**Opportunity for All AIA CAE Members – The U.S. Department of Education needs your help!**

The American Institute of Architects Committee on Architecture for Education (AIA CAE) would like to encourage all members active in the design of environments for learning to consider participating in the U.S. Department of Education’s Green Ribbon Schools award. AIA CAE has worked closely with the U.S. Department of Education and dozens of education, health and environmental NGOs to help create and implement this award over the past three years. We now wish to utilize our community and our direct links with outstanding schools to promote recognition through this innovative award. For additional information, an excerpt from the Department’s own Fact Sheet is below.

Right now, AIA CAE members can assist in three different ways:

1. **Encourage sustainable schools** with which you have worked or know about to submit for consideration in this prestigious recognition award. Most states will open their application period for next year’s award in September.
2. Volunteer to assist your state Department of Education with the application **judging process**. Individual state Departments of Education run a competition and nominate a select few schools, districts and postsecondary institutions to the U.S. Department of Education. For more information, [find your state’s designated ED-GRS contact](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/state-contacts.html).
3. Join the U.S. Department of Education on the its annual **Best Practices Tour**, which will visit past honorees in several states, and involve several federal agencies, state and local officials and the public. This year’s theme is “Healthy Schools, High-Achieving Students.”

***U.S. Department of Education’s Green Ribbon Schools Fact Sheet Excerpt***

*“The U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools (ED-GRS) recognition award honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools, districts, and postsecondary institutions that are exemplary in three Pillars: 1) reducing environmental impact and costs, including waste, water, energy use and alternative transportation; 2) improving the health and wellness of students and staff, including environmental health, nutrition and fitness; and 3) providing effective sustainability education, including robust environmental education that engages STEM, civic skills and green career pathways.*

*The award is a tool to encourage state education agencies, stakeholders and higher education officials to consider matters of facilities, health and environment comprehensively and in coordination with state health, environment and energy agency counterparts. Unique about the award is that, in order to be selected for federal recognition, schools, districts and postsecondary institutions must be high achieving in all three of the above Pillars, not just one area.*

*Schools, districts, colleges and universities do not apply for the award to ED, but to their state education authorities. Candidates must contact their state departments of education (or equivalent DoDEA or BIE jurisdictions) or state higher education authorities for information on selection in each state. State participation in the award is voluntary and not all state education authorities choose to nominate schools, districts, or colleges and universities, but hearing from interested schools may be helpful to a state in determining whether it wishes to nominate.*

*States submit their nominees to ED by February 1st of each year, with various fall and winter deadlines for their state-wide competitions for up to five PK-12 schools and districts and a single postsecondary institution. ED announces honorees annually on Earth Day, April 22nd. The honorees are invited to attend a national ceremony in July where they receive a sustainable plaque and flag. Refreshed criteria and guidelines for states and their partners are published in the spring for the subsequent award cycle.*

*Through the award, ED encourages the critical collaborations that ensure all of our nation's schools are healthier, safer, and more sustainable. ED’s complementary Green Strides initiative uses an annual report, blog, newsletter, social media and tour to facilitate the sharing of best practices and resources. The Green Strides Webinar Series and resources page provide all schools, districts and institutions of higher education free information on the tools that help them move toward the Pillars of the recognition award to follow the footsteps of the ED-GRS honorees. The award is not tied to any one program or standard, but instead encourages all schools, districts and institutions of higher education to use all of the many helpful resources available to them.”*

More information, including a listing of previous honorees, may be found at the [Green Ribbon Schools webpage on the U.S. Department of Education website](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/index.html).

We encourage you to get involved in this impactful program and welcome stories and photos about your involvement in this and similar programs, for publication on our [AIA CAE website](http://network.aia.org/CommitteeonArchitectureforEducation/home/).

Thank you,

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