



2014-2015 District Nominee Presentation Form

CERTIFICATIONS

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.

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

Name of Superintendent: **Dr. Frank R. Petruzielo**

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

District Name: **Cherokee County School District**

(As it should appear on an award)

Address: **221 W. Main Street, Canton, GA 30114**

Telephone: **770-479-1871** Fax: **770-479-4317**

Web site/URL: **www.cherokee.k12.ga.us** E-mail: **Barbara.jacoby@cherokee.k12.ga.us**

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

accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature)

Date: **1/14/15**



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 **Georgia Department of Education**

Name of Nominating Authority **Mr. Richard Woods**

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

provisions above

(Nominating Authority’s Signature)

Date: **1-27-15**

(Nominating Authority’s Signature)

SUMMARY AND DOCUMENTATION OF NOMINEE’S ACHIEVEMENTS

Provide a coherent "snapshot" that describes how your district is representative of your jurisdiction’s highest achieving green school efforts. Summarize your strengths and accomplishments in all three Pillars and nine Elements. Then, include documentation and concrete examples for work in every Pillar and Element.

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 green.ribbon.schools@ed.gov according to the instructions in the Nominee Submission Procedure.

OMB Control Number: 1860-0509

Expiration Date: February 28, 2015

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.



The Cherokee County School District: healthy choices today for a better tomorrow

In Cherokee County School District (CCSD) “Green” is more than just a trend for CCSD– it’s an important factor across all operations.

The Cherokee County School District, located in metro Atlanta, is the ninth-largest school system in Georgia and currently serves more than 39,000 students. Nearly 20 percent of the population in Cherokee County attends a Cherokee County School District school every day.

The core of the School District’s mission statement is “to enable all students to become contributing citizens who can communicate effectively, gather and use information, make responsible decisions, utilize technology effectively and adapt to the challenges of the future,” and environmental awareness and stewardship of these resources is a strong part of this responsible decision-making and citizenship education focus.

Pillar I: Reduced Environmental Impact and Costs

Environmental awareness through CCSD has led not only to facilities and practices that are better for the health of students, staff and natural resources, but also that are more energy efficient and economical, which benefits the financial health of the School District and the entire community.

While there are four major areas where significant efforts by CCSD have been made – Facilities/Construction Management, Transportation, Support Services and Waste Management -- reducing the School District’s environmental impact and costs is a major focus districtwide.

These districtwide initiatives include efforts to “reduce, reuse, recycle and rethink” such as the reduction the waste of paper, ink, copiers and energy through increased use of an intranet for electronic posting of documents for staff use; the development of an online portal for parents to access information otherwise sent home by letter; and the creation of an online virtual community bulletin board and related policy limiting fliers sent home with students.

Recent developments in this regard have included the conversion to: an online employment application process, database and applicant tracking system; an online safety training and critical policy acknowledgements system; and an electronic record-keeping system for school health clinics. These changes also have reduced waste of resources and funds and have improved efficiency.

Additionally, through written, systemic Board-approved Partnership Agreements, the School District works with

community partners such as the Clean Air Campaign, Cherokee County Water and Sewerage Authority, Georgia Native Plant Society and the Upper Etowah River Alliance to promote among students, staff, parents and other stakeholders various behaviors that reduce environmental impact, as well as opportunities to participate in related community activities including electronics recycling events, Christmas tree recycling events and lake and stream clean-ups.

Facilities/Construction Management

Energy-efficient design is a cornerstone of all new construction in CCSD, as well as a constant focus for renovations and retrofitting of existing facilities, with a joint goal of decreasing greenhouse emissions and reducing operational costs per square foot.

All CCSD facilities meet ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers) standards and use automated energy management facilities. All facilities have been retro-fitted with energy-efficient and cost-effective lighting systems and low-flow bathroom fixtures.

The School District uses a computer system to schedule and track HVAC preventive maintenance, and a bi-monthly HVAC filter replacement routine schedule is in place. Integrated pest management systems also are utilized at all CCSD facilities, and electric tools are used for maintenance rather than gas-powered.

