



Sustainable Jersey for Schools Certification Report

This is the Sustainable Jersey for Schools Certification Report of Highland Park Middle School (Middlesex), a Sustainable Jersey for Schools bronze certified applicant.

Highland Park Middle School (Middlesex) was certified on August 10, 2016 with 160 points. Listed below is information regarding Highland Park Middle School (Middlesex)'s Sustainable Jersey for Schools efforts and materials associated with the applicant's certified actions.

Contact Information

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Actions Implemented

Each approved action and supporting documentation for which Highland Park Middle School (Middlesex) was approved for in 2016 appears below. Note: Standards for the actions below may have changed and the documentation listed may no longer satisfy requirements for that action. