

## **2014-2015 District Nominee Presentation Form**

### **CERTIFICATIONS**

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#### **District's Certifications**

The signatures of the district superintendent on the next page certify that each of the statements below concerning the district's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of the superintendent's knowledge.

1. The district has been evaluated and selected from among districts within the Nominating Authority's jurisdiction, based on high achievement in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental education.
2. The district is providing the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district wide compliance review.
3. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school district has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan to remedy the violation.
4. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the school district has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
5. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or school district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.
6. The district meets all applicable federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.

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### **U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools 2014-2015 District Sustainability Award**

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Name of Superintendent: Dr. Winifred Hamilton  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

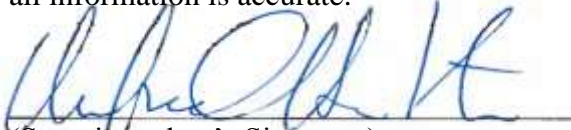
District Name: Stamford School District  
(As it should appear on an award)

Address: 888 Washington Blvd. Stamford, CT 06901

Telephone: 203-977-4525 Fax: 203-977-4560

Web site/URL: [www.stamfordpublicschools.org](http://www.stamfordpublicschools.org) E-mail: [sschwartz@stamfordct.gov](mailto:sschwartz@stamfordct.gov)

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Date: January 29, 2015

### **Nominating Authority's Certifications**

The signature by the Nominating Authority on this page certifies that each of the statements below concerning the district's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of the Authority's knowledge.

1. The district is one of those overseen by the Nominating Authority which is highest achieving in the three ED-GRS Pillars: 1) reduced environmental impact and costs; 2) improved health and wellness; and 3) effective environmental education.
2. The district meets all applicable federal civil rights and federal, state, local and tribal health, environmental and safety requirements in law, regulations and policy and is willing to undergo EPA on-site verification.

Name of Nominating Agency: Connecticut State Department of Education

Name of Nominating Authority: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Interim Commissioner

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify to the best of my knowledge that the school meets the provisions above.

  
(Nominating Authority's Signature)

Date: January 22, 2015

## **SUMMARY AND DOCUMENTATION OF NOMINEE'S ACHIEVEMENTS**

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The Stamford Public School system, located in Stamford CT, includes 20 schools in an urban/suburban city. The District has 16,149 students, of whom 51% are FRLP eligible, and 13% have limited English proficiency. Stamford has a graduation rate of 91% and attendance rate of 95%. With education as a top priority, the district is always working to improve supporting programs that together will improve the learning environment. These programs include education and support of health, physical wellbeing, the environment, and sustainability. A green attitude is prevalent in the Stamford district. With the support of district officials, many principals, teachers, and parents have been able to pursue sustainable and health initiatives in our individual schools. The Stamford Public School System has a large community that is passionate about maintaining a green and healthy environment and is fortunate enough to have a district that fully supports this mentality.

The Stamford district has encouraged its schools to participate in the Connecticut Green LEAF Schools program. Twelve schools are now registered, and eight have completed comprehensive self-assessments. The average score of these schools is 62 of 100, with many schools showing strong work in all 3 key pillars of the Green Ribbon initiative. The district continues to work toward full adoption of the Connecticut Green LEAF program.

Stamford supports our schools to become learning laboratories. Six of our schools are magnet schools. Three of these are science-themed. Students in Stamford are able to learn about science, the environment, and sustainability through the curriculum and in afterschool programming offered at all of our schools. Through local partnerships with the Audubon Greenwich, SoundWaters, the Bartlett Arboretum, and the Stamford Museum, Nature Center, and ECOS students are able to learn about the environment, nature, conservation, preservation and much more. The district also has many featured projects such as animals in the classroom and building your own self-sustaining ecosystem, that are displayed in the Stamford Government Center.

The district has been working very hard to improve the health and wellbeing of all students and staff in Stamford's schools. Through district support, many schools have set up gardens, in-school and after-school health programs, walk-a-thons and more. All schools have a close relationship with both the waste management and recycling manager as well as the district's food services representative. All 12 elementary schools are recognized as HealthierUS Challenge Bronze Award Winners. Through a strong

relationship with food provider Chartwells, the district has been able to enact healthy changes to the schools' breakfast and lunch programs. This has enabled the district to work towards a healthier and more sustainable food program in Stamford. The food options now contain daily fruit and vegetable selections, many locally sourced. Chartwells has ensured that only the best and healthiest options are served in the cafeteria. Fried food is no longer cooked in the cafeteria and students are encouraged to bring healthy food for lunch. There are also vegetarian and vegan options available every day.

Half of Stamford's schools have school gardens and garden clubs. The leader of the Dolan Middle School garden club recently founded GIVE: Green Initiatives for Vegetables in Education, which is currently working to support existing Stamford school gardens and is working to bring gardens to all of our schools. All Stamford students learn about healthy eating and activity either through health or physical education classes. When weather is appropriate, all schools have physical education outside, and all of the middle and high schools offer after school athletic programs. Many schools have taken physical activity a step further by incorporating walk-a-thons and personal health and fitness logs to stress the importance of physical activity.



**Figure 1 Stamford Students in the Garden**

Stamford Public Schools are constantly working to reduce its environmental impact with two full time energy managers who are regularly looking for projects that will reduce the district's energy costs and carbon footprint. Some of the projects that have been completed in the district include solar panels on three schools, an entire LED lighting retrofit at one school, smaller LED projects at other schools, construction of a LEED Certified Silver K-8 school, Vending Misers installed on all of the vending machines, Fridgetek fan controllers have been installed on all of the walk in refrigerators, heating and cooling set points controlled through an energy management system, and monitoring all schools' progress with Energy Star Portfolio Manager. The district has switched to all Green Seal cleaning products and is working with Stamford's waste department to make recycling a priority. Energy, water, the environment, and health are included throughout our curriculum, closing the loop on both demonstrating and teaching about the importance of resource management.

## Step 1: Green and Healthy Outlook

Stamford's Board of Education, along with all of the individual schools, is working to make Stamford's schools a healthier and more sustainable environment. 12 of our 20 schools have signed on to the Connecticut Green LEAF Schools program, with 8 of these schools completing a comprehensive self-assessment. Our Green LEAF participants include schools from across the grades, with 7 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and 2 high schools. Stamford Board of Ed's Facilities Department has two energy managers focused on reducing energy consumption through facilities upgrades and behavior modification. The energy managers work with the individual schools to form green teams, to help improve focus on sustainability, and to pursue projects that will support the district's environmental objectives.

There are also many district employees and volunteers working to meet the environmental objectives. Some school green teams and gardening clubs are already well established thanks to interested parents, teachers and students. The science curriculum associate is an advocate for environmental issues in the curriculum and also organizes a STEM showcase every year for all of the schools in Stamford to attend. She is also involved with promoting the STEM CT Invention Convention to all schools in Stamford. The science curriculum advisor attends the GE Developing Futures in Education professional development seminar and the Next Steps STEM advancement seminar every year. The information from these seminars is then incorporated into professional development for staff members as STEM becomes more of a priority. The physical education curriculum advisor is also involved with assisting schools in improving their physical and health education. All 12 elementary schools have achieved HealthierUS Challenge Bronze status. Stamford's Chartwells representative plays an active role in helping the district make healthier meal choices. All of Stamford's schools are benchmarked through Energy Star Portfolio Manager and Stamford has two schools that have reached a score of 75 and are in the process of getting their Energy Star certification.

