Updates to the 2027 California Green Ribbon Schools Application

Pillar Reordering:

- To reduce the burden on new applicants, Pillars 1 and 3 have been exchanged.
- Questions in the pillars remain identical unless noted in the alterations below.

Question Refinement

Questions were revised or removed to reduce redundancy, sharpen the focus of individual questions, and provide more space to detail achievements.

Updated Questions (Updates Highlighted)

- *OLD IA-3 (NOW IIIA-3) Complete the table below to demonstrate a reduction in non-transportation greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions related to energy conservation. How did you calculate the reduction? (Suggested length: 100 words; Points possible = 2.00)*
  - US EPA GHG Calculator linked under "calculate"
  - "non-transportation" was added because the question only pertains to the reduction in energy usage
- *IC-5 Distinguish any other programs or features not included in Pillar I that demonstrate ways that your district integrates core environmental, sustainability, STEM, green technology, and civics into curricula. Highlight innovative or unique practices and partnerships that provide effective environmental and sustainability education. If applicable, include examples of the evolution of your program(s) over time. (Suggested length: 400 words; Points possible = 1.50)*

- *IIA-4 ~~Which of the following practices does your school employ to minimize exposure to hazardous contaminants? (Mark all that apply; Points possible = 2.00)~~*
    - *New for 2027 Which of the following practices does your school/district employ to minimize exposure to hazardous contaminants and protect indoor environmental quality? (Mark all that apply; Points possible = 2.50)*
    - *Provide specific examples of the practices checked above. Include how the school manages chemicals, cleaning products, hazardous materials, ventilation-related contaminants, and exposure prevention strategies to protect student and staff health. Describe staff training, safer product selection, storage and handling procedures, integrated environmental health practices, and efforts to reduce exposure to asthma triggers and other airborne contaminants. (Suggested length: 300 words)*
- *OLD IIA-5 REMOVED ~~Describe how your school controls and manages chemicals routinely used in the school to minimize student and staff exposure. Describe actions and practices, including staff training programs and safer alternatives. (Suggested length: 200 words; Points possible = 0.50)~~*
    - The question is being recommended for removal because its content was absorbed into and made mandatory within the greatly expanded narrative for Question **IIA-4**. The **new Question IIA-4** combines the chemical management, training, and exposure minimization practices previously asked in IIA-5 into a single, comprehensive question.
- ***OLD IIA-6 (NOW IIA-5)*** *~~Describe your school's healthier and greener cleaning custodial program, including green cleaning products, services, advanced equipment, and/or policies. Describe the actions and practices used to ensure the safe application of cleaning products. (Suggested length: 200 words; Points possible = 1.00)~~*
    - *New for 2027 Describe your school's (district's) greener custodial and cleaning program. Include information about green cleaning equipment, sustainable custodial practices, third-party-certified products, cleaning technologies, and operational procedures that ensure the safe application of cleaning products. (Suggested length: 150 words; Points possible = 1.00)*

- *OLD IIA-7 (NOW IIA-6) ~~Describe actions your school takes to prevent exposure to asthma triggers in and around the school. Include practices, such as the use of asthma-safer chemicals. (Suggested length: 200 words; Points possible = 1.00)~~*
    - *New for 2027 Describe targeted strategies your school uses to identify and reduce asthma triggers in and around the school. Include practices related to indoor allergens, air pollutants, moisture and mold prevention, ventilation support, asthma management programs, and coordination with families. (Suggested length: 150 words; Points possible = 1.00)*
- *OLD IIA-11 (NOW IIA-10) ~~Describe other steps your school takes to protect indoor environmental quality. Describe practices such as implementing EPA's IAQ Tools for Schools and/or conducting other periodic, comprehensive inspections of the school facility. (Suggested length: 200 words; Points possible = 0.50)~~*
    - *New for 2027 Describe any formal indoor environmental quality assessment or management frameworks used by your school or district, such as EPA's IAQ Tools for Schools, facility audits, building inspections, environmental monitoring programs, commissioning practices, or continuous improvement systems. Include how findings are documented, monitored, and used to guide facility improvements. (Suggested length: 150 words; Points possible = 0.50)*
- *OLD IIIC-2 (NOW IC-2) ~~Describe students' meaningful outdoor nature-based learning experiences. Specify at which grade level each is implemented. (Suggested length: 400 words; Points possible = 2.00)~~*
    - *New for 2027 Describe students' meaningful outdoor and nature-based learning experiences and explain how these experiences are used to teach across subject areas, engage the broader community, and develop civic knowledge and skills. Specify at which grade level each experience or strategy is implemented. Examples may include, but are not limited to: school gardens, habitat restoration, outdoor classrooms, field investigations, community science projects, place-based learning, environmental stewardship activities, or partnerships with community organizations. (Suggested length: 400 words; Points possible = 4.00)*
- *OLD IIIC-3 REMOVED ~~Describe how outdoor learning is used to teach an array of subjects in contexts, engage the broader community, and develop civic skills. Specify at which grade level each strategy or program is implemented. (Suggested length: 400 words; Points possible = 2.00)~~*
    - The content of Question IIIC-3 was incorporated into Question **IIIC-2 (now IC-2)**, which has had its point value doubled from 2.00 to 4.00. The new IIIC-2 now requires applicants to: "Describe students' meaningful outdoor and nature-based learning experiences and explain how these experiences are **used to teach across subject areas, engage the broader community, and develop civic knowledge and skills**."

