



2015-2016 School Nominee Presentation Form

ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATIONS

School and District's Certifications

The signatures of the school principal and district superintendent (or equivalents) on the next page certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of their knowledge. *In no case is a private school required to make any certification with regard to the public school district in which it is located.*

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades Pre-K-12.
2. The school has been evaluated and selected from among schools 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.
3. Neither the nominated public school nor its public school district is refusing 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. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) is not subject to the jurisdiction of OCR. The nominated DoDEA schools, however, are subject to and in compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements to comply with Federal civil rights laws.
4. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the public school district concluding that the nominated public school or the public school district as a whole 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.
5. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the public school or the public school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
6. 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 public school or public school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or public school district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.
7. The school 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.

U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools 2015-2016

Public Charter Title I Magnet Private Independent Rural

Name of Principal: Mr. Daniel G. Casey

Official School Name: Benjamin Franklin High School
(As it should appear on an award)

Official School Name Mailing Address: 2001 Leon C. Simon
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

County: Orleans State School Code Number *: 036043

Telephone: 504-286-2600 Fax: 504-286-2642

Web site/URL: <http://www.edline.net/pages/bfhsla> E-mail: dcasey@bfhsla.org

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


Date: 1/14/16
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent: Dr. Henderson Lewis



District Name: Orleans Parish School Board

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: 1/14/16

Nominating Authority's Certifications

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

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades Pre-K-12.
2. The school 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 and sustainability education.
3. The school 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: Louisiana Department of Education

Name of Nominating Authority: Ms. Jill Cowart

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: 1/26/2016

SUMMARY AND DOCUMENTATION OF NOMINEE'S ACHIEVEMENTS

Provide a coherent summary that describes how your school is representative of your jurisdiction's highest achieving green school efforts. Summarize your strengths and accomplishments in all three Pillars. Then, include concrete examples for work in every Pillar and Element. Only schools that document progress in every Pillar and Element can be considered for this award.

SUBMISSION

The nomination package, including the signed certifications and documentation of evaluation in the three Pillars should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to ed.green.ribbon.schools@ed.gov according to the instructions in the Nominee Submission Procedure.

OMB Control Number: 1860-0509

Expiration Date: March 31, 2018

Public Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1860-0509. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 37 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain benefit P.L. 107-110, Sec. 501, Innovative Programs and Parental Choice Provisions. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20202-4536 or email ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference the OMB Control Number 1860-0509. Note: Please do not return the completed ED-Green Ribbon Schools application to this address.



Louisiana Green Schools Application for Green Ribbon Schools

School Contact Information

School Name: Benjamin Franklin High School

Street Address: 2001 Leon C. Simon Dr.

City: New Orleans

State: LA

Zip: 70122

Website: <http://www.edline.net/pages/bfhsla>

Principal Name: Daniel G. Casey

Principal Email Address: dcasey@bfhsla.org

Phone Number: 504-286-2600

Lead Applicant Name (if different): Kady Admundson Clincy

Lead Applicant Email: kamundson@bfhsla.org

Phone Number: 9310636-4518

School Information

<p>Level</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Early Learning Center</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Elementary (PK - 5 or 6)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K - 8</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Middle (6 - 8 or 9)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High (9 or 10 - 12)</p>	<p>School Type</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Public</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Private/Independent</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Charter</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Magnet</p>	<p>How would you describe your school?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Suburban</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Rural</p>	<p>District Name Orleans Parish School Board Charter Schools</p> <p>Is your school in one of the largest 50 districts in the nation? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <hr/> <p>Total Enrolled: 896</p>
<p>Does your school serve 40% or more students from disadvantaged* households? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p>% receiving FRPL 29</p> <p>% limited English proficient NA</p> <p>Other measures NA</p>		<p>Graduation rate: >95%</p> <p>Attendance rate: 99%</p>

Part II: Summary Narrative:

Benjamin Franklin High School was founded in 1957 as a city-wide public coeducational college preparatory day school for students of exceptional intellectual potential. In keeping with this legacy, the narrative documenting Benjamin Franklin High School's progress, in each element of each pillar, was written entirely by students. As a school community, we believe teacher and staff are at their best when they are facilitating learning rather than dictating it. In August of 2005, Benjamin Franklin High School was seriously impacted by Hurricane Katrina. Upon reopening in January of 2006, the priorities of students and staff shifted. The school's active Green Society, which had been previously focused on a multitude of ethical and environmental issues, began to narrow its focus on rebuilding a school community that was healthier, more sustainable and environmentally focused.

Benjamin Franklin High School is devoted to creating an environmentally friendly facility and consequently saving money. In 2014, students partnered with an electrical engineer to conduct an energy audit, learned that it would be environmentally and financially beneficial to use high-efficiency bulbs, and created a Lighting Facilities Phasing plan that was presented to Franklin officials. Benjamin Franklin High School utilizes environmentally friendly donations like efficient dual flush toilets, Sage Glass windows, and Elkay Water Bottle Refilling Stations, which have saved money, energy, and water. The Diversity and Vegetable Gardens are important parts of biodiversity on campus. Managed by Benjamin Franklin students and teachers, the gardens provide cafeteria-approved food and are utilized as outdoor classrooms. Benjamin Franklin High School has worked to expand a limited white paper recycling program. What started as a volunteer-based, labor intensive operation, transformed into a partnership with Progressive Recycling, which averages 69.28 yd³ of varied recyclable material. The students, faculty and staff practice and promote alternative means of transportation. Students and staff organize carpools, bike, walk and ride public transportation.

Prioritizing the health and well-being of the Benjamin Franklin High School community is central to the school's mission. New investments in technologies that improve indoor air quality illustrate the comprehensive approach taken to create an exceptional learning environment. Decisions regarding pest management and chemical storage are approached from a wellness perspective. Although it is not possible to immediately renovate the entire school building, small scale renovations utilize safer products like low VOC paint. Seasonally, on-campus gardens provide healthy options in the cafeteria and learning options year-round. Vending machines providing organic and less-processed food options were recently added to the cafeteria. The refillable water bottle stations make it convenient for students to stay hydrated without producing excessive disposable plastic waste. Within the rigorous academic environment, Benjamin Franklin High School students and staff have created a multitude of mechanisms and safeguards designed to support the mental health of students. Clubs and organizations focus to support groups of students who are traditionally marginalized. Students design initiatives to help others express themselves in a



supportive environment. Benjamin Franklin High School employs a full time team of accredited counselors, including a social worker, to provide extra support when needed.

Ben Franklin High School believes community and school engagement are important factors in their sustainability efforts. The school also recognizes the importance of inculcating a green mindset into each and every student within the student body, Green Society member or not. They do so by continually taking the steps necessary to ensure that each student receives sufficient environmental and sustainability education throughout their time at Ben Franklin High School. Among the most important steps taken to incorporate environmental education in our school have been the following: Earth Love Week (a weeklong recycling drive and celebration of all things *green*), Independent Research Projects (a science project requirement for graduation with environmental focuses) and “Service Saturdays,” in which students tend to the Ben Franklin gardens and hold recycling drives. The AP Environmental Science classes for junior and seniors are extremely popular, as students in this course are given the chance to partake in a marsh restoration field trip – for the purpose of educating students on the importance of ecological preservation. Green Light New Orleans, a non-profit focused on teaching sustainability and offsetting the human carbon footprint, along with Green Society members, volunteer to provide New Orleans residents free energy efficient light bulbs. Green Society members also stay busy maintaining a vegetable garden, volunteering with Animal Rescue New Orleans and participating in the annual beach sweep.

Benjamin Franklin High School’s approach to conservation and sustainability is in keeping with our overall school culture. Curriculum, extracurricular activities and community engagement is student centered. Therefore, a student proposal detailing the school’s initiatives and practices with respect to the Green School Pillars and Elements is reflective of the character of our school community.

Part III: Documentation of State Evaluation of District Nominee

Introduction

The Green Society, Benjamin Franklin High School's environmental club, has made it their mission to make Benjamin Franklin High School a greener, happier, and healthier place. Since the late 1980s, the Green Society has strived to expand this small club into a school-wide commitment to leave an environmentally sound and sustainable legacy at Franklin. Though funding is a challenge, intensive outreach to the student body, administration, other school clubs and grants allowed the Green Society's efforts to expand. The emergent efforts of one sponsor and a few founding members have now expanded to become the efforts of the entire school community, promoting sustainable thinking into the culture of the school.

Pillar I: Reduced Environmental Impact and Costs

Element IA: Energy

The Benjamin Franklin community is extremely committed to making the school as energy efficient as possible. In 2014, as part of its first year of participation in the Green Schools Challenge, members of the Green Society and students from the A.P. Biology classes worked with an electrical engineer to conduct an energy audit. During this audit, the students counted and classified the school's light fixtures, determined how much energy they were using and then compared the current electrical bill to a predicted bill incorporating lower wattage lights. They discovered that by changing the existing fixtures to the suggested high-efficiency bulbs in select classrooms they could save about 35,317 kWh and \$3,531. This data was used to create a Lighting Facilities Phasing plan that was presented by the students to school administrators, and ultimately approved by the Franklin administration. This plan takes into consideration the limited funds accessible and makes cost effective suggestions in addition to the future purchase of lighting fixtures.

Additionally, winning the Louisiana Green Schools Challenge two years in a row has led to many generous and environmentally efficient donations. These donations include dual flush toilets, which use a greater amount of water for solid waste than liquid waste, saving approximately 20,000 L of water each year compared to a single flush toilet. Sage Glass windows were also donated. These windows transition their tint according to the temperature and amount of light outside via solar powered electric technology. As a result, the two classrooms given these windows decrease the use of light bulbs and are extremely energy efficient. Additionally, Franklin has been given five Elkay Water Fountains which have allowed the school to save over 330 billion joules of energy by avoiding plastic water bottles.

Finally, twenty three teachers throughout the school pledged to participate in Lights Out Day at Benjamin Franklin. By turning out the lights, the Green Society was able to show students the amount of unnecessary energy used to light buildings that are already well illuminated by the sun. Lights Out Day was a fun way to promote a

serious cause, and many students took their new sustainable habits home to share with their communities.

Element IB: Water and Grounds

By winning the Green Schools Challenge and getting involved with GreenBuild New Orleans (the world's largest green building expo) low-flush toilets and low-flow sinks were donated, allowing the school to save a much larger amount of water. In addition to saving water, Benjamin Franklin has five Elkay Water Bottle Refilling stations in high-traffic areas that encourage students to bring in reusable water bottles instead of wasting plastic ones. Since the installation of the fountains, Franklin students and faculty have saved over 44,000 plastic bottles from being sent to landfills, as well as saving \$66,000 and 330 billion joules of energy. There is no need for a program to control lead in drinking water since the building was built in the 1990s, but the Elkay stations do have additional filters which are changed regularly.

Franklin's Diversity Garden is both an ecologically and educationally beneficial space. Upon its creation, Franklin students collaborated with EcoUrban Landscapers, master gardeners and other local nurseries to decide what plants should go into the garden. Thanks to these partnerships, in addition to donations by the alumni association and the Lorrie Otto Seeds Grant for Native Plants by Wild Ones, the Diversity Garden is now home to many native plant species. The funds received through the grant were multiplied when the native plants purchased were proven to attract Monarch butterflies, qualifying the space for a supplementary grant. Additionally, the Kiwanis Club of New Orleans and the Benjamin Franklin Key Club donated bird houses that hang on a tree in the Diversity Garden. These houses give homes to local birds and encourage further biodiversity in the garden. The Diversity Garden is a space that allows for infiltration. Franklin is also home to a vegetable garden, whose organic produce is approved to be served in the cafeteria. Gardens make up a significant part of Franklin's campus. They are tended to and enjoyed by Green Society members and other students. Franklin has service Saturdays where students from the Green Society, as well as the Biology and Environmental Science classes, tend to the garden and learn about plants from teacher sponsors. By adding benches and labels for the plants, the gardens become outdoor classrooms where students can do anything from enjoying fresh air with friends to finding native insects for a bug collection.

Element IC: Waste

Benjamin Franklin initially struggled with its efforts to reduce waste production. Before late 2013, members of the school's Green Society had to tediously travel to each classroom to manually retrieve paper from each of the room's white paper recycling bins. Though the school had recycling bins, they were limited in number and hand-painted, causing students to mistake them as regular trash bins. Volunteer students then had to hand-pick trash out of the recyclables and take them to the recycling center in the city.

These issues were mitigated with funds from the Keep Louisiana Beautiful grant, which enabled the buying of 15 new recycling bins that were subsequently distributed throughout the school. Progress accelerated in early October of 2013 and recycling efforts reached a high point when the school's administration signed up for the city-

wide recycling program by Progressive Waste Solutions Ltd. In 2014, Progressive Recycling facilitated the accumulation of 336yd³ of recycled material, equaling more than 11 30-yard construction roll-off dumpsters of material that Benjamin Franklin was able to keep out of landfills – a number calculated by Progressive, which keeps track of how many dumpsters of recycling material the school accumulates. Instead of going into landfills, the material was put back into the school and community’s local commerce. The integration of Progressive’s recycling services into Benjamin Franklin’s environmental efforts streamlined the school’s recycling efforts and allowed a much greater reduction in waste production.

In November of 2013, the school continued its efforts, hosting an America Recycles Day. This event was the school’s first public recycling day; students who attended this “Service Saturday” brought used printer cartridges, old batteries, plastic bags, brown paper bags, and newspaper to be recycled. This event marked the beginning of Benjamin Franklin’s public involvement in recycling efforts and catalyzed the school’s communal demonstrations of its eco-friendly missions.

A similarly progressive pattern continued in February 2014, in which the school hosted a school-wide competition called “Earth Love Week.” The competition was implemented to promote environmental awareness and encourage student involvement. To incentivize students, a dessert banquet was the reward for the winning grade. Grades competed against each other for participation points accumulated in the process of various eco-friendly challenges, and the grade with the final most points won. The activities of the competition were as follows: one day of wearing two items of green clothing, one day of bringing reusable water bottles to use, and one day of bringing Mardi Gras beads to recycle – with each day providing further opportunity for bringing recyclable goods such as used printer cartridges, old batteries, and brown paper bags. By the end of the week, the four grade levels had brought in a combined total of 171 brown paper bags, 1470 plastic bags, 69 batteries, 47 printer cartridges and 11lb of Mardi Gras beads. The week was greeted with abundant enthusiasm from the school and successfully encouraged school participation in recycling efforts. Through Earth Love Week, Green Society further perpetuated its environmentally friendly aspirations and promoted greener habits among the student body (such as regular recycling).

In 2015, Earth Love Week and other encouragements of eco-friendly practices and student participation persisted; Benjamin Franklin continued its progress and success with a marked increase in student participation. 2015’s Earth Love Week repeated much of the same aspects that its predecessor did, with prolonged student efforts in bringing in recyclables and reinforcing a community of environmental awareness. On the last day of 2015’s Earth Love Week, homerooms took a pledge to implement a specific green initiative into their daily lives and posted it on social media to spread the word to the community. The combined recyclables brought in during the competition were 843 grocery bags, 335 plastic water bottles, 306 batteries, 370lb of Mardi Gras Beads, and 37 printer cartridges, mirroring the progressive participation seen the previous year.