All of Stamford's schools maintain a positive relationship with the local community. The district has partnerships with Nature's Classroom, Audubon Greenwich, GIVE, SoundWaters, Stamford Museum and Nature Center, Stamford Garden Club, and the Bartlett Arboretum. Many of these organizations hold both in-school and after school programs and have worked with the district to create programs that reinforce the district science curriculum. SoundWaters is a very strong local partner and holds after school programs with most elementary schools. SoundWaters' Young Mariners program culminates with students spending a night on the SoundWaters boat while learning about the local Long Island Sound

ecosystem and environment. Audubon Greenwich has worked with three schools in Stamford to establish Schoolyard Habitats, which once established, are provided with grants to encourage the use of education in these habitats. This year a fourth school, Hart Elementary, was added to the program and will have Phase One of their habitat unveiled this spring. With these strong local relationships, KT Murphy School and Hart School have both partnered with the GE Corporation to perform clean-up projects for the community. For the past three years, GIVE and Stamford's Garden Club have hosted the annual Lettuce Challenge where students from grade 2 through 12 are challenged to nurture and grow a head of lettuce for 6 weeks. Last year, 900 students from 54 classes in 18 schools throughout Stamford participated in the challenge. The competition ended with all students gathering in the Stamford Government Center to display their plants, and winning plants were selected.



**Figure 2 Winning plants from Stamford's Lettuce Challenge**

All schools in Stamford were entered into the annual Keep America Beautiful Recycle-Bowl Competition and Stamford has had a winning school for the past two years. One of Stamford's high schools, Westhill won the competition for the state of Connecticut in 2013 and Rippowam Middle School won the competition for Connecticut in 2014. Stamford has a well-established website for updates and notifications, but Stamford's energy managers have also established social media sites to promote Green LEAF successes. In 2014, Stamford Public Schools was the Going Green Award Winner for the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education Communication Award, which focused on the awareness placed on the district's LED retrofits and behavioral awareness campaigns. In 2014 Stamford's Board of Education also received First Honors in Connecticut's Power of Change: Energy and Innovation category. Additionally, this past spring, the Facilities Department held a creative solar energy competition for the elementary schools with the winning school recognized at a district-wide Board of Education meeting. The district is constantly working to establish a greener and healthier environment, and is lucky to have district staff and individual schools that support these important themes. Looking

forward, the district is hoping to take advantage of more state programs and rebate opportunities that will encourage additional education and infrastructure improvements.

## Step 2: Environmental and Sustainability Literacy

In Stamford, district family members are encouraged to attend weekly Board of Education meetings to share their ideas and environmental goals with the district to improve curriculum and programming. One parent involved with the Bartlett Arboretum has helped bring their programs to the elementary schools, and a retired teacher from Dolan School founded GIVE, a program that is working to introduce gardens into all schools in Stamford. In the district-wide curriculum, students are learning about many environmental and sustainability concepts from kindergarten through their senior year of high school. It is a main focus of the district to have a strong science program and hands on learning is encouraged whenever appropriate and environmental and sustainability education is extremely prevalent in the sequence of learn in many grades. Below are some of the district's environmental curriculum requirements:

Kindergarten: Weather and introduction to animals

1<sup>st</sup>: Insect exploration and weather

2<sup>nd</sup>: Soil and plant growth, maple sugaring field trip

3<sup>rd</sup>: Animals, rocks and minerals

4<sup>th</sup>: Ecosystems, eco-column project, energy circuits, power, electricity, land and water

5<sup>th</sup>: Renewable energy/Solar Energy

6<sup>th</sup>: Weather, Water, Ecosystems, Watershed monitoring that includes an in-class presentation

7<sup>th</sup>: Human Body, Food Safety, Erosion and Deposition

8<sup>th</sup>: Energy, Bioengineering

9<sup>th</sup>: Solar cooker project, Biology

High School (10-12): Chemistry, Climate Change, AP Environmental Science

The district encourages schools to incorporate outdoor learning environments, which some schools have extended to create outdoor classrooms. Our elementary schools participate in programs with the Stamford Museum and Nature Center that use their outdoor learning environment, while the middle schools have an overnight outdoor learning experience to Nature's Classroom. Schoolyard Habitats have been established at three schools with a fourth school in process. Greenwich Audubon,

who assisted the School Habitat program, is seeking an Environmental Solutions for Communities grant, which would extend the program to more schools in Stamford. The district supports Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) and Project Learning Tree, which both assist teachers in providing environmental education and professional development to improve water and environmental education in the classrooms.

