



School Nominee Presentation Form

ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATIONS

School and District's Certifications

The signatures of the school principal and district superintendent (or equivalents) on the next page certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of their knowledge. *In no case is a private school required to make any certification with regard to the public school district in which it is located.*

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades early learning to 12.
2. The school has been evaluated and selected from among schools within the Nominating Authority's jurisdiction, based on high achievement in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental and sustainability education.
3. Neither the nominated public school nor its public school district is refusing the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district wide compliance review. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) is not subject to the jurisdiction of OCR. The nominated DoDEA schools, however, are subject to and in compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements to comply with Federal civil rights laws.
4. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the public school district concluding that the nominated public school or the public school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan to remedy the violation.
5. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the public school or the public school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
6. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the public school or public school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or public school district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.
7. The school meets all applicable federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.

U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools

Name of Principal: Mr. Joshua Leight

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

Official School Name: Hillendale Elementary School

(As it should appear on an award)

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space*

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



(Principal's Signature)

Date: 12/21/22

Name of Superintendent: Dr. John Sanville

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

District Name: Unionville-Chadds Ford School District

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



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Saille".

Date: 12/21/22

(Superintendent's Signature)

Nominating Authority's Certifications

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

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades Pre-K-12.
2. The school is one of those overseen by the Nominating Authority which is highest achieving in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental and sustainability education.
3. The school meets all applicable federal civil rights and federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.

Name of Nominating Agency: Pennsylvania Department of Education

Name of Nominating Authority: Tamara E. Pepper

(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.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tamara E. Pepper".

Date: February 2, 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.

Summary Narrative: An Overview of Work Encompassing All Three Pillars

Hillendale Elementary School, located in the beautiful rolling hills of Chadds Ford, Chester County, Pennsylvania, is an area rich in history, culture and closely tied to the natural environment. Hillendale is one of four elementary schools in the Unionville-Chadds Ford School District, and its unique, habitat-rich campus and history contributes to it being one of the most exceptional elementary school campuses in Pennsylvania—one that can serve as a model for environmental sustainability in both the district, community and region.



Hillendale was originally built as a museum that offered a unique look at America between the years of 1490 to 1890. Today, “Happy Hillendale” is a bustling kindergarten through fifth grade school filled with 393 children and 89 staff that come together each day to live out the school’s mission as “a welcoming community dedicated to empowering and challenging students in a safe, caring, and inclusive environment.” Staff and students alike are proud to house Unionville Chadds Ford School District’s elementary age autistic support population and pride themselves in the opportunity for inclusion and constant learning opportunities that this gift affords them.

Thanks in part to its location and community mindset, Hillendale’s interest and enthusiasm for environmentalism and sustainability started more than a decade ago and continue to present day. Reducing our environmental impact, improving the health and wellness of our students, staff, and stakeholders, and ensuring effective environmental and sustainability education are ever present and high priority school goals.

Longtime Hillendale Elementary Health & Physical Education teacher Mr. George Claypoole identified a quote in *Planting in a Post-Wild World: Designing Plant Communities for Resilient Landscapes* as a guiding principle for our school community when it comes to environmentalism and sustainability:

The front lines of the battle for nature are not in the Amazon rain forest or the Alaskan wilderness; the front lines are our backyards, medians, parking lots, and elementary schools. The ecological warriors of the future won’t just be scientists and engineers, but gardeners, horticulturists, land managers, landscape architects, transportation department staff, elementary school teachers, and community association board members. (Rainer & West, 2016)

Hillendale staff, students, and community members are strong stewards of the environment and pride themselves on being positive change agents. Mr. Claypoole’s 40 plus years of teaching, leadership and inspiration laid an incredible foundation upon which Hillendale continues to build as we forge towards improving our school community each day.

Starting in 2013, we piloted an effective, efficient, and environmentally friendly stormwater management project on our campus—one that is a model for other schools and school districts around the country. Since that time, our school community planted over 600 trees and thousands of native plants on our property, created a woodland path, established a pollinator meadow, constructed a trail that links these elements together, and filled these spaces with environmental education signage.

Today, our commitment to reducing environmental impact and costs includes tracking our energy data through the Energy Star Portal and moving our school building and grounds towards a sustainable and energy efficient future. Through our newly-formed district wide Sustainability Committee and our school’s strong commitment to conservation, we are making thoughtful upgrades which will make a tremendous impact to our footprint and total costs.

We work to improve student, staff, and stakeholder wellness, which has been a passion and purpose of the Hillendale school community for many years. Our district facilities team ensures that buildings and grounds are in good repair, maintained in a sanitary condition, and pose no hazard to the health of school occupants. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated our school and district’s focus on wellness conscious HVAC policies and procedures; and we practice sustainable approaches to managing pests in a way that minimizes economic, health and environmental risks.