Recycling was further expanded in the past year, with Benjamin Franklin implementing Community Recycling Days (two per semester) providing New Orleans locals the opportunity to recycle items like glass, batteries, and electronics (items that cannot be recycled through the usual processes), through the school. Furthermore, the school's Green Society exhausted all possible avenues of recyclable material collection, doing outside-of-school activities such as attending Mu Alpha Theta (math honor society) tournaments to collect cans. Green Society also worked even harder in the past year to seamlessly integrate the culture of recycling into the school, popularizing less wasting of materials. While none of the paper used at Benjamin Franklin is composed of post-consumer material (due to limited expenses), Green Society's pro-environmental work at the school promoted a culture and pattern of resourcefulness, and students now often pull paper out of their classroom's white paper recycling bins for reuse (for example: with scratch paper, etc.). Correlated with this school cultural progress were the sustained recycling practices of the school. The school's recycling dumpster was filled twice a week, supplementing an average of 69.28 yd³ of recyclable material (a number once again calculated by Progressive Waste Solutions Ltd. with the use of the company's tracked data).

Element ID: Alternative Transportation

Green Society conducted an online survey of Franklin students about their transportation practices, and received approximately 300 total responses in 2015, which was an impressive improvement over the approximately 130 responses received in 2014. In 2014, in the morning, 18% used the school bus, 39% carpoolled, 4% walked, 2% biked, 4% used public transportation, and 33% drove themselves. In the afternoon, 18% took the school bus, 36% carpoolled, 9% walked, 1% biked, In 2015, in the mornings, 18% of students took the school bus, 31% carpoolled, 10% walked, 8% biked, 9% used public transportation, and 24% drove themselves. In the afternoon, 18% took the school bus, 31% carpoolled, 10% walked, 8% biked, 10% public transportation, and 23% drove themselves. From the data collected, it can be concluded that a significant portion of students have switched from individual car transit to walking, riding bikes, and using public buses, which is indicative of an increase in student attention to the value of environmentally friendly transportation practices.

This school year, Franklin streamlined how parents drop their students off in the parking lots so that the school can handle a larger carpool volume and encourage more people to carpool. Faculty and staff also try to set good examples for their students by carpooling themselves and even riding their bikes to school. Orleans Parish Schools have declined to provide buses for selective enrollment public schools. Benjamin Franklin parents organized and funded several school buses from geographically distant neighborhoods to the school's campus, essentially organizing a massive ride sharing effort. In addition, Franklin has a significant carpooling culture. Many upperclassmen who have their own cars independently decide to ride with their friends because they realize the financial and environmental benefits of carpooling.

Pillar II: Improve the health and wellness of students and staff

Element IIA: Environmental Health

Through a number of developments, Benjamin Franklin has aided the health of students and faculty by implementing safe, environmentally conscious methods. The health of students and faculty are constantly taken into account in the routine business of the school. To reduce mosquitoes, the maintenance staff works to keep the campus free of standing water. During the early part of football season, the athletic association burns citronella candles to repel insects. The students, faculty and staff work to eliminate food waste and fix water leaks that attract pests. Pesticides are used as a last resort and are only sprayed during long breaks when students are not in the building for a significant period of time. Chemicals for science classes are stored using proper procedure in safe rooms that are separate from classrooms and areas where students work, which also increases safety. These chemicals are maintained by trained teachers, not students.

In some classrooms, windows have been installed that mediate the light of the sun by changing their tint automatically to allow more light when the sun is weakest and less when the sun is strongest. Other measures are currently in process. For example, the most recently improved bathrooms on the first floor are fully hands free with automatic flushing, sinks, soap and paper towels. All other bathrooms already have automatically dispensing paper towels. Also, any recently painted areas in the school were done using paint containing low levels of volatile organic compounds. Part of improving the air quality in the school includes the process of removing all chalkboards from the school and is another continuing effort. Chalk dust is a respiratory irritant and can put students with respiratory disorders at risk. This effort is being executed through the use of IDEA paint, a whiteboard paint, which eliminates the need for throwing out chalkboards and replacing them entirely with new whiteboards, reducing waste. As a basic measure, HVAC filters are changed frequently as well. Part of ongoing sustainability updates at the school, VOC-compliant fiberglass ceiling panels and sound absorbent wall panels were recently installed to optimize acoustics in two classrooms, creating comfortable and engaging learning spaces. Students themselves have contributed immensely to this goal, completing independent research projects that display interest in these issues. Their topics include natural ways to manage ants and cockroaches as well as means to measure particulate matter in classrooms with renovations, demonstrating a united dedication of the Benjamin Franklin community towards maintaining and improving standards of health and wellness for its members.