The district also strongly supports STEM and is continuing to look for ways to introduce it into the curriculum. Stamford has a science curriculum advisor who oversees all science related activities and education throughout the district. She focuses on STEM development, professional development, and works to improve the science curriculum every year. She also oversees an annual STEM showcase for the district and students of all ages are encouraged to attend. In April 2014, the district held the first STEMfest to teach students about career opportunities and it was a huge success.



**Figure 3 Stamford students attend the first annual STEMfest**

Non-fiction reading is growing in importance with the new statewide core curriculum requirements, resulting in students reading more non-fiction texts with science and environmental topics. Inquiry and project based learning is also extremely important and highly utilized at all levels of learning. Many student projects are on display at the Stamford Government Center, both showing off students' work and providing tutorials for visitors on how they, too, can make these environmental projects. All three high schools in Stamford offer AP Environmental Science, as well as recycling or environmental clubs. The district has partnerships with the local recycling and wastewater treatment centers for teachers and students often take trips there.



Stamford's partnership with SoundWaters is unique in that students are given the opportunity to learn about the local Long Island Sound eco-system and environment, while seeing how pollution and other human caused factors affect this estuarine habitat in their backyard. SoundWaters works with Stamford students for in-school presentations, afterschool programs, field trips and holds a Young Mariners program where students spend a night on the SoundWaters boat, connecting with nature and learning about the local ecosystem.



**Figure 4 Stamford students learn and work in the garden**

### **Step 3: Healthy School Environment**

Stamford's schools are very receptive to improvement suggestions and are constantly working to create healthier and safer environments for all schools. Stamford is in full compliance with the CT School Bus Emissions law, the CT School Pesticide law, and the CT Green Cleaning Products in Schools law. The district recently reintroduced Tools for Schools, and the facilities department, health department, security and building managers are currently working together to make sure the program is used to its full potential. Two training sessions were completed this past spring where energy issues were also introduced to the TfS teams, to emphasize that both indoor air quality and energy performance go hand in hand.

Stamford has been using Green Seal cleaning products for the past three years. All of the cleaning products are shipped in powdered form to reduce shipping-related fuel emissions. All bathroom paper products are made from recycled content. The mops in all schools are now made from green microfibers, and trash liners are made from recycled content. All floor finishers are also Green Seal approved.

**Step 4: Healthy Nutrition**

All schools in Stamford offer nutritional options for both breakfast and lunch. The district has partnered with our food distributor Chartwells to make Stamford’s lunch program as healthy and sustainable as possible. Students and parents have the opportunity to voice their opinion on the district-wide health and wellness team, and Chartwells works to accommodate individual requests. Currently, Rogers School is working with Chartwells in a pilot program to replace the currently used Styrofoam trays with cardboard “food boats” to eliminate Styrofoam waste. This pilot has been successful and the Rogers team has plans to expand to the rest of the district.



**Figure 5 Stamford Lettuce Challenge participants**

Vegetarian and vegan dining options are available in the cafeterias every day. Fruits and vegetables are served daily, with many locally sourced. Other sustainability initiatives from Chartwells include purchasing sustainable fish species and certified humane cage free eggs, and serving fresh yogurt and milk from cows that are free of artificial growth hormones. Chartwells provides healthy eating and recycling signage that helps to inform and educate student about sustainable choices.



