

Announcing the Best Of Green Schools 2012

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Written by [Rachel Gutter](#)
Posted in [Center for Green Schools](#)

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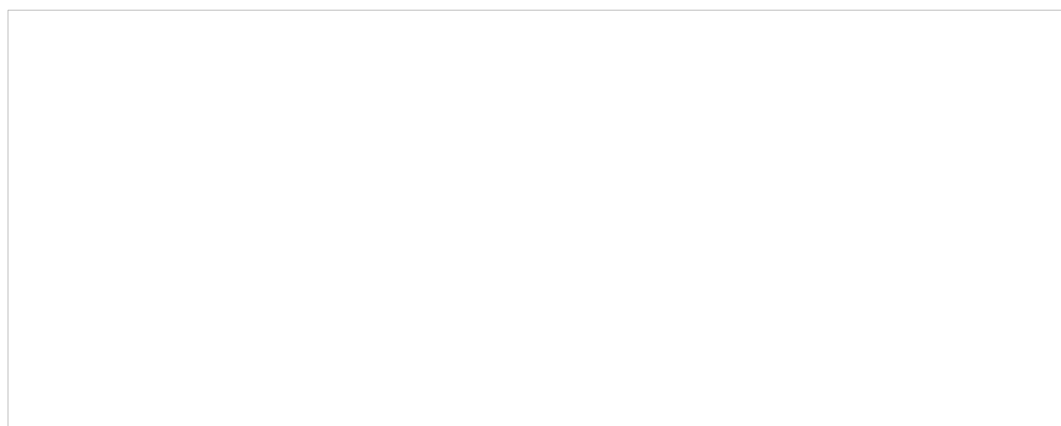


Photo credit: John Petersen, Oberlin College's Lewis Center for Environmental Studies

As moms, as dads, and even as taxpayers, we all want to do everything we can to ensure our children have opportunities to grow, thrive and succeed. 2012 proved to be a tough year for U.S. public education, with budgets stretched thin, and a teach-to-the-test mentality imposed on our teachers. Who can really blame us as a nation for worrying that we won't be able to produce graduates and future leaders who can compete in the global economy?

Yet through my work at the Center for Green Schools, I continue to be encouraged and inspired by the growing number of schools, districts, elected officials and other partners who, in these challenging times, see green as the silver lining.

For the second year running, the Center for Green Schools wanted to shine a light on the brightest examples of a nation-wide movement to ensure every student has the opportunity to attend a school that is safe, healthy and efficient, and supports her dreams for a brighter future. That's why we created the [Best of Green Schools list](#), to recognize the hard work being done across the country and to honor the heroes and shining examples of the green schools movement.

These are the true leaders of our movement, who are slashing water and energy usage, preserving teacher jobs and putting money back into the classrooms where it belongs. And we're proud to give them the recognition they deserve.

Drumroll please...this year's recipients are:

- **K-12 School(s) – Manzo Elementary (Tuscon, Ariz.) & Bertschi Science Wing (Seattle, Wash.):** The Reconciliation Ecology Project at Manzo Elementary is transforming lives and communities through the promotion of stewardship, healthy choices and innovation in learning and educational facilities. Seattle's Bertschi School Living Science building is the first project in the world built to the Living Building Challenge (LBC) v2.0 standards and in an urban setting.
- **2-year Higher Education Institution –Johnson County Community College (Overland Park, Kan.):** In just four years, JCCC has become a signatory to the ACUPCC and is providing regional and national leadership on sustainability issues.
- **4-year Higher Education Institution –Oberlin College (Oberlin, Ohio):** Through innovative curriculum, research and work opportunities, and educational events and programming, Oberlin College aims to engage all members of its community in sustainability issues.
- **School District –Virginia Beach City Public Schools:** The current LEED projects in the district total over 1.5 million SF of LEED building space. In addition, VBCCPS currently has 21 Energy Star schools totaling 2.3 million SF of building space.
- **Policy Maker(s) – Henry A. J. Ramos and U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan:** Henry A. J. Ramos is at the forefront of system-wide efforts to integrate environmental sustainability into 112 colleges by introducing policy so that it becomes part of their institutional culture. Under Secretary Duncan's leadership, the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools program has united the NGO community around a common effort, impacting millions of students across this country as their schools are working to become healthier, more efficient places to receive a 21st century education.
- **Moment for the Movement –International Green Schools Movement:** For the first Green Apple Day of Service, 49 countries around the world and on every continent came together to make the green schools movement global.
- **Ambassador – Frederick E. Harris, Vice Chancellor of College Finance and Facilities Planning for California Community Colleges:** Harris has led the 72-district community college system toward minimizing its environmental impact by reducing energy use through energy efficiency and energy conservation and adoptions of sustainable practices.
- **Business Innovation – Interface:** Interface's "Learning from Nature" brochure was created to share information about biomimicry from a perspective that not only impacts the construction or renovation of education buildings, but influences learning strategies from within the classroom. The brochure was distributed via mail to over 100K decision makers and influencers across North America throughout the K-12 and Higher Ed environments.
- **Community-based Event – Public Purpose Fair, Westminster Schools (Atlanta, Ga.):** The Public Purpose Fairheld in March 2012 was a campus-wide event of service projects and assemblies focused on how Westminster's community can, and does, strive to make a better world through courses, programs and co-curricular experiences.
- **Collaboration –Connecticut Green Leaf Schools Program:** The Connecticut Green LEAF Schools Program encourages K-12 schools to create and improve their environmental and sustainability education, enhance the health and wellness of students and staff, and reduce the environmental impact of their buildings.

For more information on the Best of Green Schools, visit centerforgreenschools.org/bestof2012, or [read our press release](#).

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