New construction in CCSD since 2004 has included the following energy-efficient features, at a minimum:

- Prototype architectural designs with a focus on energy-efficiency, which not only reduce operational costs, but all design costs;
- Long-lasting, low-maintenance construction materials including metal roof systems, concrete block walls and brick, which in addition to decreasing energy use also reduce maintenance practices that have an environmental impact;
- High-efficiency T-8 and T-5 fluorescent lighting and lighting controls for non-use times including occupancy sensor in appropriate areas;
- Low-flow bathroom fixtures including toilets with low-volume flush valves and waterless urinals;
- Four-pipe HVAC systems with variable speed drive pumps; energy recovery units;
- Energy management controls throughout the facility; reflective metal roof system;
- Pedal valves for water control in the kitchen area; and,
- A computer shutdown system of utilities for after-hours, non-use times.

A new feature for school construction beginning this school year has been the use of polished concrete flooring in high-traffic areas, which eliminates the need for additional vinyl flooring materials and more frequent use of water and

cleaning chemicals. New playground construction also is focused on the use of recycled rubber material, which eliminates the need for irrigation and/or mulch replacement.

Water conservation is another environmental initiative for CCSD, which includes the aforementioned use of low-flow fixtures and pedal valves and the use of alternative flooring, but also other innovations and standard practices.

Artificial turf has been installed at one of CCSD's six football fields, with plans to expand this to other campuses. The use of mulch and other materials to reduce the need for irrigation is a standard operating procedure at all campuses.

This green focus in regard to school and facility grounds begins in the construction phase through a partnership with the Georgia Native Plant Society. The organization is invited to "rescue" plants from CCSD construction sites to be replanted elsewhere; additionally, CCSD transplants trees and shrubs from sites to save these plants and reduce landscaping costs.

Transportation

The most efficient way to transport CCSD students to school each day is by school bus, and CCSD transports 29,000 of its students on its 350 buses daily. This total, which represents about 75 percent of the total enrollment, is a result of continuous promotion by CCSD to parents and the high-quality, safe and timely service students and their families receive.

Routing efficiency is a priority, with automated systems and close staff reviews to ensure no waste. Additionally, bus depots with fueling stations and maintenance staff are located throughout the county – south, central and north – to reduce mileage, drive time and expense.

The School District has been a Clean Air Campaign partner for four years and is committed to continuous implementation of practices to improve air quality. The Campaign's Clean Air Schools programs are available to all CCSD schools and include programs to promote bus ridership, carpooling to school and no-idling school zones, and CCSD promotes these programs in its schools and community. The Campaign also provides schools with instructional classroom materials to educate students about how they can change their behavior and that of their families to preserve and improve air quality.

Additionally, the Cherokee County Council of PTA and school PTA units, in conjunction with Clean Cities, promote parent awareness to discourage idling in carpool lanes. Through this successful initiative, the majority of parents turn



off their engines while waiting to drop off and pick up their students, which decreases emissions that erode air quality and create health risks.

An idle-reduction policy has been established for all CCSD buses: drivers do not allow buses to idle in school loading/unloading zones; likewise, buses are programmed so that, if in neutral with the parking brake activated, a bus will shut down after 10 minutes of idling.

Through a Fiscal Year 2011 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, CCSD has retrofitted all of its school buses purchased prior to 2007 with the latest exhaust-reduction devices including diesel oxidation catalyst mufflers. Additionally, 60 percent of school buses – 214 buses -- are equipped with diesel particulate filters.

All diesel fuel purchased is an ultra-low sulfur “clean diesel” blend. A filter crusher is used for all used oil filters, which drains 95% of excess oil and sludge from filters, which extracts all hazardous waste and reduces the filter to a quarter or less of its original size.

The Transportation Department recycles all water used for washing buses and other vehicles, and also recycles tires and vehicle batteries. Electric tools are used for maintenance rather than gas-powered equipment.

All CCSD bus drivers are required to maintain commercial driver’s licenses and undergo more than 40 hours of training. Additionally, drivers participate in annual mandatory safety training, and 90 percent of drivers participate in an optional advanced training program, which provides additional instruction in areas such as driving skills, student management, CPR/First Aid, bullying prevention and diversity awareness.