Hillendale offers a wide variety of curricular and extracurricular wellness activities and opportunities for both students and facility alike including clubs, wellness days and fitness challenges. And we participate in “Start with Hello Week” to end isolation and promote positive connections throughout the school in partnership with local first responders.

Our staff regularly engages in professional development in partnership with PA State Police regarding best practices in crisis preparedness, management, and live saving interventions.



Through partnership with our active Parent Teacher Organization, students, staff, and families both join together for important socializing and fundraising efforts, and to participate in service-learning opportunities that teach students the importance of serving one's local community.

Hillendale is proud to host Unionville-Chadds Ford's elementary Autistic Support population for all students in need of Verbal Behavior Programming. In partnership with the Chester County Intermediate Unit, staff lead activities to promote inclusivity of neurodivergent peers, such as the inception of one of the first elementary Unified Bocce teams to be recognized by our local branch of the Special Olympics.

Hillendale provides a robust offering of environmental and sustainability education to children in kindergarten through fifth grade. During the 2022-23 school year, staff embarked on a multiyear commitment to learning best practices in teaching about and within nature in our outdoor classrooms in partnership with Stroud Water Research Center.

Our campus has three formal and several additional less formal outdoor classroom spaces utilized daily by our school community. Hillendale's Walking Trail, Woodland Trail, Meadow and Sensory Rain Garden provide interactive and flexible spaces in which teachers facilitate student inquiry and exploration. Intended to reduce the learning curve for teachers and provide an all-weather learning space, an outdoor classroom pavilion is slated for construction in 2023.

Both indoors and outdoors, Hillendale's staff provides students with interdisciplinary environmental and sustainability learning opportunities in kindergarten through fifth grade across the curriculum. Our unique campus and homegrown curricula help students learn about varied ecosystems including forests, wetlands, and grasslands; as well as the many species that depend upon those systems including native trees, amphibians and reptiles, butterflies and insects. Students also learn about climate change, invasive species and other threats to our environment.

Hillendale is extremely thankful to partner with many local organizations to improve its environmental and sustainability education programming and to improve its campus as an ecosystem and classroom for all.

All of these investments and programs contribute knowledge, resources and tools to our students, and the local community while preparing the next generation of conservation-minded citizens.

Narrative for Pillar I: Your Efforts to Reduce Environmental Impact and Costs

To significantly reduce Hillendale Elementary School's greenhouse gas emissions, we are focused on reducing energy consumption at the source. We track energy consumption through an EnergyStar Portfolio Manager Account so that we can measure current energy usage and establish where we can make future improvements. We have uploaded three years' worth of historical data and have established automatic uploads of all future costs with our utility provider. This will provide invaluable in tracking all our energy conservation initiatives.

Working in tandem with our district's newly formed Sustainability Committee (a community of volunteers, students, faculty, parents, and concerned citizens), we did a high-level audit of utility bills and found our Energy Usage Intensity (EUI) measured in kBtu/sqft. Our current EUI is 74.3 which is lower than the 104.4 national average for schools. That said, additional improvements to the lighting, HVAC, and procurement, to name a few, would go a long way in further reducing consumption.

For lighting, we've re-lamped most of the school with LED light bulbs and fixtures which use between 7 to 10 watts, which is significantly reduced from the 30 to 170 watts of the T8 and T12 bulbs they replaced. These bulbs also have a 3 ½ times longer life, thus reducing waste, some of which can be hazardous in older bulbs. LED lighting has an added benefit of reducing the heat load in spaces during cooling seasons. While much of the school is completed, we will soon upgrade the Café and Gym.

For HVAC, we replaced an antiquated chiller in January of 2023 with a new high efficiency one that uses variable speed

condenser motors, scroll compressors, and a more environmentally friendly refrigerant. This chiller will operate at 60% of the costs of the chiller it is replacing. With HVAC being a significant portion of the utility costs (often up to 50% of the total utility bill), this step will have a big impact on reducing energy.

In terms of procurement, we are implementing policies around future purchasing and design. This includes a requirement that future appliances be Energy Star rated as well as looking to require new equipment to have electrified heat to reduce the amount of onsite fossil fuel burning used. The policy revisions will also include standardizing temperature setpoints, operational hours, and emphasizing behavioral changes to reduce energy consumption.

To reduce our water consumption, we've replaced 16 traditional sinks with motion sensor sinks. This significantly reduces the amount of water wasted by our elementary school age children when using facilities. By reducing the amount of water used, this also reduces the amount of energy needed to generate hot water, thus reducing fossil fuel consumption. We also have plans underway to replace traditional toilets with low flow toilets.

