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Jan. 10, 2023

Going Green, Inside the Classroom and Out!

Each year, the [U. S. Department of Education](#) presents [the Green Ribbon Schools Award](#), which is **nation's highest federal recognition for school sustainability**. States across the country put forth nominees to be considered for this national recognition. The Illinois State Board of Education partners with the [Illinois Green Alliance](#) to [accept and review applications](#) from school communities across Illinois that integrate best practices in energy, water and waste management, healthy school environments, and environmental education. Illinois applications are due by **5 p.m. on Jan. 18**. You may view our [program page](#) for more information.



District 99 students participated in an eco-friendly art project using bottle caps. The project is an example of how the school supports the health and wellness of students and staff, which is an element of the Green Ribbon Schools Award program.

[Community High School District 99 in Downers Grove](#) was [one of five school districts nationwide](#) selected as a Green Ribbon School in spring 2022 after being selected to represent Illinois. Kristen Kucharski, who serves as assistant to the director of the physical plant and facility rental manager, was one of the District 99 staff members who led the team in drafting its application.

Like all applicants, District 99 was responsible for demonstrating progress in each of the **three main pillars**:

1. Reduce environmental impact and costs
2. Improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff
3. Provide environmental education and effectively incorporate STEM, civic skills, and green career pathways

[District 99's application](#) effectively highlighted the district's many cost-saving, health promoting, and performance-enhancing sustainability practices.

"Over the years, District 99 has enacted fundamental changes to our environments in order to better align our buildings to our conservation efforts," said Ms. Kucharski. Highlights of the district's initiatives include establishing quarterly Energy Committee meetings; using Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design guidelines for all new and/or renovation projects; and hosting a quarterly **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** session for staff and students that incorporates civic learning.

"To receive recognition at a national level is a testament to the quality of our people and programs," said Dr. Hank Thiele, superintendent of District 99. "What's unique about this award is that in addition to considering what we've practiced for years -- **energy conservation and education** -- we're being recognized for our activities that promote social sustainability, which relates to how we work to improve the health and wellness of our students and staff."

Those who may be interested in starting similar environmental initiatives or [applying for Illinois Green Ribbon Schools](#) this cycle should educate themselves on the true meaning of what "Going Green" means. Participating in the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools application process enabled District 99 staff members to fully understand the broad scope of sustainability and how they could truly make a difference.





Applications are open for **2023 Illinois Green Ribbon Schools**

2023 Green Ribbon Schools Application Deadline Extended

Prek-12 schools, districts, and early learning centers with active sustainability practices or initiatives are encouraged to apply for [2023 Illinois Green Ribbon Schools](#) recognition. Submission materials should be sent to greenribbon@isbe.net by **5 p.m. Jan. 18**. Finalists at the state level will advance to the national level for potential recognition as a [U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School](#).



Apply for the Energy CLASS Prize!

Applications are now being accepted from Local Education Agencies (LEAs) interested in establishing energy manager positions. Such an employee can identify, plan, and implement efficiency and health upgrades in schools. The American-Made Energy Champions Leading the Advancement of Sustainable Schools ([CLASS](#)) Prize is designed to provide training and cash prizes to LEAs so they can make energy management a sustainable feature of their communities. Please refer to [the official rules](#) for complete submission and eligibility requirements. The deadline to apply is Feb. 28. If you have any questions about the prize, please send an email to energyclassprize@nrel.gov.