The School District recently won a Georgia Department of Transportation Safe Routes to Schools grant to encourage walking or bicycling to school in order to reduce car and bus traffic, reduce emissions and increase healthy exercise. The funds covered the installation in Fiscal Year 2013 of crosswalks, sidewalks and bike racks at several schools.

Support Services

The School District, in order to maintain a safe school environment and be responsible stewards, has in place policies for appropriate maintenance and custodial services, including chemical usage, to reduce environmental impact and costs.

These include chemical inventory controls, selection of less hazardous chemicals, reduction of waste products and the purchasing of minimum amounts. Integrated pesticide management is used, and mercury has been removed from schools including lighting fixtures containing mercury.



District policies are in place to guide employees' use of chemical products in science, fine arts and vocational classes, which include that products must be approved by the School District. How these chemicals are stored and in what amounts also is determined at the District level, with every school required to maintain a list of chemicals approved for use and where they are stored. These practices protect students and staff as well as the environment and reduce waste.

The School District operates a hazardous waste disposal/removal program and school science lab chemical pickup program, both of which are managed by CCSD's Office of Risk Management.

Custodians in all CCSD schools and facilities use mainly low- to zero-hazard chemicals including "green" cleaning supplies. Some schools have additionally instituted policies to prohibit all staff from bringing in their own aerosol products for classroom and/or personal use in an effort to protect air quality.

Waste Management

The School District continuously reduces its solid waste production through districtwide efforts to promote reduction, reuse, recycling and rethinking of how we use consumable products.

Every school participates in a school-based recycling program designed to meet the needs of its students, staff and community; cardboard and other products are recycled districtwide... with the greatest levels by high-use departments such as the School Nutrition Department.

Products recycled at a majority of CCSD schools include: white paper, newspapers, magazines, phone books, cardboard, aluminum, plastic, glass, printer ink cartridges, electronics, and cell phones. Most of these programs allow for the recycling not only of items used at school, but items students bring from home to be recycled. For some schools, recycling also has become a fundraiser through partnerships with organizations that will pay for used ink cartridges and cell phones and/or provide the school with new office supplies or other in-kind donations. High schools additionally recycle materials from their vocational classes including steel and building supplies.

A new initiative underway at a growing number of CCSD schools is composting, with many schools setting up composting areas as part of their campus gardens and/or outdoor classrooms.

Products collected by most schools for reuse include: school supplies from end-of-year locker cleanout, which are given to students in need; household goods that are useful for class projects, science experiments, etc.; eyeglasses for Lions Club drives; and clothing and shoes for local clothes closets/nonprofit thrift stores.



Teachers at schools throughout CCSD also trade instructional resources (books, displays, supplies) with their colleagues to reuse materials rather than disposing of them. An example of this is at Sixes Elementary School, where teachers know items are up for grabs because their colleagues leave them in the hallway outside their classroom doors during teacher work days.

The School District holds regular surplus sales through which unneeded equipment and vehicles are sold for reuse rather than being added to landfills and junk yards.

Recycling and reuse partners for CCSD include local waste management companies, Cure Recycling, Recycle Rally, Terracycle, PTA units, the Lions Club, the Cherokee County Animal Shelter, the Boy Scouts and various local businesses.

Recycling at the school level has increased in the past year through a partnership with the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce's Going Green Initiative committee. One way CCSD and the Chamber have teamed up to "go green" is through an annual Recycling Challenge. The school which collects the most newspapers to be recycled during the challenge time period wins gift cards for every student.

A growing number of CCSD schools also are participating in The Great American Can Roundup – a National program and competition running from Recycling Day (Nov. 15) to Earth Day (April 22) that encourages the recycling of aluminum cans and provides incentives for students to participate and learn about the benefits of recycling.

