

CA Green Ribbon Press Release and Newsletter Examples

These examples have been compiled by Andra Yeghoian from Green Ribbon applications that she directly applied for or supported applications for starting in 2013 through now

Purpose and Overview: This document provides examples of press releases and newsletter stories highlighting recipients of the California Green Ribbon Schools (CA-GRS) Awards. The examples illustrate different ways organizations have celebrated Green Ribbon recognition through media announcements and storytelling, and are intended to help districts, schools, and county offices of education communicate their sustainability achievements and share their stories with the broader community. *Use the table below to navigate to different examples.*

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I. PRESS RELEASE EXAMPLES

A **press release** is an official announcement written for media outlets that communicates important news or achievements from an organization. It is typically distributed to journalists, news organizations, and community partners to generate public awareness and coverage about a specific event, recognition, or milestone. Members of the press may use the press release to write news stories, publish announcements, conduct interviews, or share the information with their audiences through newspapers, online publications, television, radio, or other media channels.

A) San Mateo County Office of Education Press Release Example - 2017-19 Application*

The San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) has won a [California Green Ribbon Award](#) for excellence in resource efficiency, health and wellness, and environmental and sustainability education. The California Department of Education (CDE) will present the award at a ceremony on May 3rd. The CDE recognizes four levels of Green Ribbon schools: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Green Achievers.

SMCOE received the Bronze or "Entry Level" award for its efforts. Highlights of SMCOE's environmental efforts include: 85 percent of electrical energy sourcing is carbon free, an emphasis on eco-friendly cleaning practices, support of 13 school districts' participation in Safe Routes to School, access to outdoor learning in SMCOE-sponsored schools, and integration of environmental literacy in STEAM Center professional learning. The San Carlos School District was awarded the Gold or "Full

Integration” Award and is recognized across the county as a leader in environmental education and sustainable practices. Woodside Priory, another recognized green school leader in San Mateo County, also received the Gold Level Award this year, as well as in 2015, 2016, and 2017. Woodside Elementary School District was a Bronze Level winner in 2016.

The award corresponds with the launch this year of SMCOE’s Environmental Literacy Initiative, which includes the One Planet Schools Challenge, the Schools for a Sustainable Future Conference, a Professional Learning Series, and the Environmental Sustainability Partnership Program. The One Planet Schools Challenge offers schools and districts an easy first-step and pathway toward becoming a Green Ribbon school, while the Partnership Program helps school boards commit to green practices and programs.

“We are honored to receive the Green Ribbon Bronze Level Award this year and will work hard to achieve at the Gold and Green Achiever levels,” explained Superintendent Anne E. Campbell. “We have made environmental literacy a priority and look forward to working alongside schools and districts in the county to not only improve facilities and practices, but to equip our students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to create an environmentally sustainable world,” Superintendent Campbell continued.

For more information on SMCOE’s Environmental Literacy Program, contact Andra Yeghoian at ayeghoian@smcoe.org or 650-802-5406

*For a more recent press release example on SMCOE’s Green Achiever Recognition in 2025 see the [2025 SMCOE Green Achiever Press Release](#)

B) Bishop O’Dowd Press Release Example - 2015-16 Application

Earth Day 2016 held special significance for Bishop O’Dowd High School. That’s when U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. and Managing Director of the White House Council of Environmental Quality Christy Goldfuss announced O’Dowd was named a 2016 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School.

O’Dowd is among 47 schools, 15 school districts and 11 postsecondary institutions being honored this year. The honorees are being recognized for reducing their environmental impact, including energy use, waste, transportation, and water; creating healthy learning environments and fostering wellness practices; and providing effective sustainability education that prepares students to succeed in the 21st century. O’Dowd was nominated for the federal award in February, when it became the first Catholic school to receive the highest-level honor (Green Achiever) in California’s Green Ribbon Schools program. The school was recognized as a California Green Ribbon School program (CA-GRS) Gold School in 2015, and a Silver School in 2014.

