

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

GreenRibbonSchools



Highlights from the 2016 Honorees



U.S. Department of Education - 400 Maryland Ave, SW - Washington, DC 20202
www.ed.gov/green-ribbon-schools - www.ed.gov/green-strides



2016 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools

Ohio

Urban Community School, Cleveland, Ohio

An Outdoor Oasis for Students and Refugees Alike

Urban Community School is located on the near west side of Cleveland. Urban was founded in 1968 and was once located on two campuses, St. Malachi and St. Wendelin parishes. In 2005, the school relocated to a new building at on Lorain Ave. The 2005 building was built on a brownfield consisting of an unused warehouse and its adjacent property. The building is occupied by 550 students from preschool through grade eight, 74 percent of whom are eligible for free or reduced price lunch. In 2014, the school built an addition for middle school students.

Urban Community School has many building features that translate into a healthy environment conducive to learning and the conservation of the Earth's resources. Urban features natural light in the middle school addition. There are timers on computers that power down devices at night, and lights that turn off when rooms are not occupied. Urban installed ten solar panels, resulting in an 80 percent cost reduction for electricity of the building.

The school encourages carrying reusable water bottles, the middle school wing has refillable water bottle stations, and water fountains throughout the school have filters. The Learning Garden has water retention features, and includes many drought-tolerant species native to Ohio. Recycling is routine throughout the school, and composting has begun in the early childhood wing. Other conservation efforts include recycling ink cartridges and purchasing 100 percent recycled paper products.

In 2014, Urban partnered with The Refugee Response and the Cleveland Botanical Garden to establish the Learning Garden. The half-acre garden is the fruit of a partnership with an organization that assists refugees to establish themselves in the United States. Many of the refugees come with a background in agriculture, and put that expertise to work by helping to maintain the Learning Garden in the summer months in exchange for access to school-owned production gardens. Production gardens are used for produce that is sold to local restaurants. The Cleveland Botanical Garden staff facilitated the design of the Learning Garden by conducting a series of focus group sessions for staff, students, parents, and Refugee Response staff. The result has been a beautiful garden that students and staff cherish and use

2



frequently. Vegetables from the Learning Garden supplement school lunches, and teachers run a garden club.

KaBoom!, a national nonprofit that works to bring balanced and active play into the daily lives of all children, facilitated the installation of a playground designed for primary students. MetroHealth hospital sponsors a weekly afterschool exercise program, and Urban offers karate classes to students.

Primary grades go to Cleveland Metroparks, Rocky River Nature Center, Huntington Nature Center, and the Cleveland Zoo. Older students have had various trips to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, including visits to Greenberry Farm, the Ledges, and Towpath Trail.

Middle school students conducted a West Creek water quality project, working with a regional EPA official. They studied the stream ecosystem and water quality. They conducted data analysis, drew conclusions about how humans have affected the site, summarized findings, produced a report, and prepared a presentation.

All students in the sixth grade go to the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center for a four-day, three-night environmental camp, thanks to support from Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park. This camp immerses students in watershed and sustainability concepts and issues. Students build knowledge and skills around the topics of water quality, biodiversity, and applying sustainable practices to the design of a building. Students also practice green living by measuring food waste, separating items for compost or recycling, and reusing materials in creative ways. Upon returning from camp, sixth grade students develop and implement a sustainability project. One recent project focused on the pros and cons of various energy sources. Students presented findings to other classes and developed an energy conservation plan for the school to implement. Students encouraged practices such as turning off lights and computer monitors, and analyzed the electricity bill at both the start and end of the project, resulting in a \$900 reduction in electricity charges.