Unique school-based recycling or reuse programs include:

- Arnold Mill Elementary School's students and staff this school year started a holiday light recycling drive, which was very successful; the school also annually participates year-round in the Terracycle recycling program of materials including foil chip bags, Capri Sun juice bags, tape dispensers, writing utensils and beauty product containers; and the school is planning its first Waste Free Lunch Day to be held this spring;
- Carmel Elementary School this school year is launching Green Day, which is to be held on Feb. 5 in conjunction with Digital Day, and no paper use will be allowed;
- Clayton Elementary School this school year is beginning a Paper Recycling Challenge coordinated by its Junior Beta Club, with classes competing to recycle the most white paper;
- Indian Knoll Elementary School media specialists give students scraps from damaged books to use for language arts class projects and scraps of lamination material for use by the art department;

- Macedonia Elementary School students and staff this school year have started collecting empty pet food bags, which are transformed by Cherokee County Animal Shelter volunteers into reusable tote bags that they sell as a fundraiser;
- River Ridge High School holds a special recycling event once a semester for televisions and large batteries; Sequoyah High School's Beta Club collects gently used jeans for a reuse program sponsored by the local Aeropostale store, which provides the jeans to less fortunate teens;
- Sixes Elementary School this year began a "sharing table" during lunch to reduce food waste: students who do not want an unopened packaged item that was included with their lunch from the cafeteria can put it on the table for classmates to take as a swap and/or for a second helping; and,
- Woodstock High School sponsors an annual Greenstock environmental awareness festival, which includes an electronics recycling event.

Pillar II: Improved Health and Wellness

The Cherokee County School District has a holistic view of its mission and understands that improved health and wellness leads to overall more successful students and staff.

For its students, the School District has been a strong participant in State initiatives such as Fitnessgram and the SHAPE (Student Health and Physical Education) Program, with 19 of CCSD schools being named to the first Governor's SHAPE Honor Roll (only 107 schools statewide earned the recognition; CCSD's total increased from 16 the previous school year) and proactive at the local level through such efforts as the School District's comprehensive playground committee, which supports wellness initiatives for health and safety and promotes balance, upper-body strengthening, aerobic exercise and healthy play activities.

Another major component of the School District's health and wellness activity is accomplished through its systemic Partnership Agreements with organizations that provide additional curriculum, events and after-school programs such as the YMCA and its Youth Fit for Life program, a nutrition and fitness education program for students that was piloted at two Title I schools in the 2012-13 school year and has been expanded to eight schools for this school year, and its Snack Wars competition for elementary and middle schools to educate students about healthy snacks; the American Heart Association, which conducts Jump Rope for Heart, Hoops for Heart or Red Out programs at all schools; and new agreements with the U.S. Tennis Association and a local golf course to offer free curriculum and equipment to begin tennis and golf instruction in elementary school physical education classes.

Individual school initiatives have included fitness, walking and running clubs for students and staff, which are fast

becoming very popular lunchtime and after-school activities; and the establishment of nature walking trails at several campuses through fundraising and grants.

Unique school-based health and wellness programs for students and staff include:

- Ball Ground Elementary School STEM Academy offers after-school fitness programs for students and after-school Zumba exercise classes for staff led by PTA volunteers;
- Canton Elementary School STEM Academy began a Fun Run community fitness event this school year and is launching a “The Biggest Loser”-inspired weight-loss program and competition for staff and parents (two other schools – Dean Rusk Middle School and Macedonia Elementary School – also hold these competitions for staff and parents annually);
- Creekland Middle School is participating in Northside Hospital’s Fit Friendly School program and competition, which provided pedometers to each staff member so their mileage can be tracked daily and assists the school in organizing other “healthy” competitions;
- Freedom Middle School is beginning its second annual “Get Fit” weight loss and exercise program for staff, which provides nutritional and fitness information and support to participants;
- Holly Springs Elementary School STEM Academy this school year held its first-ever School Fun Run, which encouraged physical activity in the school and was open to the community;
- Indian Knoll Elementary School with its PTA presents “Fitness Nights,” which encourage families to exercise together and learn about nutrition. Many of the events are held outside, and focus on lifestyle changes like walking when possible instead of driving, dancing as exercise and other opportunities to make fitness a lifetime routine;
- Knox Elementary School staff can participate in HIT (High Interval Training) fitness classes on campus after school;
- Liberty Elementary School teachers have created a “Fit Wall” in the staff as a place to share healthy recipes, tips and encouragement;
- Little River Elementary School offers a “Boot Camp” exercise program twice a week led by a certified fitness instructor;
- River Ridge High School last summer won a Georgia SHAPE School Grant to improve student health and the \$3,000 in grant funding is being used to transform a classroom into a cardio conditioning room for students and staff. Curriculum based on using the equipment has been developed including an adaptive PE program for students with special needs; and,
- Woodstock Elementary School through the support of partner in education, WellStar Health System, is building a quarter-mile track on its campus and forming walking and running programs for students and staff.



