



Secretary of Education Names St. Thomas Aquinas School a 2014 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School

April 22, 2014

Acting Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality Mike Boots joined U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to announce that St. Thomas Aquinas School, in Indianapolis, Indiana is among the 2014 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools award honorees.

St. Thomas Aquinas School was nominated by the Indiana Department of Education. STA has **reduced its environmental impact** substantially by installing sustainable flooring, new windows and low-flow toilets. Through recycling partnerships with Abitibi, Terracycle and Ray's Recycling and a strong practice of composting, approximately 30% of the school's solid waste is diverted from landfills. There has been an approximately 19% reduction in school greenhouse gas emission due to walking and biking through the Safe Routes to School program. This program aligns with STA's commitment to **the health and nutrition** of its students and staff. Students remain active through physical education classes and recess. After school activities, such as karate, flamenco dancing and sports, offer additional learning and physical activity time. Staff members are encouraged to remain fit by wearing pedometers to track daily steps. **Sustainability** concepts are an integral part of the STA curriculum. Students learn content knowledge about the natural world and its interactions; religion classes help frame environmental and sustainability issues as a way to care for our neighbors and for creation. STA partners with community resources, such as parks and universities, to visit prairie, river and wetlands habitats. St. Thomas Aquinas School is committed to caring for the world and its inhabitants.

"We are thrilled and humbled to be a 2014 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School. Our success is the result of every student and staff member contributing the little efforts that add up over time to make a significant difference for our world. We are one step closer to fulfilling our vision that STA students will become responsible, faith-filled, caring citizens, and independent learners." Cara Swinefurth, Principal

Forty-eight schools were honored for their exemplary efforts to reduce environmental impact and utility costs, promote better health, and ensure effective environmental education, including civics and green career pathways. In addition, nine districts were honored for the District Sustainability Award. Duncan and Boots made the announcement at the U.S. Department of Education, in Washington, DC. Secretary Duncan also announced a new post-secondary nomination category will be added to the school and district awards for the coming year.

The schools were confirmed from a pool of candidates voluntarily nominated by 30 state education agencies. The list of selectees includes 39 public schools and nine private schools. The public schools include ten early learning programs, three charter, one magnet and three career and technical schools. The schools serve various grade levels, including 29 elementary, 16 middle and 18 high schools are among them, with several schools



GreenRibbonSchools



having various K-12 configurations, from 27 states. Twenty-one of the 2014 honorees serve a disadvantaged student body and 18 are rural. The list of all selected schools and districts, as well as their nomination packages, can be found here: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/index.html>.

The Department is looking forward to a fourth year of award, with a post-secondary category, and will be posting updated competition criteria shortly to reflect this addition. State education agencies are encouraged to indicate intent to nominate schools in 2015 by August 1, 2014.

More information on the federal recognition award can be found [here](#). Resources for all schools to move toward the three Pillars in which the 2014 honorees are exemplary can be found [here](#).

EMBARGOED UNTIL 4/12

