routine maintenance of the terminal air supply units. These are generally variable air volume type systems or similar operating equipment that distribute the heating, cooling and ventilation in the classrooms and other occupied areas. Old buildings are updated with new furnishings on a cyclical basis in order to remove old paints, carpets, ceiling tiles and other environmental hazards. The Integrated Pest Management Program reduces the use of pesticides on campus through a comprehensive program.

School curriculum includes a comprehensive K-12 health education program that supports the Indiana Academic Standards for Health and Wellness. Along with traditional physical education classes, course offerings include interpersonal relationships classes, outdoor explorations, sports medicine, lifestyle and personal wellness, and physical conditioning. To support community-based wellness and in cooperation with the Hamilton County Health Department, all students receive CPR training in both 7th grade and high school required health classes. Through partnerships with the Carmel Education Foundation, Carmel Police Department and Carmel Fire Department, beginning in the school year 2023-24, all students will receive Stop the Bleed training as a standard in the K-12 health curriculum. Stop the Bleed is a national campaign to inform and empower the public to become trained on basic trauma care in order to stop or slow bleeding during emergencies. In 2019, Carmel voters passed a school safety referendum which, in part, funds contracted mental health services with an outside provider to eliminate barriers to mental health services and support the district’s families with resources as needed. Every school has a certified social worker to provide wraparound support. We have a nationally-recognized School Resource Officer (SRO) program and the safety referendum has allowed an increase in the number of dedicated SROs to a total of 21. These full-time law enforcement officers are trained in school-based policing and crisis response and utilize the triad concept of school-based policing: law enforcement, counseling, and education. SROs provide students with health and safety education on a variety of topics; including, vaping awareness and prevention, alcohol and drug awareness, bullying, digital citizenship, body safety, water safety, fire safety, and gun safety. SROs are actively involved with administrators to provide both preventative and restorative discipline practices thereby reducing the need for punitive measures. Overall wellness initiatives include a Courageous Conversations series which aims to inspire dialogue, community engagement and civic education related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
Speakers include scholars, community leaders and diversity professionals whose scholarship, leadership and advocacy enhance the school system’s efforts to present diverse viewpoints, ideas and perspectives to inspire greater understanding and appreciation for inclusive excellence. In collaboration with Carmel Youth Assistance Program, school social workers and counselors support students with food insecurity with weekly “weekend backpacks” and a summer meal program. With the support of local internet companies, the district provides low-cost or free internet access to families in need of assistance.

Carmel Clay Schools is invested in the health and well-being of its employees and staff. We offer an abundance of resources to improve and maintain physical, mental, and financial health through both internal programs and partnerships with outside businesses. We are an award-winning district for employee health, receiving the 2020 Health Value Award for a mid-sized group from the Validation Institute for its outstanding employee wellness benefits. This award recognized the district’s efforts to provide high-quality healthcare and services, while also reducing the costs to both employee and taxpayer. The Carmel Clay Schools Wellness Center is a partnership with Ascension St. Vincent Health to provide a convenient, no-cost option to employees for acute, preventative and wellness-focused primary care services. The facility houses a full-scale doctor’s office with family medicine, pediatric and sports medicine specialists, a pharmacy, physical therapy, mental health counselors, and nutritionists. The Wellness Center also includes a complete studio fitness center for all employees and spouses with group fitness classes, yoga, meditation, personal training, and state-of-the-art cardio and weight equipment. In addition, wellness benefits include a wide-range of employee discounts and services that provide support for every aspect of life, including; a pedometer program, car rentals, cellular services, legal services, financial planning, entertainment, computers, home improvements and repairs, groceries and dining.
Carmel Clay Schools uses a comprehensive and distributed model to infuse an ethic of sustainability into every aspect of the district culture. Because each department (food services, business, transportation, facilities, curriculum, student services) is charged with efficient use of resources as a fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayer, this mindset confers to both the implicit and explicit curriculum from kindergarten through 12th grade.

