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## **Pennsylvania Schools Named U.S. Department of Education's 2016 Green Ribbon Schools**

**Harrisburg, PA** – Environmental and education advocates gathered at the State Capitol Building today to honor three Pennsylvania schools that were named 2016 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools (ED-GRS). The School District of Jenkintown, Park Forest Elementary School (State College, PA), and Slippery Rock University were celebrated for receiving the prestigious, national honor at a press conference.

“Being named a Green Ribbon School is an honored distinction, and these schools should be proud of their achievements,” said Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera. “Providing students with an education that includes lessons in environmental stewardship and civic responsibility will ensure a healthy, thriving environment for generations to come. Additionally, offering an array of educational pathways to students during their school years will create a diverse and engaged workforce.”

Among those in attendance were Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Executive Deputy Secretary David Volkman, Acting Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Patrick McDonnell, Secretary of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Cindy Adams Dunn, President of PA Green & Healthy Schools Partnership (PAGHSP) Nick Semon, EPA Region 3 Deputy Regional Administrator Cecil Rodrigues, as well as lawmakers and other stakeholders.

“The three winning Pennsylvania schools demonstrate how environmental stewardship, sustainability and wellness go hand-in-hand,” McDonnell said. “These schools not only create better places for students to learn, but also healthier places for people to work which benefits the entire community.”

“Each of these schools has demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting conservation, and to improving the health and wellness of their students and staff through outdoor activities,” Dunn said. “They have installed wetlands, rain gardens and nature trails, purchased bicycles to promote recreational riding, implemented a walk to school week, and also redesigned a baseball field to reduce storm water runoff -- all models that other schools in Pennsylvania should consider bringing to their communities.”

Additionally, Mike Walsh, DCNR Deputy Secretary for Administration, presented the Champion of Green Schools Award to Leo Bernabei, Director of Operations for Radnor Township School

District. The award was presented by the PA Green and Healthy Schools Partnership, with unanimous approval by its Board, to honor an individual who has been a leader in advancing policies and implementing programs aimed at making Pennsylvania schools more healthy and environmentally-friendly places of learning.

“For nearly two decades, Leo Bernabei has been focused on improving the learning environment for children in the Radnor School District, home to the first ‘green’ elementary school in Pennsylvania, and the nationally recognized Radnor Middle School,” Walsh said. “Leo understands the importance of those things related to a healthy school environment--indoor air quality, using the right materials and cleaning supplies -- but he also cares deeply about ensuring that there is a connection made with the students of the district.”

The School District of Jenkintown was named a 2016 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School for its commitment to green cleaning, participation in the U.S. Green Building Council’s Green Apple Day of Service, and promotion of alternative transportation, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of students walk to school. Park Forest Elementary was honored for its Energy Star certification, exemplary zero waste initiative, using its schoolyard as an inquiry and context for environmental education, as well as working with a local school psychologist to bring mindfulness practices to students. Slippery Rock University was awarded the honor for its outdoor classrooms, including 150 acres of Audubon Society Sanctuaries, the Campus Sustainability Features Map, its Sustainable Enterprise Accelerator program that connects students with local businesses interested in improving the sustainability of their operations, the “Health Planet, Healthy People” summer camp for local high school students, and the establishment of a Climate Action Plan, which includes more than 30 specific projects and strategies to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

The ED-GRS program recognizes schools, districts and institutions of higher education based on their efforts to reduce environmental impact and costs; to improve health and wellness of schools, students and staff; and to provide environmental education, including STEM, civics, and green career pathways.

Across the United States, 47 schools, 15 school districts and 11 postsecondary institutions were honored. Since the program began in 2011, 15 education institutions from Pennsylvania have been named Green Ribbon Schools. Of those honorees, there have been two private schools, seven K-12 public schools, three school districts, one career and technical school, and two postsecondary institutions.

For more information, visit the U.S. Dept. of Education’s [website](#).

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