

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

GreenRibbonSchools



Highlights from the 2014 Honorees



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2014 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools

Ohio

West Geauga High School, Chesterland, Ohio

Leading Teachers, a Leading School

Since West Geauga High School began its energy conservation program roughly five years ago, the efforts of energy coordinator Wes Rogge, a social studies teacher, have saved nearly 6 million kW of electricity, as well as over 28,000 cubic feet of natural gas. West Geauga has avoided producing nearly 7 million metric tons of CO₂, and has provided the district a savings in utility costs of well over \$1,000,000. Through recycling and composting programs managed by student groups, thousands of pounds of solid waste have been diverted from landfills. These tremendous milestone efforts are being realized by educating people about environmentally responsible behaviors, not with new technology, new infrastructure, or construction.

Mike Sustin, the environmental science teacher at West Geauga High School, strives for professional growth and to provide leadership. He has been recognized as the North American Association for Environmental Education's Teacher of the Year. He is on teacher advisory boards for both the Geauga Park District and the Lake Metroparks, and is involved in program development and alignment. He recently was recognized by Project Learning Tree-Ohio as Teacher of the Year, and has been awarded a seat on the Project Learning Tree-Ohio Board of Directors. He conducts professional development workshops for the popular Project WILD, Growing Up Wild, Project WET, and Project Learning Tree curriculum supplements for teachers, as well as undergraduates in teacher training programs. He runs an award winning Summer Ecology Expedition program for high school students to earn credits on their official transcripts for in depth field studies in ecology, conservation biology, geology, and environmental science.

Energy savings are an ongoing pursuit at West Geauga High School. Recently, all of the overhead lighting in the two gymnasiums was changed from the old sodium vapor lamps to new 80W high power compact fluorescent lights. The lights are brighter, energy consumption is down, and the new bulbs will last longer.

West Geauga partners with agencies like the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Holden Arboretum, Lake (county) Metroparks, Geauga Park District, Cleveland Metroparks, Geauga SWCD, Ohio Vernal Pool Partnership, Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Case Western Reserve University, local landscape companies and nurseries, Brownies, Cub





Scouts, and Boy Scouts, as well as Russell, Chester, and Munson Township governments in order to accomplish environmental goals. Each of these partners provides material goods or services, as well as access to some of the best, brightest and creative minds in the business of becoming green. Without these partnerships, student initiatives like rain gardens, Salamander Education and Environmental Diversity (SEED) Trail, diesel particulate filters for all school buses, idle-free zones at all school buildings, plastic and aluminum-can recycling programs and kitchen waste composting program would not have become integral parts of daily life at West Geauga.

Schools are always looking to do more with less. Continued development of the Summer Ecology Expeditions program will provide deeply meaningful field experiences for students, through expeditions in Ohio, Wyoming and Costa Rica. After-school clubs have proven to be effective outlets for students to explore their own efficacy. Key Club handles the paper recycling program, and Interact Club provides opportunities for volunteerism and service learning at the county park districts and at childcare and eldercare facilities. The Envirothon academic competition team has been a platform from which students have developed the appreciation, knowledge, and passion for the environment that has led them into environmental career paths at college. The school's Lexus Eco Challenge teams have been consistent first place winners with projects locally and globally, including installing composting toilets in Afghanistan.

