

Bay Farm School Receives Prestigious Green Ribbon Award
School honored for recycling, gardening, sustainability achievements
State Superintendent Tom Torlakson attends ceremony at the school

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alameda, Calif. — February 26, 2016 — Bay Farm School, a K-8 program in the Alameda Unified School District (AUSD), received a California Green Ribbon Schools Award from State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson in a ceremony at the school on Friday.

The Green Ribbon Schools program honors schools, school districts, and institutes of higher education for excellence in resource efficiency, health and wellness, and environmental and sustainability education. Bay Farm is now also a nominee for the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools program.

Only five schools can be nominated for the federal award from each state. Bay Farm is the only individual public school that won the nomination in California this year. The other nominees are: Los Angeles Unified School District, Manhattan Beach Unified School District, San Francisco Unified School District, and the private Bishop O'Dowd High School in Oakland. The schools and districts were also named "Green Achievers," the highest honor in the California Green Ribbon Schools recognition program.

Their nominations – along with those from 25 other states – will be confirmed by the U.S. Department of Education on Earth Day (April 22).

"I commend these schools and districts for reducing their environmental footprints and engaging students using sustainability and the environment as the context for learning," Torlakson said in a press release issued by the California Department of Education (CDE). "Their efforts are helping to build healthier, more resilient communities and a more prosperous California."

"A School Culture"

The awards were given out at a news conference Friday morning. Representatives of the other winning programs also attended the ceremony and spoke of their work, which led former science teacher Torlakson, who convened an Environmental Literacy task force in 2014, to tell the audience, "Clearly I'm passionate about environmental education. But your passions bring me to a higher level."

Bay Farm teachers and students didn't learn of the award until the morning assembly, when AUSD Superintendent Sean McPhetridge announced it to the entire school. "You have helped save the world," he told Bay Farm's students, teacher, and staff. "You're a model for our whole district. You're a model for the whole state. You are now a model for the whole United States!"

Green Ribbon Schools demonstrate exemplary achievement in three categories or "pillars": reducing environmental impact and costs; improving the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff; and providing effective environmental education that incorporates science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), civic skills, and green career pathways.

Bay Farm School was honored for its implementation of a highly efficient, student-led "Green Waste" program that diverts 85 percent of solid waste from the landfill to recycling and compost. Bay Farm School has also developed an Outdoor Learning Center that is managed by a full-time garden teacher who regularly teaches the students about plants, gardening, nutrition, and cooking.

Second grade teacher Michele Kuttner, who is also a Go Green Coordinator at Bay Farm, as well as a member of AUSD's Green Schools Challenge Steering Committee, accepted the award on behalf of the school. "At Bay Farm, what began as a program to increase recycling and build a garden has become our school culture," Kuttner said. "Our entire school community works to prove that a school can increase in size and population and reduce the size of its carbon footprint."

In 2014, the district-wide [Green Schools Challenge won a Golden Bell Award](#) from the California School Boards Association.

After the ceremony, the nearly 100 attendees from across the state toured Bay Farm's butterfly garden, Outdoor Learning Center, and classrooms, so that they could learn more about the school's green practices.

You can read more about Bay Farm's efforts on their [Go Green](#) web page. The California Department of Education's [Green Ribbon Schools Award Program](#) web page includes more details on the award program.

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Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) serves about 9500 students in Alameda, California, an island community in the San Francisco Bay Area. For more information, please visit the [AUSD website](#), follow [@AUSDNews](#) on Twitter, or subscribe to our [email communications](#). Questions? Contact Susan Davis, Senior Manager, Community Affairs, at sdavis@alameda.k12.ca.us.

**California Nominees to the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools Program
(from the California Department of Education [press release](#))**

Bay Farm School, Alameda, Alameda County

Bay Farm School has implemented an efficient three-stream waste diversion program that diverts 85 percent of solid waste from the landfill. Students are critical to these efforts, monitoring lunchtime sorting and conducting multiple waste audits to keep recyclables out of classroom and playground trash. Bay Farm's Outdoor Learning Center (OLC) is managed by a full-time garden teacher. All students regularly learn outdoors in part by working in the OLC and eating the food they grow there. Read more about Bay Farm's efforts on their [Go Green](#) Web page.

Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles County

LAUSD is the largest school district in California and the second largest in the nation, serving approximately 650,000 students in grades K–12. In 2003, LAUSD became the first school district in California to adopt the sustainability standards of the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) for all new schools and modernization projects. To date, 78 LAUSD schools have received CHPS certification. LAUSD has installed 21 megawatts of solar capacity, supported more than 375 school gardens, and built more than 180 outdoor classrooms. The District's sustainability Web site, [Learning Green](#), provides information and resources for all schools. LAUSD's Susan Miller Dorsey Senior High School was recognized as a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School in 2015.

Manhattan Beach Unified School District, Los Angeles County

MBUSD has documented a 33 percent reduction in non-transportation energy use and a 44 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from a 2009 baseline. All MBUSD schools are ENERGY STAR certified. MBUSD diverts 100 percent of food waste by combining on-site composting with a municipal program that converts food waste into Engineered Bioslurry used to generate energy. MBUSD was the first district to pilot and implement the parent-initiated programs [Grades of Green](#) and [Growing Great](#). MBUSD earned a CA-GRS Silver Level Award in 2015, and Grand View Elementary School was recognized as a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School in 2012.

San Francisco Unified School District, San Francisco County

SFUSD utilizes a Shared Savings Program that rewards schools for reducing their use by giving them 50 percent of the savings generated through conservation as discretionary funding. Every school in SFUSD has an Environmental Liaison, and SFUSD's Environmental Science Center has been providing standards-based environmental education in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area since 1976. SFUSD has installed nearly 60 green schoolyards since 2005 and will expand schoolyard "greening" to every site using a local modernization bond authorized in 2011. The District's [Green the Next Gen](#) Web site features teacher resources; student programs; and utility, commute, and waste diversion data from SFUSD schools. SFUSD earned a CA-GRS Silver Level Award in 2015.

Bishop O'Dowd High School, Oakland, Alameda County

O'Dowd's Center for Environmental Studies, completed in 2014, is a LEED Platinum certified building. The campus also supports a four-acre "Living Lab" that has undergone ecological restoration annually since 2000 and received Bay Friendly certification and Wildlife Habitat certification. The Living Lab features four different local ecosystems, beehives, chickens and rabbits, edibles, and water catchment systems. It is used for field research, experiential learning, and spiritual meditation. Green Gloves, a 2015 partnership with the ReThink Disposable project, replaced disposable plates and bowls in the cafeteria with reusable baskets, reducing solid waste by 3,376 pounds per year. O'Dowd was recognized by CAPSO as a CA-GRS Gold School in 2015 and a Silver School in 2014.