While we currently utilize a single stream recycling system, we are in active negotiations with Republic, our current waste management company, and the Carton Council to reduce the use of plastic containers in our cafeterias. Working with our food service department, we will purchase juices and milks in cardboard carton containers instead of plastic bottles. We will also implement a carton recycling program to ensure these new containers are 100% recycled.

To engage our school in reducing environmental impact with through their own actions, and empower the community for change, we propose an annual Earth Month Challenge this April. We will have our fifth graders lead the initiative, brainstorm ways to lead by example, and advocate for these practices. The effort will be highly visible through school-wide communications channels. We will ask students to send pictures of family habits of environmentally conscious activities to be shared on various media. Suggested ideas include:

Week 1: "Drop the drop off!" To reduce carbon emissions, students are encouraged to take the bus to and from school (instead of being dropped/picked up by car). All will be encouraged to walk to and from the bus stop instead of driving there.

Week 2: "Pack it Up!" Parents, students and staff will be encouraged to pack lunch with reusable containers to avoid disposable, single use plastic wrap and baggies. Students will join the Zero Hero club (represented on bulletin board) if they have no trash to throw out at lunch.

Week 3: "Punch out the plastic!" All will be encouraged to use reusable bags at the store. Students will remind parents to keep those reusable bags in the car. We will collect reusable bags that can be donated to those who may need them. Students will be on Hillendale Elementary TV each day with tips to reduce the use of plastic utensils and straws.

Week 4: "Kick the Cup!" Parents, students and staff will be challenged to use reusable water bottles, coffee mugs/thermos all week.

We have engaged in a pilot to move to an electric school bus fleet and currently have contracts in place for two electric buses to be replace diesel buses in August 2023. These electric buses will be utilized by Hillendale students starting in the fall of 2023. This effort augments our Earth Month Challenge for take the bus to school week.

Hillendale has five water bottle filling stations on six of our water fountains located throughout the school. These units offer filtered and chilled water in a sustainable way to our students and staff. Stations like these have an important role in encouraging hydration and reducing plastic use, and helps our school to take simple, yet powerful, steps toward our sustainability goals. A digital dashboard on each station shows students and staff the impact of their installation and use. These water bottle filling stations have collectively replaced the need for over 25,000 plastic water bottles since their installation in 2020.



In partnership with funding and expertise from the Kneale E. Dockstader Foundation and local watershed experts, our facilities team and parent volunteers advanced a significant stormwater management project to control erosion and flooding issues while offering experiential environmental education opportunities to students and families.

Prior to 2013, the surface water runoff from Hillendale contributed to flooding in some neighboring properties during extremely heavy rains. A large ravine also developed as a result of this runoff. The silt washed out from this ravine contributed to poor water quality in Craigs Mill Run, a stream located downslope from our school. Craigs Mill Run is a tributary to the Brandywine Creek which flows to the Brandywine Creek, then to the Christina River, Delaware River, Delaware Bay and finally to the Atlantic Ocean.

Hillendale's upgraded Storm Water Management System now collects over 75 percent of the rainwater that falls on the property. The system slows down the rainwater runoff allowing water to naturally enter the groundwater thus preventing erosion and resulting in cleaner water as the ground has a chance to filter and purify the water.

Key elements of the system include planted trees, two rain gardens, four bioretention basins, a large extended detention dry basin and a landscaped final outflow area. The four smaller bioretention basins are heavily planted with native grasses, plants and shrubs. The bioretention basins are located centrally on the property and collect rainwater runoff from the upper and lower parking areas, hardtop playground areas and the roof of the school. Spillways divert water from one bioretention basin to the other creating a meandering stream effect. These bioretention ponds are designed to empty within 6 to 12 hours after a storm. There are also two rain gardens strategically located to collect water from the lower parking area. When runoff reaches the end of the fourth bioretention basin, it is then directed through a cement head wall outflow allowing water to drain from the final detention basin to the larger extended detention basin at the lower end of the property. The water travels underground for over 100 yards through an 18" pipe.

A large extended detention dry basin, located at the lower end of the property, collects the outflow from the four centrally located bioretention basins. This significantly larger extended detention dry basin can limit downstream erosion and control some pollutants such as suspended solids. Extended Detention (ED) dry basins improve on the basic detention design by lengthening the storage time, for example, to 24 or 48 hours.

Runoff slowly drains from the large ED dry basin and is directed underground to the southeast corner of the Hillendale property. This is the end of the line for Hillendale's stormwater management system. Drainage water from the ED basin reaches the final outflow and is dispersed through a rocky substrate. The water travels down a long hill planted with a special seed mixture and willow shrubs. Upon completion of its journey down the hill, any remaining stormwater enters the Craigs Mill Run stream.