Element IIB: Nutrition and Fitness

Benjamin Franklin installed an Elkay Water Bottle Refilling Stations in October of 2013. After 10,000 bottles of water were filled using this station, rather than 10,000 plastic water bottles used and thrown away, another water fountain was rewarded. Finally, due to our success in the past two years' Green Schools Challenges, we have received a third and fourth. Benjamin Franklin's commitment to on-site filtered water and reusable water bottles now



adds another element to its own movement: keeping students from contributing to the millions of plastic water bottles thrown into landfills every year. The added effect of these easily-accessible and easy to use water fillers is the promotion of water for hydration regularly, rather than only small amounts every day. By using these fountains, we have saved enormous amounts of plastic from the landfills, immense amount of energy, and also several thousand dollars.

Franklin's Green Society and Key Club built a vegetable garden on campus. The vegetables have been approved to be served in the cafeteria, providing our students with healthy organic food. Because the students and teacher-sponsors of service-based clubs in the school were able to choose and plan the vegetables and other plants grown in both the Diversity and Vegetable Garden, a learning environment was fostered throughout the entire process. Benjamin Franklin hosts service Saturdays where students from the Green Society as well as the Biology and Environmental Science classes tend to the garden and learn about plants from our teacher sponsors. By adding benches and labels for the plants, the gardens become outdoor classrooms where students can enjoy fresh air with friends and find native insects for bug collections. Last school year a healthy food vending machine was installed in Benjamin Franklin's cafeteria in order to provide an easily-accessed option for healthy food options rather than their more unhealthy counterparts. Such healthy food options include: organic teas (rather than sodas), fruit-based gummies and organic chip options that expose students to food options that are certified organic. Organic food is produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations. With the organic vending machine options now offered by the school, Franklin is helping to reduce student consumption of food produced with harmful pesticides and synthetic ingredients.

Through Franklin's Green Society, students partnered with the local organization Green Light to implement a new activity this year: planting backyard gardens, in addition to installing the more environmentally-friendly light bulbs. This activity has opened the students' eyes to the planning it takes to begin the process, the effort it takes to see the plans through, and finally the rewarding experience they can be a part of as a result of their combined efforts on each and every garden they help to build. Independent of BFHS clubs and organizations, students volunteer with Grow Dat, a community organization focused on producing healthy food for local residents. Grow Dat grows and harvests an average of 12,000 pounds of fresh produce. Thirty percent is distributed to low-income residents who otherwise have little or no access to fresh food.

Element IIB (cont.): Coordinated School Health, Mental Health, School Climate, and Safety

As Franklin is an extremely competitive school, many students feel the stress of trying to balance academics, extracurricular activities, and a social life. As a result, Benjamin Franklin depends heavily on its strong mental health team and a healthy school climate. The climate is student-centered. Student groups organize a yearly Red Ribbon Week, which promotes awareness about substance abuse and violence prevention. Franklin prides itself in its

inclusive climate where anyone can find their niche. Every culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, and identity is accepted and loved in our community. From GSA (gender-sexuality alliance), which made Franklin a “No Place for Hate” School, to the Black Culture Club which held a student-led demonstration for justice and equality last year, Franklin has a place for every student to be comfortable.

