



OFFICE OF GOVERNOR PAT QUINN

NEWS

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Governor Quinn Announces Three Illinois Schools Nominated for National “Green Ribbon” Award

Proclaims April “Earth Month” in Illinois at 4th Annual Go Green Schools Symposium

CHICAGO – April 13, 2012. Governor Pat Quinn today announced that three Illinois public schools were nominated for a new U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools award program that recognizes exemplary achievement in environmental impact, student and staff health and the environmental literacy of graduates. The Governor made the announcement during the 2012 Go Green Schools Symposium, which encourages educators and students across Illinois to adopt sustainable practices in order to conserve our natural resources and protect the environment. Governor Quinn also issued a proclamation declaring April as “Earth Month” in Illinois.

“Embracing sustainability is good for the health of our people and our economy,” Governor Quinn said. “These schools are leaders in the green movement and proof that if everyone does a little, we can accomplish a lot towards our goal of making Illinois the greenest state in America.”

Illinois is among 33 states to participate in the U.S. Department of Education’s pilot year of the Green Ribbon Schools award program with winners to be announced April 23 and honored locally and nationally later this spring. A team of environmental and education experts reviewed and scored 13 applications before nominating the three Illinois schools: Thomas J. Waters Elementary School in Chicago Public Schools District 299, Academy for Global Citizenship in Chicago and Prairie Crossing Charter School in Grayslake. The recognition award is the first comprehensive federal policy addressing the environmental impact, health and education of our nation’s schools. For additional information, visit: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools>. Information about the finalist schools and their sustainability efforts are attached.

The Go Green Schools Symposium is hosted by the Illinois Green Governments Coordinating Council in partnership with the U.S. Green Building Council Chicago Chapter and Chicago Public Schools. It features presentations from local, state, and federal policy-makers, educators, green businesses and non-profits. Workshops cover a variety of topics to give participants ideas for making schools across Illinois green. Green school construction and renovation, energy usage in the classroom, environmental education and health, and ways to finance sustainability projects are some of the areas that were discussed.

“Mayor Emanuel is committed to building a Chicago where sustainability is embedded in everything we do, and what better place to start than in our schools,” said Karen Weigert, Chief Sustainability Officer for the City of Chicago. “A central focus of our sustainability efforts is to build a better environment for our children and we are proud that Chicago schools are leaders in this effort.”

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Throughout April, various state agencies will hold events and programs aimed at educating the public about the importance of environmentalism and conserving natural resources. The state of Illinois participated in Earth Hour earlier this month by shutting off unnecessary lighting at the Executive Mansion in Springfield and the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago.

Governor Quinn has also signed numerous Executive Orders and statutes into law to ensure greater energy efficiency, use of renewable energy, and protection of Illinois' land, air and water resources. For more information about Governor Quinn's sustainability initiatives, please visit www.Green.Illinois.gov.

About the three finalists:

- Thomas J. Waters Elementary School features an Ecology program that is integrated across all subjects as well as woven into the school's daily routines. The program highlights resource conservation with a schoolwide recycling program, including a lunchroom composting system; field ecology with on-site study and observations of local ecosystems such as the Chicago River and Lake Michigan and community gardens that feature multiple native plant areas. The school emphasizes a healthy lifestyle with daily recess, a daily lunchtime salad bar in the school cafeteria, and other physical activity and nutrition programs. Community support and grants have helped the 100-year-old facility improve efficiency with the addition of solar panels, environmentally friendly floor tiles and energy-efficient lighting fixtures.
- The Academy for Global Citizenship, a charter school in Chicago, features a school-based greenhouse and garden. Students at this public school have access to organic breakfast, lunch and snacks and participate in composting and recycling programs. Students participate in a daily Sustainability and Wellness class as well as daily yoga. Additionally, the school runs dozens of community workshops on environmental topics. The school tracks energy and gas use and sets annual reduction goals and recently began purchasing electricity through a wind power provider. The school features a small solar installment where students monitor and track how much energy is created. Staff has shared their practices at more than 100 conferences across the country. Throughout the year, students also tend to three schoolyard chickens as part of learning about animals, life cycles and food production.
- Prairie Crossing Charter School's campus features the first LEED certified school building in Illinois. The campus features local, renewable and recycled materials, native landscaping, a geothermal heating and cooling system, natural ventilation and lighting, solar panels, a wind turbine, rain cisterns, rain barrels, indirect and direct fluorescent lighting, dual flush toilets and more energy-efficient technology. Monthly Green Challenges address integral environmental issues and sustainable practices and classrooms set goals to improve their environmental practices and achievements. The school's curriculum includes daily outdoor recess, classroom gardens, nature walks and more. In classroom gardens and at the charter's Learning Farm, students participate in every stage of growing organic crops and gardening is integrated into lessons across the school curriculum.

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