Limiting the amount of stormwater runoff is one way to help teach our students, families, and staff how to maintain a healthy watershed.

Since the construction of our stormwater management system, parent volunteers and students planted over 600 trees (Tulip Poplars, Swamp White Oaks, Redbuds, Scarlet Oaks, Magnolias, Red Maples, Basswoods and Dogwoods) thousands of native plants, cleared a woodland path, erected educational signage, established a two-thirds of an acre native plant and pollinator meadow replacing a gravel parking lot, and have constructed a paved walking trail that links these elements.

In addition to supporting native bees and honeybees, many of the native flowering plants used in the Hillendale Meadow also attract nectar-seeking butterflies, moths, and hummingbirds, and some are host plants for butterfly and moth caterpillars. Growing the right flowers, shrubs, and trees with overlapping bloom times will support pollinators from spring through fall. By adding native plants to our landscape that provide food and shelter for pollinators throughout their active seasons and by adopting pollinator friendly landscape practices, we can make a difference to both the pollinators and the people who rely on them.

Regarding hazardous waste disposal, our district collects all items that are considered hazardous, from batteries to ballasts, to un-used chemicals throughout the year. We then dispose of them through an annual county-wide hazardous waste recycling program.

Visit [this page](#) to learn more about the Craigs Mill Run Watershed Project and other ways our school community promotes sustainability while reducing our environmental impact.

Narrative for Pillar 2: Your Efforts to Improve the Health and Wellness of Students and Staff

Hillendale's buildings and grounds are in good repair, capable of being maintained in a sanitary condition, and pose no health hazard to occupants. We have a continuous program of inspection and maintenance of the building, grounds, and equipment, and preventative maintenance is performed at regular interval and within a 10-year facilities plan maintained by the Unionville-Chadds Ford facilities department. Should construction, remodeling, or alteration of the building for repair or improvement of the buildings be needed, environmental health considerations, to include plumbing, water supply, toilet and handwashing facilities, sewage disposal, food service, refuse disposal, and the physical building are taken into consideration. All plans and specifications are submitted to and approved by the Chester County Health Department to validate compliance with health regulations prior to beginning construction.

The school's exterior wall, roof, foundation, porch, and stairs are structurally sound, weather-tight, and water-tight to control mold, dust, and entry of insects and/or rodents into the building. Interior floor, stair, wall and ceiling are structurally sound and finished to control exposure of the occupants to hazardous levels of toxic fumes, dust, mold or noise. Wall and floor coverings materials ensure safe and sanitary conditions, and all areas of the buildings and grounds are free from visible hazards.

Safeguarding the health and physical well-being of district students and staff depends upon the cleanliness and proper sanitary conditions of the school building and grounds. Our sanitary management program ensures that the building, grounds, play area equipment, and appearance are maintained in a manner to minimize health and accidental hazards. All spaces are maintained in a clean, dry condition, with the presence of unnecessary material in storage. Routine cleaning of utilized spaces is performed each evening, and additional cleaning and disinfection of high touch spaces is implemented as needed. All cleaning materials and other toxic materials are locked away and/or inaccessible to students, and stored away from foods, food preparation areas and student and staff activity areas. Cleaning materials and other toxic materials are used in a manner that does not contaminate student and staff activity areas, food, food preparation areas and does not constitute a health hazard to the students or staff.

Our HVAC system brings in as much outside air that its systems will safely allow. Demand controlled ventilation has been disabled to maintain a constant air flow throughout the day. HVAC systems run for a minimum of two hours before and after the building is occupied to refresh the air before arrival, and purge air at the end of the day. Portable HEPA air purifiers are provided for all classrooms and small office spaces to further enhance clean air exchange rates and improve indoor air quality.

Maintaining the health of students and staff through vector control is a top priority. The spread of vector borne diseases is prevented and controlled through preventative measures such as vector-proofing of structures by maintaining the building and grounds in a condition not conducive to vector harborage. When necessary, responsive measures such as eradication of vectors are also performed.

Our Integrated Pest Management Plan takes a sustainable approach to managing pests by combining biological, cultural, physical and chemical tools in a way that minimizes economic, health and environmental risks. We promote prevention over remediation, and advocate for integration of at least two or more strategies to achieve long-term solutions. Management strategies include education, exclusion, sanitation, maintenance, biological and mechanical controls, and pesticides. We use pesticides only after consideration of the full range of alternatives, based on analysis of environmental effects, safety, effectiveness and costs. We follow rigorous procedures to manage structural and landscape pests and the toxic chemicals to alleviate pest problems with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment. Education is a key component of prevention strategies and is incorporated into our science curriculum

as part of understanding the impact of human actions on natural systems.