The School District maintains a districtwide school nurse program, which in addition to providing clinic care for students and annual screenings for hearing and vision (Grades 1, 3 and 6) and scoliosis (Grades 7 and 8), also provides annual training to additional staff on topics including administering epinephrine auto-injectors and caring for students with diabetes, as well as American Heart Association CPR/AED training.

Through participation in the Free Epipens4Schools Program and partnerships with healthcare providers including Northside Hospital-Cherokee and Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA), the School District has stocked school student health clinics with additional supplies including four (two adult, two junior) epinephrine auto-injectors for anaphylaxis reaction per school, and 35 of the School District’s 40 campuses now have one or more AEDs, with staff training provided. A number of CCSD schools also have received CHOA’s Heart Safe School designation for their high percentage of teachers and staff trained in CPR.

For its staff, the School District has established a comprehensive wellness policy that encompasses features such as: flu vaccination clinics at all schools and work locations; CCSD contributions to reduce the cost of employee participation in health and fitness clubs and partnerships with providers to further discount rates; District Employee Assistance Program services for stress management and emotional health; participation in the Drug-free Workplace Program; and improved identification of health risk factors through the vision benefit program.

The School District’s Office of Personnel Management also offers onsite health screening fairs for employees and this year established a new Healthcare & Wellness Benefits Review committee for continued support of nutrition and physical education programs and to further develop other school-based initiatives to promote health and wellness.

The School District’s students and staff benefit from significant, continuous improvements in the School Nutrition Department that include: transferring “raw” government commodities to manufacturers to produce “end products” for use in schools to help eliminate the associated risks of food-borne illnesses; implementing online free and reduced-price meal applications; and serving as a preceptor with approved colleges and universities seeking to place post-graduate interns pursuing their accreditation to become registered dietitians.

The School Nutrition Department has embraced National and State initiatives by implementing the new National School Breakfast and School Lunch guidelines to reduce childhood obesity. The Department also stays on top of trends, such as working with school nurses to create a safe environment for students with life-threatening food allergies and other health problems.

Costs associated with purchasing higher-quality foods continue to be controlled through the School District's participation in a buying cooperative, which has earned the School Nutrition Department both Regional and National recognition from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Some of the more unique programs undertaken by the School Nutrition Department include the continued participation in the Farm to School program, which increases the amount of local produce served in the cafeterias; "Sharing Tables" and lunchtime music to reduce the amount of "plate waste" food that is left uneaten by the students; "Grab and Go" breakfasts, which are served at the school bus arrival areas to increase breakfast participation; and the Neighborhood Summer Feeding Program, which is operated through the Seamless Summer Option to feed students free meals during the summer.

Pillar III: Environmental and Sustainability Education

The Cherokee County School District begins environmental and sustainability education for its students at the elementary school level, and these opportunities increase as students progress to higher grades.

Curriculum examples include:

- The third-grade unit on pollution and conservation, through which students learn about the damage pollution can cause to the habitats of plants and animals and what can be done to help: conservation of resources, recycling materials and stormwater management;
- The seventh-grade unit on ecology, through which students learn about the diversity of living organisms and how changes in environmental conditions can affect their survival;
- The high school Environmental Science course, through which students participate in lab- and field-based study to understand the ecosystem, its resources and how human activity and technology impacts ecosystems; and,
- The high school Transportation course, through which students build cars that use alternative energies.

High school students also frequently choose this subject area for their "capstone" senior projects. Recent examples include an Etowah High School student who constructed an artificial reef off the coast of Florida with permission of appropriate State agencies for his project, and an ACE Academy alternative high school student who made nature trail cleanup a focus of his project.

