



## NEWS RELEASE

For additional information, please contact David Jespersen by phone (402-471-4537) or email ([david.jespersen@nebraska.gov](mailto:david.jespersen@nebraska.gov))

FEBRUARY 2, 2023

# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS HONOREES ANNOUNCED

The U.S. Department of Education released the names of the 2020 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools, District Sustainability Awardees, and Postsecondary Sustainability Awardees. Across the country, 39 schools, 11 districts, and 5 postsecondary institutions are being honored for their innovative efforts to reduce environmental impact and utility costs, improve health and wellness, and ensure effective sustainability education.

The honorees were chosen from a pool of candidates nominated by 27 states. The selectees include 28 public schools, including 3 magnet schools and 4 charter schools, as well as 11 nonpublic schools. Forty-five percent of the 2020 honorees serve a disadvantaged student body.

Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart in Omaha, Bayard Public Schools in Bayard, and Mickle Middle School in Lincoln were named honorees.

Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart students, faculty, and staff embrace sustainability as an integral part of the school's culture. The school was one of the first in Omaha to start a composting program. The district has upgraded heating and lighting throughout each building and installed a solar array, becoming the first high school in Omaha to produce renewable energy on campus. The school also launched a STEM program with the opening of the Duchesne Research Engineering Art Media (DREAM) Lab. The area is open to all students and is designed to encourage creativity.

Bayard Public Schools has fostered quality partnerships to efficiently use resources. The district partners with the Natural Resources District, the Nebraska Forrest Service, the City of Bayard, the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy, and private companies to engage in improvements to the school environment and educational opportunities for students. The district has switched to LED lighting and sensor-based water fixtures and have started recycling programs at each school. The district also provides students with many hands-on opportunities to engage in effective environmental and sustainability education incorporating STEM, civics, and green career pathways through the use of a newly-constructed greenhouse, an aquaponics system to grow vegetables and raise fish, and the utilization of a school garden.

Mickle Middle School has integrated environmental sustainability across the building in all classrooms and outside the school. Students work in the school garden and help provide food to their classmates. The school has started a recycling program led by students and created a recycling video called "Recycle Man VS Garbage Man & Trash Boy". The video exhibits the rules for recycling, portraying the environmental impact and sustainability measures important to Mickle Middle School.

"Congratulations to each Nebraska honoree for their efforts to create a healthy learning environment for students, faculty, and staff," said Commissioner Matthew Blomstedt. "These schools have done exemplary work to help prepare their students

for a greener, better future.”

The list of all selected schools, districts, colleges, and universities, as well as their nomination packages, can be found [here](#). A report with highlights on the 55 honorees can be found [here](#). More information on the federal recognition award can be found [here](#).

####

*David Jespersen*  
*Public Information Officer, Nebraska Department of Education*  
*402-471-4537*  
*david.jespersen@nebraska.gov*  
*@NDE\_News*