We are staffed with a full-time, on-site nurse who provides clinical services to both students and staff with acute and chronic health conditions. Staff are also trained annually on how to administer epinephrine pens and how to clean up bodily fluids. Select staff throughout the building are also trained in CPR and are also trained at helping families get set up with medical assistance and outside therapy/counseling services that students and families may need.

Hillendale staff receive professional development from the PA State Police regarding the “Run, Hide, Fight” methodology of crisis management and response and has adopted the Standard Response Protocol created by the I Love U Guys Foundation as part of the Sandy Hook promise to ensure that all staff and students are prepared for a crisis scenario. Local paramedics provide professional development to staff in tourniquet use in a schoolwide “Stop the Bleed” training to prepare all parties to intervene and save lives as quickly as possible.

Staff is also trained to carry out threat-risk assessments as needed for students in crisis. Many staff members and all that work within our Autistic Support population are also trained in physical management through the Safety Cares program that prioritizes positive reinforcement and de-escalation strategies before the use of safe restraints. Cafeteria staff receive Servsafe training which is a food safety training.

In the cafeteria, staff takes extreme caution around students with food allergies. Some students have food placemats they use so there is no cross contamination. Other students have certain meals provided for them that meet their dietary needs. Our school policy prohibits birthday food treats to reduce sweets consumed during the school year. In September of 2022, a “share table” was placed in the cafeteria so that foods can be used by students who may want/need them. All students, staff, and families received information regarding what foods may safely be shared on the table including pre-packaged items purchased from the school cafeteria, fruit/vegetables, and milk and other beverages if it has not sat out for over a 60-minute period.

Students have a 20-minute lunch period and a 10-minute snack break daily. Students participate in monthly taste tests to introduce and encourage consumption of new, healthy foods called “Fruit Adventures” with our school nurse who highlights lesser known healthy fruits throughout the school year across grade levels.

Students may eat breakfast when they arrive at school if needed. Hillendale participates in the National Free Lunch program and therefore provided free lunch to all students throughout the pandemic and continues to provide free breakfast to all students as well regardless of their status within the free and reduced cost lunch program. The school has numerous hands-free bottle filling stations/water fountains located throughout the hallways and next to the gymnasium/cafeteria. Free and reduced lunch is offered anonymously to families who qualify. Bi-lingual lunch menus are provided via our [food services website](#).

Students in grades 1st-5th participate in physical education class twice in a six-day cycle for 40-minute sessions. Students in the autistic support classroom participate in an adapted physical education class once every six days. Students in 3-5th grade follow an age-appropriate curriculum once every six days for 40 minutes. Third grade students learn about their integumentary and skeletal systems. Fourth grade students learn about nutrition and the muscular and nervous systems. Fifth grade students learn about their digestive, circulatory, respiratory and reproductive systems. Hillendale also has an extensive [health website](#) and an additional [physical education website](#) with informational and exercise videos for students, families, and staff.

The physical education teacher also creates daily physical challenges on the live, student led morning news broadcast, “HE TV” (Hillendale Elementary Television) to help all start each day by getting up and moving. This November, all students and staff participated in a “Planksgiving Challenge” and in December participated in the “Twelve Days of Fitness” challenge where students got to view many Hillendale staff members modeling the proper form for various exercises that students could replicate at home or on their own. Students participate in a 20-minute recess outside daily.



At times, the school participates in “All School Walks” on the trail.

Each fall, we host a “Husky Hustle 5K and Family Fun Run” for students, staff, alumni and families whereby they can choose a 5K or a one mile walk or run. Hillendale hosts a 45-minute fall and a spring running club that includes one hundred students, staff members and parent volunteers where students can walk or run along the trail, two mornings a week. Parents and staff supervise this group. Yoga club is offered as an after-school activity throughout the year.

A robust line up of walking field trips and events whereby physical activity takes place includes:

- Kindergarten: Barnard’s Apple Orchard
- First grade: Heinz Nature Center, Longwood Gardens, and Unionville Community Fair
- Second grade: Hagley Museum
- Third grade: Lincoln Financial Field and Chester County Court House
- Fourth grade: Cherry Crest Adventure Farm
- Fifth grade: Historic Philadelphia, Historic New Castle, and Ashland Nature Center; they also host an “Oldies Dance” each winter where they participate with parents while raising money for local charities

Outside of the school events that promote physical activity are advertised to Hillendale students and families via emails, posters, and a communication vehicle called Peachjar.