**Figure 6: Stamford students learn about good nutrition through cafeteria signage**

**WE PROUDLY SERVE** 2014-2015

Whole Grains  
 Unlimited Portions of Fresh Local Produce for Students  
 Deli meats by **Boar's Head**  
 No Transfats, No Hydrogenated Oils or Fats,  
 No High Fructose Corn Syrup  
 No Added MSG, Artificial Sweeteners, or Caffeine  
 All of our recipes & menus meet USDA guidelines

**Figure 7: A posting on the Stamford Public Schools website from Chartwells.**

## Step 5: Physical Well-Being

Another important focus for the Stamford district is physical fitness. Physical education is mandatory. Typically, the amount of time spent in physical and health education is as follows:

- Elementary: 1-2 hrs/week of PE and 20-30 minutes/week of health education
- Middle: 1-2 hrs/week of PE and 1 hr/week of health education
- High School:
  - All freshmen and sophomores take PE and Health Education every day over a semester
  - Juniors and seniors have options of taking electives in PE or Health

It is the district's approach to stress the importance of students' physical activity beyond gym class hours. Students at the elementary level have recess that takes place outdoors when weather is appropriate. All schools have gym class outdoors as well. Most elementary schools offer afterschool programs, while all middle schools and high schools offer athletics. In addition, both high schools have state of the art fitness centers which are used both during and after the school day to help students reach their fitness related goals.



**Figure 7 Stamford High School**



**Figure 8 Toquam Elementary**

All 12 of the elementary schools are HealthierUS Challenge Bronze honorees. The middle and high schools follow the Alliance for a Healthier Generation curriculum which is sponsored by the American Heart Association and the Clinton Foundation. Professional development is provided throughout the school year by the district to enhance this program. Many schools have introduced their own programs which stress the importance of physical fitness. Some examples of successful programs include:

- Westover School's JAM (Just a Minute) program which has students out of their seats for a minute of jumping or dance to get the blood circulating, teaching students the importance of getting up and moving. Westover also has an annual Jog-a-thon.
- Hart School has a before school class where students can participate in physical activity before the day starts.
- Jog-a-thon at Toquam School.
- Rogers School holds an annual Walk-a-thon where students add up their walking mileage throughout the year. Older students keep a personal physical activity log.
- Northeast School has an afterschool flag football program and a fall fitness program.
- KT Murphy School stresses the importance of physical fitness through an annual spring field day and has two Walk-a-thons a year to Cove Island Park.

### Step 6: Energy Efficiency and Water Conservation

Stamford is committed to reducing energy consumption at all of our schools. The district has two energy managers who have benchmarked all schools through Energy Star Portfolio Manager, and are constantly assessing building consumption to look for projects that will improve the buildings' energy performance. They work with the schools' building managers and have collaborated on action lists for every school to keep track of all building energy projects and target future initiatives. Stamford's district has always focused on inefficient lighting and air conditioning systems. Through lighting retro-commissioning projects and HVAC upgrades, Stamford's energy managers have worked to reduce the district's electric consumption drastically in the past three years, which can be seen in the graph below.