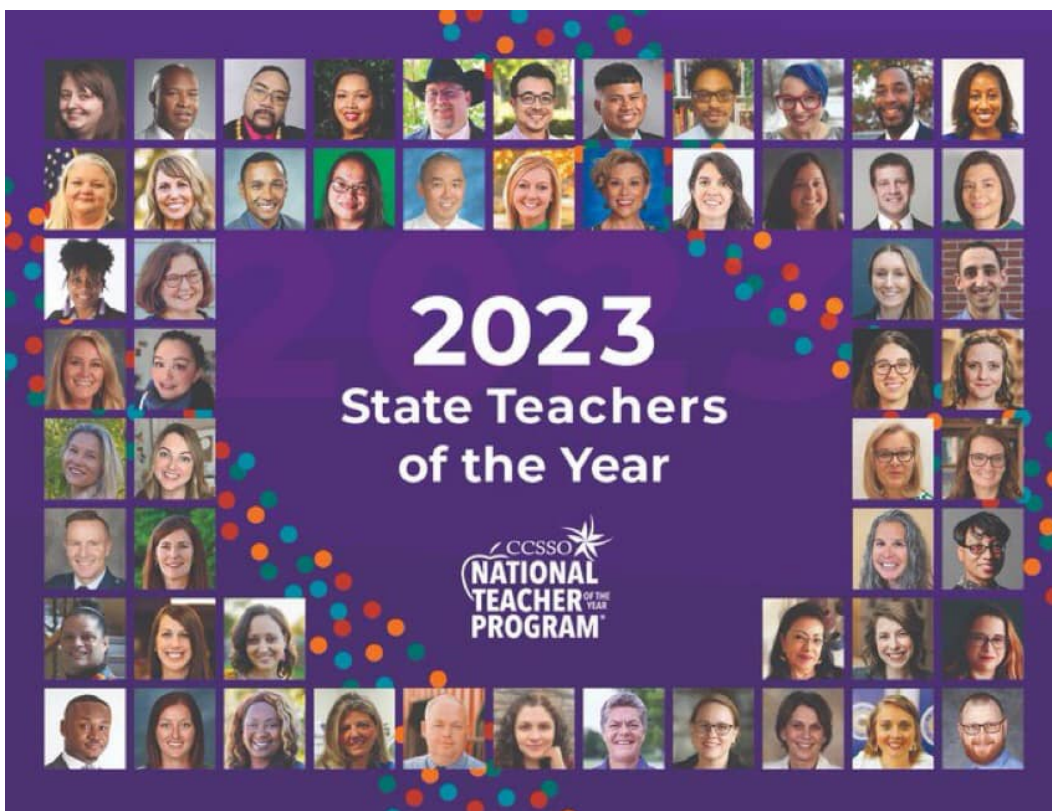
We Appreciate Teachers Contest Open!

[Nominate](#) teachers today! Twenty-five teachers selected from all those who are nominated will each receive [Back 2 School](#) America (B2SA) kits for their classroom and a gift basket of goodies, and will be invited to a champagne reception in their honor. Nominations can be made through the B2SA website. Anyone can submit an application on behalf of an Illinois teacher. Submit your nominations by April 1.





Congratulations to [Illinois School for the Deaf](#) (ISD) basketball Coach Jamal Garner, who recently qualified to play in the [World Deaf Basketball Championship](#) in 2023 and the [Deaflympics](#) in 2025. Coach Garner currently coaches the junior and senior varsity boys basketball teams at ISD. Jamal himself graduated from the Illinois School for the Deaf in 2015. After tryouts at the end of this month, Coach Garner may be selected to join the [USA Deaf Men's Basketball Team](#) and go on to represent his alma mater and the country on the international stage. Good luck to you, Jamal!



Congrats to the Illinois Teacher of the Year Kim Radostits (second row, fourth from right above) of Oregon Community Unit School District 220 on officially joining the [2023 State Teachers of the Year](#) national cohort. The 2023 cohort is composed of 55 educators from across the country and U.S. territories who will take part in a yearlong, one-of-a-kind professional learning journey. To learn more about Kim and her colleagues from around the country click [here](#).



Superintendent Dr. PJ Caposey of Meridian Community Unit School District 223 has been named the [2023 Illinois Superintendent of the Year](#) by the [Illinois Association of School Administrators](#). Dr. Caposey was selected for his achievements in the areas of academic achievement, preparing students for the future, social emotional support, teaching and instruction, and leadership. He also is one of four finalists nominated for [National Superintendent of the Year](#). The 2023 national winner will be announced next month. Congratulations to Dr. Caposey and the entire Meridian School District community!



Congratulations to Superintendent Dr. Josh Reitz (left) from McHenry School District 15 and Superintendent Dr. Peter Hannigan (right) from Hawthorn School District 73, who were both recently named [2022 Superintendents to Watch](#) by the [National School Public Relations Association](#). Each year, up to 25 superintendents from around the country are named. Honorees are selected for their dynamic, fast-paced leadership; effective use of communication technology; and innovation in expanding outreach to their school communities. We are so grateful to have such excellent superintendents representing Illinois on a national stage.

Check out ISBE's [Elevating Educators webpage](#) for a complete list of all current ISBE recognition programs. To submit a recognition story to be featured in this newsletter, please reply directly to this message with the story and a suitable photo.



The Illinois State Board of Education is the State Education Agency for Illinois. Our mission is to provide each and every child with safe and healthy learning conditions, great educators, and equitable opportunities by practicing data-informed stewardship of resources and policy development, all done in partnership with educators, families, and stakeholders.

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