“Our school leadership has worked hard aligning values and decision making practices with sustainability principles, as well as designing pathways for students to access sustainability in the curriculum and co-curricular programming. Receiving this recognition now is an affirmation that we have really stepped forward as leaders in the Education for Sustainability movement, and gives us purpose for continuing to move this important work forward,” Director of Sustainability Andra Yeghoian said.

One example of O'Dowd's recent efforts includes a partnership with the ReThink Disposable project. In 2015, the school replaced disposable plates and bowls in the cafeteria with reusable baskets, reducing solid waste by 3,376 pounds per year.

And, as a Catholic high school, O'Dowd is committed to bringing the themes of Pope Francis' environmental and social justice encyclical – [Laudati Si](#) – to life. To that end, the school strives to equip students, faculty and staff, and the greater community with the tools, resources and life experiences to create an environmentally sustainable, socially just and economically viable world.

Some of the initiatives, programs and curriculum that O'Dowd was recognized for include:

- Building a LEED-platinum certified Center for Environmental Studies
- Gaining recognition as a Fair Trade School (O'Dowd is only one of 16 schools nationwide at the K-12 level to receive such recognition)
- Creating a comprehensive transportation program to encourage carpooling
- Replacing grassy areas with artificial turf or drought-tolerant plants
- Installing a total of 243 solar panels on campus
- Introducing new curriculum, such as the freshman Science and the Environment course, which provides a meaningful intro to the environment and issues associated with earth stewardship
- Piloting the Living Lab Certificate program in which over 125 students participated
- Supporting the formation of student clubs – such as the Sustainability Corps – dedicated to the greening of campus, spreading social justice and empowering others to live sustainably
- O'Dowd faculty and staff are formalizing a draft of forward-looking sustainability initiatives across campus, community and curriculum areas, building off the success of efforts to date.

For more information on Bishop O'Dowd's Sustainability Program, contact Andra Yeghoian at _____.

II. NEWSLETTER EXAMPLES

A **newsletter article** is a story written for an organization's internal or community newsletter to inform and engage a specific audience. These articles often highlight accomplishments, share program stories, and celebrate community members or partners, providing more narrative detail and context than a traditional press release.

A) Special Edition: San Mateo Union High School District Green Ribbon Award - Originally released in the Spring 2022 San Mateo County Office of Education's ELSI Monthly Newsletter

Congratulations to SMUHSD for Bronze-Level Green Ribbon Recognition!

We are so thrilled to celebrate San Mateo Union High School District (SMUHSD) for receiving a [California Green Ribbon Schools \(CA-GRS\) bronze-level recognition](#)! This is a huge achievement that speaks to the amazing progress SMUHSD has made in sustainability in recent years. We are so proud of this school district community for recognizing the climate emergency and making change to be more sustainable and climate ready - and we are excited to continue working together to push this work forward in years to come!

The California Green Ribbon award is given for school communities that have demonstrated progress towards reaching the goals of each of three Pillars, which are:

- Pillar I: Reduce environmental impact and costs
- Pillar II: Improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff
- Pillar III: Provide effective environmental education, which teaches many disciplines, and is especially good at effectively incorporating STEM, civic skills, and green career pathways

Awardees are recognized in a tiered system ranging from Bronze to Green Achiever (highest recognition). Past San Mateo County Green Ribbon Awardees include:

- Woodside School District (2016) - Bronze
- [San Mateo County Office of Education](#) (2018) - Bronze
- San Carlos School District (2018) - Gold
- Woodside Priory (2020) - Green Achiever
- [Ravenswood City School District](#) (2021) - Bronze
- [South Hillsborough Elementary](#) (2021) - *Hillsborough City School District* - Silver
- [The Nueva School](#) (2021) - Green Achiever
- [San Mateo Union High School District](#) (2022) - Bronze

To learn more about the Green Ribbon program, and how to receive technical assistance visit SMCOE's [Green Ribbon page](#).