Environmental and sustainability education is the focus of numerous CCSD-approved field trips for students including: the Chattahoochee Nature Center, the 4-H Center at Jekyll Island; and Tybee Island for ecosystem and erosion programs.

The expansion this school year of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Academies at four of the School District's elementary schools to additional grades after launching in 2012-13 is further increasing the focus on these topics with units covering subjects such as energy and ecology.

This school year also saw the rollout of STEM units at all middle schools, as well as increased course offerings in these subjects in all high schools including Advanced Placement Environmental Science at two additional campuses.

Unique school-based Environmental and Sustainability Education examples include:

- Ball Ground Elementary School STEM Academy is piloting a problem-based learning program with weekly activities that often focus on the environment and a potential problem, typically inspired by current events/issues, and students are tasked with identifying ways to address the problem;
- Cherokee High School and Creekview High School are participating in a project sponsored by the local chapter of Trout Unlimited through which tanks have been set up in classrooms for biology and zoology students to breed trout to be released into the wild;
- Clark Creek Elementary School this year conducted the Big Canyon Balloon science experience, an innovative earth science experience that uses a huge inflatable canyon model to teach about Earth's processes;
- Creekland Middle School purchased a "human-powered" generator to teach students about energy and energy-efficiency by showing them how much physical energy is required to produce enough power to light a regular incandescent light bulb or small appliances; and,
- Holly Springs Elementary School STEM Academy's Big Balloon program is an annual in-house field trip covering earth and environmental sciences; topics included water, erosion, water cycle and systems, and constructive and deconstructive forces.

Outdoor classrooms, gardens and nature trails are popular at many of School District campuses as a way to increase environmental and sustainability education. Unique examples include:

- Arnold Mill Elementary School's outdoor classroom that includes weather stations and information signage for plants found there;
- Free Home Elementary School's greenhouse under construction with support from the Farm Bureau to teach science class students about botany and environmental awareness with plans to grow fruits and vegetables and practice hydroponics and composting;
- Freedom Middle School gardens, which are for programs supported by the Master Gardeners of Cherokee County to teach children about organic and sustainable gardening and its environmental and health benefits;
- Johnston Elementary School's gardens include a butterfly garden created by and cared for by third-grade classes;



and,

- Little River Elementary School’s gardens, which are managed by staff members who have earned Master Gardeners certification, offer students in classes and through The Budding Gardeners Club the opportunity to learn about the environment and the benefits of gardening. The garden area also is used by classes across the curriculum... ranging from inspiration for poetry classrooms to science projects on plant life cycles.

The School District and its individual schools also are committed to developing closer ties to community organizations like the Cherokee County Water and Sewerage Authority and Upper Etowah River Alliance, which offer no-cost education programs in the classroom and teacher professional development as part of their systemic Partnership Agreements with the School District. A partnership with Georgia Power has led to science presentations throughout the school year at dozens of schools at no cost to CCSD, which have included programs on energy efficiency.

Professional development opportunities for CCSD teachers with a focus on environmental awareness include the School District’s STEM 21 program and the national Advanced Placement Environmental Science Summer Institute, which two CCSD teachers attended last summer.

In addition to a strong “green” focus in the School District’s curriculum, Environmental Clubs and Green Clubs are offered District-wide to encourage student, school and community environmental awareness and to promote reducing, reusing and recycling. These clubs educate students and give them the opportunity to organize and participate in efforts such as: recycling projects; “campus cleanup” and beautification days; waterway clean-ups including the annual Great Allatoona Cleanup and Etowah River Cleanup; school Earth Day celebrations; Adopt-A-Road and Adopt-A-Stream programs; and environmental improvement projects such as tree plantings.

Garden Clubs also are growing in numbers District-wide, with many of these clubs partnering with community organizations such as the Master Gardeners, County Extension Office and Farm Bureau, which they connect with through the District’s systemic Partnership Agreements; and 4-H Clubs throughout the District promote good stewardship of natural resources.