Teachers use “brain breaks” and encourage students to get up and move around between or during lessons throughout the day. Community building activities are also incorporated especially at the beginning of the school year in the classrooms. Various grade levels buddy up throughout the year to participate in different activities and build connections among the grades. Posters hung throughout the building demonstrate respect. The school participated in “Start With Hello Week” in September 2022 as part of the national Sandy Hook Promise program. Through this program, students and staff set out to end isolation and promote positive connections throughout the school. PA State Police and the Longwood Fire Company greeted students daily at both our bus and car drop off areas to promote a positive connection between children and local first responders. Additionally, students promoted inclusion on our daily student led HE TV broadcast, buddy activities, and the “UCFSD Name Initiative” where each student had an opportunity to pronounce their name clearly and correctly to promote respect and to create a greater understanding of one another as a diverse student body.

Chester County Health Department offers on-site vaccines for staff; and the district hosts the department annually to offer vaccines to students and families. The Longwood Fire Department visits the school to educate first grade students on fire safety. All full-time staff participate annually in a district-wide Staff Wellness Day where sessions are offered in yoga, healthy cooking, mindfulness, workout classes, and in physical, mental and emotional wellness areas. Hillendale hosts an innovative annual Student Wellness Day with sessions on yoga, crafts, cardio dance, outside yard games, board games, nutritional food tasting, and meditation. We improve this program based on student and staff feedback and plan to incorporate a keynote speaker on student wellness. This unique practice has since been adopted by all the other elementary schools in the district and has become a highlight of the school year for students and staff. Hillendale also hosts an annual Veterans Day Assembly where veterans from students’ families are invited to come into school to be honored; for those who cannot attend their picture and brief bio is displayed around the building for all to see.

The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is heavily involved in the school community and hosts events to engage families including an annual Bingo Night, Family Night Out (at a local farm), and an Adult Evening to bridge connections between parents and tighten bonds within our school community. The PTO often stocks the staff lounge with nutritious snacks and beverages. During the 2021-22 school year, the PTO partnered with the 5th grade student council, 5th grade teachers, and Hillendale’s principal to plan and fund the creation of a new student playground composed of play equipment exclusively selected by our 5th grade students. We host a Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service where all Hillendale staff, students, and family members are invited to participate in service projects benefiting



the local community including Nemours Children's Hospital, Julee Cares, the Pocopson Home, Kennett Area Community Service, the Brandywine Valley SPCA, and the Supportive Transitional and Emergency Housing Ministry. Students learn the value of serving their local communities and the power of their contributions.

Our smoke-free campus has four different outdoor classroom areas where students and staff can work throughout the day.

All students get to/from the campus via school bus or family member's vehicle. Students are not permitted to walk to/from school as there are no sidewalks leading to campus. Campus fields are shared with local soccer organizations and the school gymnasium is shared with local basketball organizations.

The Hillendale Trail provides stress-relief and offers a healthy, safe environment for students, staff and our community to walk and/or jog. It is used by our running club members, outside organizations, recreation leagues, families (as a place to walk while their children participate in recreation league practices and games at Hillendale). It is also used by the community during non-school hours. The Hillendale Trail enhances the school's physical education program and promotes a greater awareness of fitness and wellness of the staff and the students, and it is used throughout the year for wellness activities. We have plans to upgrade our trail with exercise stations to such as pull up bars, sit up benches, and painted movement activities onto our blacktop playground surface and trail.

Staff participates in monthly themed breakfasts and lunches to promote good relationships between staff. Healthy food options are always included. Get-togethers for staff outside of school are also planned at restaurants, houses, and bowling alleys to promote continued opportunities for socialization. The staff takes an annual, themed holiday card picture to send to families every December and helps families who may need some support during the holiday season through our Giving Tree. Staff take tags from the giving tree and shop for families. Some classes participate in coin drives and use the money to purchase items for the Giving Tree.

Students who qualify can receive an individualized education plan to meet their emotional, behavioral, mental, or social needs. They can receive direct instruction and/or small group instruction along with specially designed instruction and accommodations while in the classroom. We work with outside counselors, therapists, and other support staff to create a wrap-around plan to meet the needs of the students in and out of school. The school counselor hosts a "lunch bunch" for students to foster positive relationships with others, in addition to proactive monthly whole group guidance lessons in each grade level and the direct counseling services provided to students in need.

Hillendale dedicates significant resources to our neediest students and proudly hosts the district's elementary Autistic Support population for all students in need of Verbal Behavior Programming. We have two full time autistic support teachers, a BCBA, speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, multiple personal care assistants and registered behavior technicians. We are upgrading the Sensory Room used by all students but especially those with significant sensory needs. Educating our students with autism provides staff and students with constant opportunities for learning and growth. The Chester County IU provides annual peer sensitivity training to help teach neurotypical children and staff about autism and neurodivergent thinkers. In addition, buddy opportunities promote inclusivity and learning across populations creating well-rounded individuals and future citizens of the community. Hillendale created one of the first Elementary Bocce teams recognized by Special Olympics through which our 5th graders team with students in the autistic support population in an 8-week Bocce league leading up to the Chester County Special Olympics.

