



Gadsden Elementary School Honored Among 2019 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools

September 25, 2019

Director of the Campaign for Environmental Literacy James L. Elder and Manager of the Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council, Phoebe Beierle joined Assistant U.S. Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education Frank Brogan and Acting Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Neil A. Jacobs Wednesday, September 25, 2019, to congratulate Savannah-Chatham County Public School System's Gadsden Elementary School on their achievements at a ceremony at the U.S. Department of Commerce in Washington, D.C.

Gadsden Elementary School was nominated by the Georgia Department of Education. In awarding the recognition, Robert W. Gadsden Elementary School was commended by the U.S. Department of Education for exemplifying the concepts and ideas of conscientious environmental preservation and sustainability. The school has one of the lowest utility costs per square foot in the district at 76 cents and has achieved a 38 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. A variety of energy-saving strategies have included the incorporation of energy-management performance guidelines and automated temperature-control systems; the integration of occupancy sensors; the scheduled replacement of conventional lighting with LED; the development of efficient student transportation; and the introduction of recycling.

Students are an active part of the environmentally friendly efforts. Over two tons of waste were recycled in one school year by the recycling club, run by third, fourth, and fifth-graders. The cafeteria transitioned from Styrofoam trays and bowls to paper trays which are made of 20 percent recycled pulp and 80 percent paperboard, manufactured from wood pulp grown in the U.S. from certified forests. The school also reduced water use by 13 percent in the past year, and three water-bottle filling stations were installed which is expected to eliminate over 3,000 plastic bottles.

Physical Fitness efforts have also increased for both students and staff through a variety of programs. In addition, the school has partnered with community organizations to grow garden produce and students have the opportunity to explore various career pathways related to agriculture and farming not often presented to students from urban communities.

“This award acknowledges Gadsden’s commitment to sustainable practices,” says SCCPSS Superintendent Dr. Ann Levett. “We commend Gadsden’s principal Dr. Renee Bryant-Evans, school staff, students, and families, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Operations Officer Mrs. Vanessa Miller-Kaigler, and Executive Director of Maintenance and Operations Mr. Arnold Jackson for their leadership in facilities, health, and environmental education. The work done by Gadsden is representative of promising practices to improve achievement and equity, not only for aspiring green schools, but for all schools.”

At the event, 35 schools and 14 districts were honored for their innovative efforts to reduce environmental impact and costs, promote better health, and ensure effective environmental education. In addition, four colleges and universities were honored with the Postsecondary Sustainability Award. A state education official was also recognized for his efforts to advance school sustainability in the state of Minnesota. Representatives from selectees received sustainably crafted plaques in recognition of their achievements.

The honorees were named from a pool of candidates nominated by 28 states. The selectees include 25 public schools, including three magnet schools and two charter schools, as well as 10 nonpublic schools. Over a third of the 2019 honorees serve a disadvantaged student body.