On top of that, there are many student organizations, such as the Peer Assistance Team (PAT), which were specifically created for helping the mental growth of students. The PAT annually trains over thirty hand-picked students to deal with social situations and how to tutor students in a beneficial manner. Another PAT activity is the “New Student Seminars.” In a total of three seminars, new students are given advice on how to navigate Franklin, where to get help and how to manage time.

Another Franklin club, the Nice Club, has a similar goal. A club founded to foster a positive atmosphere through projects, Nice Club has had a “Nice Things” drive where students pledged to do nice things throughout the week and put up posters around the school. Also, Nice Club, in conjunction with PAT, passed out a personal positive note to every student at Franklin during the start of the school year.

Fortunately, Mental Health and School Climate does not end with the students; the teachers, too, are very active in preserving a good atmosphere. Every year all faculty and staff must attend mandatory training for preventing suicide and bullying as well as training on recognizing and reporting child abuse. The school also has three full time counselors, a full time social worker, and a full time nurse. They are all active in the lives of their students. Beatrice Flair, a college counselor, enlisted professionals from Campus Health Services to help Franklin students after a beloved member of the Franklin community passed. Such acts of kindness and concern are not uncommon within the counseling staff who are all ready to listen and help whenever. Franklin is a school which prides itself in its academics, but what really makes us strong is our school climate.

Pillar III: Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education

Pillar IIIA: Interdisciplinary Learning

Recognizing not only the importance of incorporating beneficial environmental measures into the school community through the actions of one club, but also the importance of inculcating that mindset—a green mindset—into each and every student within the school body (Green Society member or not), Benjamin Franklin High School has taken steps to ensure that each student receives sufficient environmental and sustainability education throughout his/her years here. Among the most important steps taken to incorporate environmental education in our school have been our “Earth Love Week”, Independent Research Projects (IRPs), “Service Saturdays,” applied learning opportunities, marsh restoration trips, and Advanced Placement (AP) Environmental Science.

The Earth Love Week broadcasted a “green vision” throughout the school, which sought to integrate sustainable thinking into the culture of the school. The week included a lights out day in which teachers held class



with the lights turned off and the addition of recycling bins for Mardi Gras beads, batteries, paper, plastic, etc. throughout the school. Such measures brought environmental issues to students' attention and into classroom discussions about sustainability and the environment.

The Independent Research Project (IRP) is a graduation requirement at Benjamin Franklin and an ideal opportunity to integrate environmental education into students' curriculum in our school. Following the nationwide Beach Sweep in which we participated, students were encouraged to conduct research on the amount of trash collected and/or the effect of such trash on the surrounding environment, thus motivating students in both statistics and environmental science classes to learn more about human effects on the environment. Additionally, many other environmental science and environmental engineering IRPs have been funded by the NOAA BWET grant and Coypu grants awarded to Benjamin Franklin for the past several years.

Following the creation of the Diversity Garden, "Service Saturdays" were instituted in order to persuade all students, especially those in biology, environmental science and chemistry, to help maintain the garden while simultaneously learning more about the many plants species within the garden. Our biology and environmental science teachers came in on Saturdays to help garden and to teach students about plants and the numerous systems that allow such a garden to grow and prosper; thereby establishing the garden as a sort of outdoor classroom within the school.

Benjamin Franklin students are also able to gain environmental knowledge outside of the classroom. In October 2014, students from the Green Society and Key Club went on a field trip to GreenBuild, the world's largest Green Building Exposition, which was hosted in New Orleans that year. While at GreenBuild, students were able view the latest technology in Green Building and attend exciting conferences such as the Women in Green Leadership Breakfast and a speech on Donor's Choose by founder Charles Best. Over the summer, the Executive Director of USGBC Louisiana, contacted BFHS because Louisiana had no representative at the Student Climate and Conservation Congress. The chapter nominated and sponsored a Franklin junior to attend the conference at the National Conservation Training Center where he learned sustainability and conservation techniques that could be implemented at Franklin and in the larger community.