Narrative for Pillar 3: Your Efforts to Ensure Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education

Hillendale offers extensive opportunities for students to learn about the relationship between humans, energy and the environment in which we all live; our grounds provide an excellent outdoor classroom setting. Understanding the connection to our world starts in kindergarten, and follows through their entire experience, culminating in fifth grade.



Effective environmental and sustainability education is part of the fabric of our school community. Hillendale endeavors to foster a sense of environmental stewardship among our students and community.

Throughout the 2022-23 school year, Hillendale’s principal led the staff in the first of a multiyear commitment to learning how to best teach about and within nature in Hillendale’s outdoor classrooms. Staff engaged in professional development in “best practices of outdoor classroom use” with Stroud Water Research Center. This professional development series will reduce the challenging learning curve for outdoor classroom use for busy teachers—and will ultimately increase the amount of time that students spend learning outdoors.

Hillendale’s school community has three formal and several additional less formal outdoor classroom spaces utilized daily by our school community. Hillendale’s Walking Trail, Woodland Trail, Meadow and Sensory Rain Garden provide interactive and flexible spaces in which teachers facilitate student inquiry and exploration.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Hillendale stakeholders created three formal outdoor classrooms in which students can learn about and within nature. Involved parents created Hillendale’s very popular “stump classroom” which began as a place where students and staff could take mask breaks while learning. Roughly 25 large stumps (desks) and accompanying smaller stumps (chairs) form a semicircle where students face their teacher who has their own stump desk and chair as well.

Local Eagle Scouts created an outdoor bench classroom under sprawling trees that provide shade and sound reduction during lessons. Benches provide room for multiple classrooms worth of students to immerse themselves in learning in nature.

In 2021, second grade teachers and our PTO created Hillendale’s first outdoor science lab classroom with weatherproof tables and seating to be used for outdoor STEM projects. This classroom is lovingly used for our messiest and most engaging lessons and projects.

Hillendale’s principal is currently partnering with the PTO to create Hillendale’s most spacious and structured outdoor classroom – a 36’ x 24’ covered pavilion on our lower campus with a 5’ x 24’ storage facility for outdoor classroom supplies including clipboards, writing utensils, gardening gloves, coats, jackets, measuring tools, shovels, buckets, etc. In partnership with EcoPlastics in Delaware, Hillendale students and staff will collect plastic recyclables to mold into hexagonal picnic tables made entirely of recycled plastic to provide the pavilion with enough seating for multiple classrooms at once. The pavilion will be outfitted with electricity, ceiling fans, WI-FI, outdoor whiteboard, and mounted projector/screen –and is available to all students and staff, to be reserved through districtwide facilities management for use by community members outside of school hours and in the summer. Hillendale’s team and Pioneer Pole Buildings will break ground in spring of 2023.

In 2021, the district-wide facilities team carved a walking path through our meadow to aid our environmental education effort here. The path allows the Hillendale community to better explore the beauty and biodiversity of our meadow, essentially creating an outdoor classroom out of what used to be a parking lot. Additional native plants were added in 2022 to enhance the existing native plant population including yarrow, milkweed, aster, and purple coneflower to name a few. We added interpretive signage highlighting specific plants and explaining the concepts of biodiversity, pollination, and pollinators in May of 2022. Hillendale’s meadow was officially recognized as a Monarch Waystation for migrating butterflies in December of 2022.

As well as providing a safe place to exercise, our Hillendale Trail, established in 2015, serves as an environmental educational literacy tool for students and the community. Our diverse, 20-acre property has grasslands, shrublands and forest. We also opened a 500-yard woodland path expanding our learning opportunities about this habitat. Both paths provide well-utilized spaces on which students explore E-STEM lessons and activities.

Six interpretive educational watershed literacy signs installed strategically along the Hillendale Trail describe the key components of the Craigs Mill Run Watershed at Hillendale Environmental Educational Program. The watershed literacy signs inform our students and community about how important it is to properly manage stormwater runoff for

the health of our waterways. The signs fully explain our stormwater management system. The trailside signs are in proximity to the featured stormwater management components.

Both indoors and outdoors, Hillendale's staff provides students with interdisciplinary environmental and sustainability learning opportunities in all grades across the curriculum. We focus on Pennsylvania State Standards with an evolving eye on evolving **Science, Technology & Engineering, Environmental Literacy and Sustainability (STEELS) Standards**. Our unique campus and homegrown curricula help students learn about varied ecosystems including forests, wetlands, and grasslands; as well as the many species that depend upon those systems including native trees, amphibians and reptiles, butterflies and insects. Students also learn about climate change, invasive species and other threats to our environment.