- *NEW IIID-5 Describe any other efforts toward reducing environmental impact, focusing on innovative or unique practices and partnerships. Include any programs or efforts not covered in the previous questions for Pillar III. Content does not need to be specific to Element IIID – Alternative Transportation. (Suggested length: 200 words; Points possible = 1.00)*

Updated Questions (Updates in Bold)

- IA-3 Complete the table below to demonstrate a reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions **related to energy conservation.** How did you calculate the reduction? (Suggested length: 100 words; Points possible = 2.00)

- IA-7 **What percentage of your district's energy comes from purchased renewable sources in addition to your electric utility's standard renewable portfolio requirement? Please specify the types of renewable energy purchased, the name of your local electric utility, and the utility's current renewable portfolio minimum**. ~~What percentage of your school's energy is obtained from purchased renewable energy above the portfolio minimum of your utility, and what type? Include the name of your local electric utility and identify its portfolio minimum.~~ (Suggested length: 100 words; Points possible = 1.00)

- IA-9 Has your school developed a program or made progress toward reducing the heat island effect with **planting shade trees**, cool roofs, reduced pavements, or reflective coatings on pavement? Describe the program(s) and/or physical improvements made. (Suggested length: 100 words; Points possible = 1.00)

- IA-10 What has your school done to reduce energy use? Describe projects such as lighting retrofits, installation of an energy management system, planting shade trees to cool classrooms and air conditioning units, **planting shade trees to cool classrooms and air conditioning units etc**. (Suggested length: 200 words; Points possible = 2.00)

- IB-1 How does your school track water use? (Mark one only; Points possible = 0.50)

	Our water use is not metered. (0 points – No data available to guide water conservation efforts.) ~~Our water use is not metered.~~
	We meter indoor and outdoor water use together. (0.10 points – Some tracking, but no ability to distinguish indoor vs. outdoor use.) ~~We meter indoor and outdoor water use together.~~
	We meter indoor water use and use a submeter for outdoor water. (0.30 points – Allows partial separation of water use data for targeted conservation.) ~~We meter indoor water use separately with a submeter for outdoor water use.~~
	We have separate meters for indoor and outdoor water use. (0.50 points – Provides the most accurate tracking for indoor and irrigation use.) ~~We have separate meters for indoor and outdoor water use.~~

- IB-5 Complete the table below to describe the efficiency of your school's landscape. Describe alternative water sources used for irrigation and any efforts to reduce stormwater runoff and/or reduce impermeable surfaces. (Suggested length: 200 words; Points possible = 1.00)

What percent of the landscape areas on the school site has an irrigation system?	
Is the irrigation efficient? If so, how? Is it being tested/monitored? ~~What year was the current system installed?~~	
What percentage of the turf area is used for physical education or other educational purposes?	
What types of water-efficient and/or regionally appropriate plants and trees are used? What percentage of all plants are water-efficient and/or regionally appropriate?	
What percentage of underutilized turf areas on the child-accessible areas of the school sites has been converted to trees or other low-water-use vegetation?	