Marsh Restoration volunteer trips, which aim to help restore destroyed marshlands, have also been organized in concordance with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. During these trips students had the opportunity to learn about biodiversity and succession, especially in terms of the effects of Hurricane Katrina, while planting trees native to the area.

Finally, the most obvious and effective example of environmental and sustainability education at Benjamin Franklin has been the AP Environmental Science course, which is available to all students in their junior or senior years. This course consistently has the largest number of students in the state and is among the most popular AP courses in the school. Over the course of the year, students learn about energy systems, human impacts, ecological

cycles, pollution, and many other subjects regarding the environment and our place within and effect on it.

Element IIIB: STEM Content, Knowledge, and Skills

Benjamin Franklin, specifically Benjamin Franklin's Green Society, makes community engagement a priority. Members volunteer at Green Light New Orleans and Animal Rescue New Orleans, participate in an annual Beach Sweep, and encourage community recycling. Teachers sometimes elect to hold class outside in the Diversity Garden, and Franklin has a strong ongoing relationship with the University of New Orleans faculty who facilitate independent environmental research for students. Students at Franklin and faculty at UNO often collaborate on student-led experiments for the Independent Research Project requirement that Franklin requires students to complete before graduation.

Green Light New Orleans, a nonprofit focused on teaching sustainability and offsetting the human carbon footprint, provides New Orleans residents with free energy efficient light bulbs and a backyard vegetable garden. Franklin volunteers spend Saturday mornings going to low income New Orleans homes to replace incandescent lights with energy efficient CFL bulbs, and installing vegetable gardens to encourage self-sufficiency and to decrease food transportation mileage. Volunteers also discuss additional environmentally friendly activities with residents like unplugging electronics, turning off lights and reducing water use, as well as putting residents in contact with the city recycling service if they are not already signed up.

Franklin student volunteers also visit Animal Rescue New Orleans once a month for 3-4 hours and help with whatever task the no-kill shelter assigns to them. Tasks include feeding and walking dogs, cleaning dog cages, feeding cats, cleaning cat cages, doing laundry, washing dishes and general building cleaning. Green Society chose ARNO as their shelter of choice because they receive much less funding and volunteer help than the Louisiana SPCA and do not euthanize animals.

Every year, Green Society participates in the Beach Sweep organized by the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, in an effort to "Save our Lake." Volunteers spend a couple of hours walking up and down the beach and collecting trash and recyclable items. It is a good opportunity for students to make visible change and understand just how important the work they are doing and education they are receiving is. Green Society also holds several gardening and recycling Saturday events at Franklin itself, advertises it throughout the community, and welcomes drop offs from people in the area. Green Society teams up with Republic Services to recycle paper, plastic, aluminum, glass, electronics, batteries and Mardi Gras beads.

Conclusion

The Benjamin Franklin Green Society believes that being proactive towards serious environmental issues like climate change and pollution means starting with schools and starting with young people. If students spend five days a week for eighteen years in a sustainable environment, not only will they emerge happier and healthier, but



sustainability will become the norm because it's all they've ever known. It is the Green Society's ultimate goal that every student that graduates from Benjamin Franklin High School will leave with a sense of respect for the environment; a sense that will hopefully guide their future choices as they move towards success. We are committed to reducing our environmental impact, improving the health and wellness of every person who learns or works at our school, and because environmental education is a priority in our curriculum, the members of Green Society believe Benjamin Franklin High School meets the goals of the Green Ribbon Schools Program and is proud to make this application. It is our ultimate goal that every graduate of Benjamin Franklin High School leaves with a sense of respect for the environment, the education to make wise choices for themselves and their community, and experiences that will guide them towards a more sustainable future.

Submit 10 – 15 photos (with descriptions) and up to 10 minutes of video. These will not be scored. All photos and videos submitted must be permissioned for web and print use by Louisiana Department Of Education, LDWF, and U.S. Dept. of Education.



Time to Recycle!!



Beach Sweep!



Growing for the Future!



2015 Green School Challenge Winners!