Kindergarten students learn about life cycles of plants and animals, recycling, earth, their senses, seasons and weather. Kindergarteners observe tadpoles and track their growth and development in our outdoor sensory, rain garden pond classroom. They observe butterflies in our meadow and Pollinator Path. With signs labeling plant species, they identify the flora which native pollinators depend upon. They also collect and identify different materials and recycle them to create buildings, machines, creatures, and toys.

First grade students expand on their foundational knowledge of weather and organisms with more in-depth exploration in our pond classroom. They explore solids and liquids, which leads into learning about the amazing natural science of dinosaurs. Our first-grade classrooms are outfitted with living aquatic organisms through which students learn, first-hand, about the life cycles of frogs, turtles, and fish. First graders also learn about the importance and nesting habits of bees as pollinators by observing mason bee boxes on campus. In 2022, we received funding to repair our existing birdhouses and to install additional mason bee, bat, and butterfly houses to promote learning and benefit the local ecosystem.

Second grade students learn about the states of matter and experiment with soils through a project that allows them to grow and care for plants. They learn what plants need to survive and thrive, and what nutrients are best for them. Using these learnings, the students discover how butterflies can teach us about life cycles. They find caterpillars in our meadow, recognize their sources of food and shelter, identify when they pupate and for how long, and where they will go when they leave our campus. Our second-grade students raise butterflies from larvae within the classroom and release the butterflies once they have fully matured.

Third grade students use our campus to learn about animals that live in different habitats such as a forest, meadow, pond, and watershed. Students observe this outdoor classroom as often as possible; they use computers, iPads, and an intentionally sprawling outdoor Wi-Fi network to take pictures of what they find and where, returning to the indoor classroom to conduct research, answer questions and present their findings. Third graders also learn about the importance of bees as pollinators and maintain our campus mason bee boxes as habitats and learning tools.

Fourth grade students nurture their love of rocks and minerals by spending weeks adventuring and gathering, integrating their findings and identifications into presentations to share. Being "grounded" enables our students to think about electricity and how they use it. They also have many opportunities to explore land and water through our property's rain gardens as well as our water waste treatment area. Fourth graders also monitor nesting in campus bird boxes.

Fifth grade students leave our school understanding their impact on our environment and community and how this knowledge relates to their civic duty as stewards of our local, state, and world environments. They experiment with growing vegetables and herbs for SILO's local community garden in Oxford, PA which feeds those in need. Representatives from SILO visit Hillendale to teach 5th graders about plant growth, community gardens, and to inspire students about the impact of their seedling projects. Fifth graders also monitor bird egg production and progression of the nestling and fledgling stages through an application developed by Cornell Lab of Ornithology. This data is used by Cornell to monitor area bird populations.

Additional environmental education opportunities can be found at “[Claypoole’s Corner](#),” an extensive, student friendly library created by Hillendale Health & Physical Education Teacher, Mr. George Claypoole. An incredible [video library](#) of teacher-created content enriches our daily curricula and is beloved by students and staff of all ages.

We are very fortunate to have many local resources and organizations to expand our knowledge and hands-on approach to environmental lessons. We continue to develop relationships with these organizations, taking field trips to their facilities, grateful for their visits to our school, and for their working with us to improve our district’s role within our natural community including:

- Longwood Gardens
- Mt. Cuba Center
- Stroud Water Research Center
- SILO Community Garden
- Kneale E. Dockstader Foundation
- Brandywine Valley Conservancy
- Delaware Natural History Museum
- Brandywine Zoo
- John Heinz Wildlife Refuge

All stakeholders in the Hillendale community that are interested in the environment have opportunities to grow their knowledge through their experiences on the trail, in the woods, along the meadow, and within our outdoor classrooms. Our educational practices continue to evolve and grow thanks to resources and co-collaborations with Longwood Gardens, Mt. Cuba Center, Stroud Research Center, support from Pennsbury Township and the neighboring townships.

Hillendale families gather during a fall and spring weekend to beautify our campus removing any accumulated trash/recycling, weeding, and controlling invasive species. In partnership with Mt. Cuba, a committee of parents and our 4th grade teaching team is establishing a “Weeding Warriors” program through which students will learn about and to identify native and non-native plants and how to eliminate unwanted invasive species in an eco-friendly way. With guidance from Mt. Cuba, 4th graders will select the native plants that they want to plant and care for in our garden beds on campus and plant the beds in spring of 2023.