The understanding of distributed responsibility for sustainability education is most clearly evidenced in the establishment of the district-wide Green Teams nearly 15 years ago. Each of the 15 schools in the district has an active local team, composed of students, parents and staff who are charged with building awareness of green initiatives and sustainability practices into the individual school culture. The district representatives from each building meet 6 times per year to discuss large-scale initiatives and share ideas and encouragement. Throughout the school year at each building, Green Teams develop awareness campaigns for their peers and sponsor school wide events such as; collecting and recycling markers, Bic pens, shoes, school supplies and coats for donation. Across the district of 16,000 students, we have many who participate in Arbor Day celebrations, the K-12 Tree City USA program, the Indiana Phenology lab, Earth Day, and Trick or Trash collections after Halloween. Students have worked as a part of the City of Carmel’s 10,000 Trees planting initiative. Several teams have toured Carmel Wastewater Facilities and Ray’s Recycling plants in order to better understand the impact of humans on the environment. During lunch each day, student volunteers recycle water bottles and separate plastic from the trash. Another team disassembles old textbooks so they can be properly recycled. High school Green Team students have researched the effectiveness of solar panels on school rooftops and made presentations to district administrators for consideration (we’re still looking into this as a future option!). Three Carmel High School students were recently awarded a Great Idea! Innovation Grant from the Carmel Education Foundation to implement composting in the school cafeteria. This grant will work alongside a larger grant from the State of Indiana to support composting efforts from both the food production side, as well as the consumer side of the high school’s main cafeteria – which serves 2,500 meals per day. A group of Hamilton County green volunteers have partnered with the Community Garden at one middle school where students take field trips to understand soil conservation, plant seeds, and eventually harvest the fruits and vegetables from the garden. Because of this distributed responsibility, students are able to see the importance of sustainability outside of the classroom and practice it in their everyday lives.

As a part of the formal curriculum, we have adopted Project Lead the Way (PLTW) as a key component of STEM initiatives for both elementary and secondary students. Our youngest learners engage in a cross-disciplinary unit called Living Things and explore both the needs and impacts of all life. During an outdoor walk, students look for plants and animals and consider how their needs are met in their natural environment. Then, they explore how living things impact the natural environment. They participate in a simulation to observe how an animal impacts the natural environment to meet its needs. Students then explore human needs and wants and how humans impact the natural environment, both positively and negatively. In an
exercise to reduce waste, students use the design process to build a new game or toy out of reusable materials. Social Studies lessons include conversation about geographical features and the natural landscape, including protection of endangered species and preservation of national parks. Students are regularly encouraged to think critically about issues that are important to them, and design solutions to a problem they see.

At middle school, we are adding PLTW units on Energy and the Environment and Green Construction. In these hands-on learning activities, students are challenged to think big and toward the future as they explore sustainable solutions to energy needs and investigate the impact of energy on our lives and the world. They design and model alternative energy sources and evaluate options for reducing energy consumption. Students have grown up in the age of “green” alternatives, so they will learn how to apply this concept to the fields of architecture and construction by exploring dimensioning, measuring, and architectural sustainability as they design affordable housing units.

Carmel High School students have myriad opportunities to develop a rich understanding of sustainability through course offerings, co-curricular activities, and student action clubs that focus on green initiatives. CHS offers students the opportunity to dive deeply into a global perspective with a focus on civic responsibility and response in both AP Environmental Science and AP Human Geography courses. Health classes include project-based learning where students research an environmental hazard to health and design a solution for it. Visual Arts courses include recycled materials into sculpture, jewelry and fiber arts projects. Construction and Design classes utilize green products, recycled materials and other solutions to minimize human impact on the environment. AP Capstone projects may include sustainability efforts as a part of their research. Robotics club, the Green Action Club, and other student organizations are deeply involved in community efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle. One of our most recent graduates has been involved at the State level as well as a part of the City of Carmel’s 10,000 Trees initiative and the Carmel Climate Action Plan committee.