In order to better understand SMUHSD journey to Green Ribbon, e interviewed SMUHSD Sustainability Committee members who supported the Green Ribbon application and are sustainability leaders in the district: student Maram Ahmed (she/her), Mills High School senior; Bethany Li (she/her), SMUHSD Sustainability Coordinator/Burlingame High School English teacher; Associate Superintendent/Chief Business Officer Yancy Hawkins (he/him); and Superintendent Dr. Kevin Skelley (he/him). Read some of their stories below, or in the [SMUHSD Green Ribbon Changemaker Interview article](#).

The SMUHSD Sustainability Journey: From Student-Led Momentum to District-Wide Climate Action Planning

The sustainability journey at SMUHSD is truly a story of student-led momentum and multi-role collaboration across the district. As Mills High School senior and Youth Commissioner Maram Ahmed has shared, “All of the work that we’ve done wouldn’t have been here if it hadn’t been for student voices coming to board meetings, giving public comments, talking to their teachers, facilities, school principals...applying for the Green Ribbon has dissolved a lot of the barriers that were standing in our district previously that hindered multi-generational collaboration.”

In April 2021, students in SMUHSD successfully appealed to their school board to pass a Declaration of Climate Emergency. The students also supported the formation of the SMUHSD district-wide Sustainability Committee in Spring 2021, and a review of district sustainability with a Baseline Assessment. The Sustainability Committee is now led by a district-wide Sustainability Coordinator, as well as site-level sustainability facilitators and students, teachers, and staff.

The SMUHSD Sustainability Committee led the Green Ribbon application efforts and is responsible for this incredible recognition, which speaks to some of the amazing progress the district has already seen across school site campuses, curriculums, and cultures. The district-wide sustainability projects currently ongoing include tri-bin waste management and education efforts, solar panel projects, electronic buses, and hopefully a [campus sustainability dashboard](#) and EV charging. In District

Sustainability Coordinator and Burlingame High School English Teacher Bethany Li's eyes, the Green Ribbon award provided "a way to remind ourselves of what we can continue to do, while pausing along the way to be grateful for the work that's already in place."

For Chief Business Officer Yancy Hawkins, moving forward with these sustainability initiatives is important for meeting the expectations of the community: "We are so lucky to be supported by a community that is so supportive of our schools and our school facilities, and it's our responsibility to make sure we're making the right choices." Superintendent Dr. Kevin Skelley has further shared that he believes it is the responsibility of all educators to take action for climate resilience: "We have an existential challenge here. I think that being an educator means you have a commitment to the future, and to me that's the way with the environment as well - we have a commitment to the future."

As the SMUHSD community celebrates the Green Ribbon award, the Sustainability Committee is moving forward with creating **the first Sustainable and Climate Ready School Action Plan in San Mateo County**, which will set a long-term vision, goals, and specific projects for the district to orient around in sustainability work. As Dr. Skelley noted, the Green Ribbon application process and award showed "That we're doing a lot, and also that we have a lot more to do." The Sustainability Committee believes the Sustainable and Climate Ready Action Plan will be a crucial next step for giving the district direction and accountability around sustainability goals in years to come.

B) Additional Newsletter Story and Promotion Examples

- [Fremont Union High School District Newsletter Feature](#) (2026)
- [Ravenswood City School District in East Palo Alto Green Achiever \(2026\)](#) - website and press release embedded
- [Green Ribbon Changemaker Articles](#) - *note this page features articles from 2021 onward AND has profiles and application summaries*
- Articles about Bishop O'Dowd's Green Ribbon Award (2016): [BOD Patch Release](#), [NCEA Announcement](#)
- Fun Creative Example (Marilyn Avenue STEAM Academy - 2026): [4th Grade Podcast Play on Green Ribbon Achievement](#)