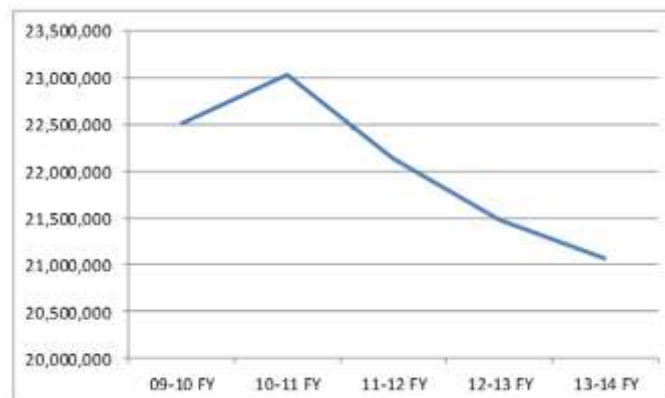
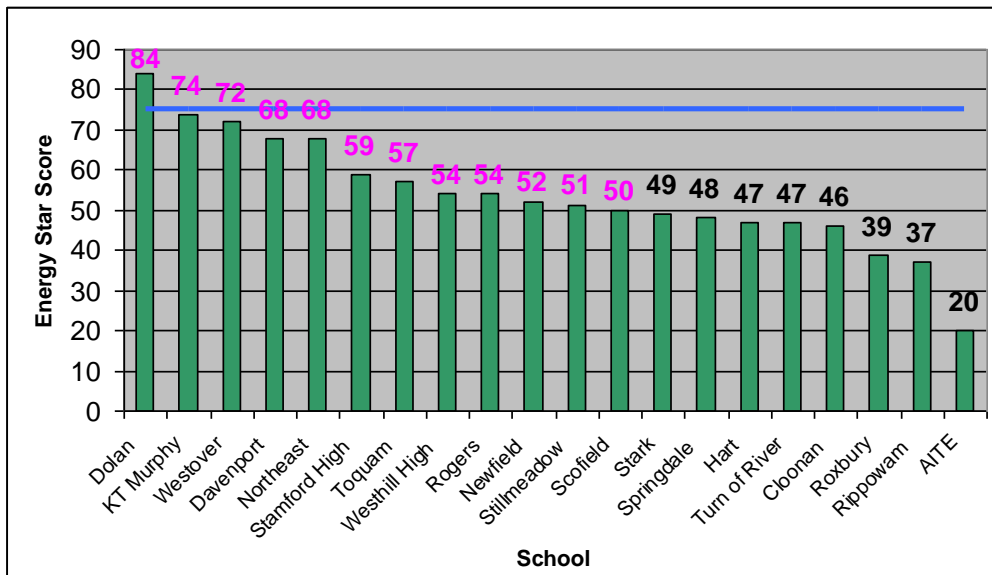


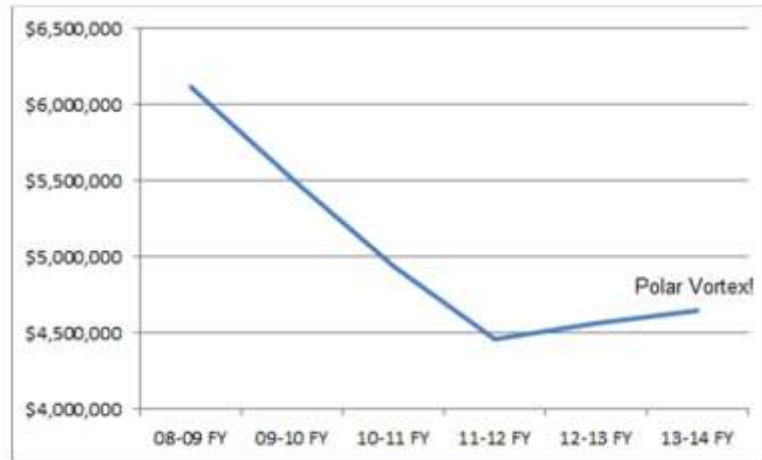
Figure 9 Stamford District-wide Annual Energy Usage (kWh)

Stamford’s energy managers are always working to control set points and are now focusing on LED lighting projects. Stamford just completed the first full LED lighting retrofit at Scofield Middle School, the school in Connecticut to have 100% LED light. In recent months, smaller LED projects have been completed and larger LED projects are being investigated. The energy team has also assessed classroom, gym, auditorium, theater, and outdoor lights to target future energy efficiency projects for the district. The City of Stamford has out a bid for a performance contract which would include efficiency upgrades of at least five schools. The energy managers also work to influence the conservation culture at all of the schools, creating energy education programs for students to learn about the importance of saving energy. Stamford has five schools that are at or close to the 75 benchmark score required for Energy Star certification. 12 additional schools are near the 50 mark.