- IB-6 What percentage of the school grounds is devoted to ecologically beneficial uses? Describe uses such as **trees/pocket forests**, rain gardens, wildlife or native plant habitat, outdoor classrooms, etc. Include any ranking or certification earned. (Suggested length: 100 words; Points possible = 0.50)

- IC-1 What percentage of solid waste is diverted from landfilling or **other methods of disposition** ~~incinerating~~ due to reduction, recycling, and/or composting? Complete all of the calculations below. (Points possible = 1.50)

- IC-3 How does your school track waste disposal and recycling, and what efforts are in place to reduce overall waste on campus? **Describe your practices related to zero-waste initiatives, reduction of single-use plastics, and reuse of materials such as foodware, textiles, or classroom supplies.** (Suggested length: 100 words; Points possible = **1.00**)~~How is waste disposal and recycling tracked? Describe your practices.~~

- IC-4 **Describe the hazardous materials used at your school sites and how they are properly stored, handled, and disposed of.** Include items such as science lab chemicals, cleaning agents, paints, adhesives, batteries, fluorescent lamps, and e-waste. Describe efforts to reduce or eliminate hazardous waste in alignment with Education Code Section 49341.(Suggested length: 200 words; Points possible = 0.50)~~Describe the hazardous materials used at your school and how they are disposed of properly. Describe use, storage, and disposal practices for flammable or corrosive liquids, toxins, mercury, lamps and tubes, etc. Include other progress and measures taken to reduce solid waste and eliminate hazardous waste in relation to Education Code Section 49341~~

- IIA-4 Which of the following practices does your school employ to minimize exposure to hazardous contaminants? (Mark all that apply; Points possible = 2.00)

Removed	~~Our school prohibits smoking on campus and on public school buses.~~
	Our school has identified and properly removed sources of elemental mercury and prohibits its purchase and use in the school.
	Our school uses fuel-burning appliances and has taken steps to protect occupants from carbon monoxide (CO).
	Our school does not have any fuel-burning combustion appliances.
	Our school adheres to the Asbestos Act and has an asbestos management plan in place.
Removed	~~Our school has tested all frequently occupied rooms at or below ground level for radon gas and has fixed and retested all rooms with levels that tested at or above 4 pCi/L or our school was built with radon-resistant construction features and tested to confirm levels below 4 pCi/L.~~

	Our school has identified any wood playground or other structures that contain chromate copper arsenate and has taken steps to eliminate exposure.
	Our school has a chemical management program that includes: chemical purchasing policy (low- or no-volatile organic compounds (VOC) products), storage and labeling, training and handling, chemical inventory, hazard communication (clean-up and disposal), purchasing policy for less toxic products including less toxic art supplies, and selecting third-party-certified green cleaning products.

- IIA-8 Which of the following indoor environmental standards are employed at your school? (Indicate the percentage of classrooms that meet the standard; Points possible = 4.00)

The classrooms in our school have good acoustics (less than 45 dBA).	
The classrooms in our school have good daylighting and high-quality electrical light when needed.	
The classrooms in our school have good relative humidity control (ASHRAE 30-60%).	
The classrooms in our schools exceed minimum outdoor air exchange rates **(The California building code (Title 24) Required Minimum).**	
The classrooms in our school have views of trees and nature.	

- IIB-2 Which practices does your school employ relative to school gardens? (Mark all that apply; Points possible = 1.00)

	Our school has one or more on-site gardens maintained by students, staff, and/or families.
	Our school garden supplies food for our students in the cafeteria, a cooking or garden class, or for the community.
	All students in every grade receive instructional time in a school garden.

Provide specific examples of actions taken for each checked practice, focusing on innovative or unique practices and partnerships. **To the greatest extent possible, please include a description of the time spent by each student at each school in the gardens and the activities performed, as well as how many weeks within a school year the gardens are actively growing plants. Please include a description of the instructional time each grade spends in the school garden.**

- IIB-4 Describe the types of outdoor education, exercise, and recreation available outside of formal physical education. Include time spent in the garden and opportunities for students to engage in child-led, child-directed physical play activities. **Does your school have natural areas and/or tree-shaded areas for students to play and explore?** ~~Explain how your school or district used COVID relief funds for infrastructure projects that support outdoor learning.~~ (Suggested length: 200 words; Points possible = 1.50)

- IIIC-1 Describe students' civic/community engagement projects integrating environmental and sustainability concepts. (**Examples include but are not limited to: zero-waste efforts, energy and water conservation campaigns, native habitat restoration, sustainable transportation advocacy, environmental justice partnerships, and wellness initiatives such as school garden programs or healthy food drives.)**Specify at which grade level each is implemented. (Suggested length: 400 words; Points possible = 2.00)

- IIIC-2 Describe students' meaningful outdoor **nature-based** learning experiences. Specify at which grade level each is implemented. (Suggested length: 400 words; Points possible = 2.00)