Woodstock High School has been a model school in this area through its strong participation in both classroom and extra-curricular activities including stream-monitoring projects and hosting an annual community Earth Day festival that encompasses both education and entertainment. Its achievements earned the school a \$31,000 grant from State Farm Insurance in 2010 for its environmental awareness program, Woodstock Always Takes Environmental Responsibility (WATER) – a joint initiative with the City of Woodstock, Cherokee County and Georgia's Adopt-A-Stream program; and its Environmental Club won the 2012 Georgia Senior School of the Year Award for the NEED (National Energy



Education Development) National Youth Awards.

This focus on science education including environmental and sustainability education is evident in the outstanding academic achievement by CCSD students on National and Statewide assessments including:

- ACT, on which CCSD high school students in 2013 earned a 22.5 average on the Science section, as compared to the 20.7 National average and 20.5 State average;
- Advanced Placement exams, which include exams in science subjects, the passage rate of CCSD high school students in 2012 was 80 percent, as compared to the National rate of 57 percent and the State rate of 53 percent;
- End-Of-Course Tests, on which CCSD high school students in 2013 earned a 91 average in Biology, as compared to the 78 State average, and a 95 average in Physical Science, as compared to the 86 State average; CCSD middle school students in 2013 earned a 100 average in Physical Science, as compared to the 86 State average; and,
- Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests, on which the percentage of CCSD students in 2013 who exceeded or met standards was: 86 percent for Third Grade Science, as compared to 78 percent for the State; 85 percent for Fifth Grade Science, as compared to 80 percent for the State; and 85 percent for Eighth Grade Science, as compared to 74 percent for the State.

District Policies

Cherokee County School District policies encourage good stewardship of all resources and innovation to meet that goal.

The School Board's Mission Statement is: "We, the School Board of Cherokee County, Georgia, commit ourselves to a philosophy of respect and high expectations for all students, parents, teachers and other staff. Our mission is to enable all students to become contributing citizens who can communicate effectively, gather and use information, make responsible decisions, utilize technology effectively and adapt to the challenges of the future. This mission will be accomplished by providing a variety of learning opportunities and experiences for students, both in school and in the community."

The School District's Major System Priorities features language that promotes reduced environmental impact and costs; improved health and wellness and environmental and sustainability education including: "Insuring that all students and staff have a safe and secure environment for teaching and learning" and "Utilizing technology both to improve student achievement and to increase the school district's productivity and efficiency as a major business enterprise."

The School District's Five-Year Strategic Plan is developed by an ad hoc committee appointed by the Superintendent of Schools and comprised of department heads, principals and parents. The plan enables policymakers, the Superintendent,

staff and the community to monitor measurable progress toward successful implementation of the School District's Major System Priorities. The plan focuses on 13 major objectives and contains timelines and evaluation components relative to each of the Major System Priorities.

Elements from the current plan that address reduced environmental impact and costs; improved health and wellness and environmental and sustainability education include:

- Replace paper with electronic online data, use technology-based software that facilitates web-based data sharing and collaboration and automate workflows where possible, including forms and often-modified documents such as policy manuals and curriculum guides;
- Continue to increase efficiency and provide for additional secured parking by utilizing three existing, strategically-located Bus Support Facilities, while investigating the advisability of an additional facility in the northeastern sector of the County as part of anticipated growth and future school construction in that area;
- Continue to update a five-year maintenance schedule for facilities, which includes painting, floor and/or roof repair/replacement, installation of energy management systems including portable classrooms, electrical and mechanical needs; and,
- Continue predictive replacement of major equipment based on usage, age, repair history, energy consumption and approximate life expectancy.
 - a. Review/Update equipment inventory
 - b. Evaluate age and condition of equipment
 - c. Determine approximate life expectancy of each piece of equipment
 - d. Determine date when equipment should be replaced
 - e. Budget for equipment replacement

The District's Wellness Program Policy "recognizes that student wellness and proper nutrition are related to students' well-being, growth, development, and readiness to learn. The Board is committed to providing a school environment that promotes and protects student wellness, proper nutrition, nutrition education, and regular physical activity as part of the total learning experience. In a healthy school environment, students will learn about and participate in positive dietary and lifestyle practices that can improve student achievement." This policy covers Nutrition Guidelines, Nutrition Education, Physical Education, Other School-Based Activities and Implementation.