**Figure 10 Energy Star scores for all 20 schools in Stamford. Twelve schools in the district have scores above 50 and five schools in the district have scores above 65.**

Since Stamford Public Schools first introduced an energy management program almost 5 years ago, the district has reduced their energy costs more than 1.4 million dollars. The graph below shows the total cost of energy for each fiscal year from 2008-2009 to the 2013-2014 school year. Monthly electric and natural gas bills are analyzed and compared month over month and year over year to identify consumption patterns that need to be addressed or modified.



**Figure 11 Stamford's Total Energy Cost per Fiscal Year**

Retro-commissioning projects are constantly being considered throughout the district, as are more intensive energy monitoring programs. The city of Stamford has also put out a bid and received applications for a performance contract that would include five schools in Stamford. Beginning in 2015, Stamford's energy managers will also produce "Energy Report Cards" to keep schools updated on their energy progress with a letter grade, informing them about how their building's performances compares to previous months and to other schools in the district.

Stamford has three schools that have solar panels. The district is working on solar projects on three additional schools. The department hopes to move forward with these projects in early 2015. In spring 2014, the facilities department held a solar energy competition for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at all of the elementary schools. Davenport Elementary, the winner, was honored at the monthly Board of Education meeting. The facilities department is working to install a solar array on the school's roof, to increase solar education and reward the school for supporting renewable initiatives.

Stamford's transportation program also focuses on sustainability. All new busses are purchased with efficient in mind. Additionally, Stamford has continuous routes throughout the morning and afternoon to save on fuel emissions. Stamford busses are compliant with Connecticut's no idling law to save on emissions and protect the air quality around schools. Students are encouraged to take the bus rather than carpool, or to walk if they live close to their school.

Students on all levels learn about energy and water conservation while attending Stamford's schools. Solar energy is taught in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, including basics of renewable energies and in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, in depth about solar energy. Some schools take trips to the water treatment plant that is located in Stamford to learn about water conservation.

## Step 7: Green Purchasing and Waste Management

Stamford Public Schools' cleaning and maintenance products are Green Seal certified. Cleaning products are purchased in concentrated form to reduce shipping impact. All floor finishers and floor strippers, bathroom materials, including foam soap, paper towels and tissues are green products or are made from recycled content. The trash liners in the school are also made from recycled content, and mops are also made of certified green microfiber. Recently, the Green Team at Rogers International School introduced an initiative to remove the Styrofoam trays from the cafeteria, and a successful pilot was conducted this fall. The school also purchased more recycling bins in order to increase the consistency of the trash-recycling bin ratio throughout the school. Chartwells Stamford representative, the district nutrition advisor, the district recycling and waste manager and principal are working with the green team to enact this change. With district support, and after seeing a successful pilot at Rogers, the team hopes to expand the program to the entire district.



**Figure 12 Westhill Recycle-Bowl Champions**

The City of Stamford and the Board of Education are in compliance with all recycling laws. Stamford introduced single stream recycling in 2013 and has been improving on the program ever since. Building managers are properly educated on how to dispose of waste and recyclables in their school and the district is continually working to educate school faculty and staff on how to properly recycle and encourage recycling. The district recycling and waste manager is constantly working to improve the district and city's recycling rate and he works closely with the schools to continue and improve on this effort. The district solid waste and recycling manager has set a goal to raise the city's recycling rate from 20% to 80% and is constantly working to improve the recycling system within the schools. In December

2014, the average recycling rate throughout the district was at 30%. He has given in-school presentations and has worked with individual school green teams and custodians to increase the recycling rates in schools. For the past two years, district schools have participated in the Keep America Beautiful Recycle-Bowl. In 2013, Westhill High School was the winning school for the entire state of Connecticut, recycling 2.56 pounds of waste per student. In 2014, Rippowam Middle School was the winning school for Connecticut and recycled 13.3 pounds per student. Some school's environmental groups, such as one of the Stamford High Schools, have chosen to focus primarily on recycling, proper signage, and education throughout the school.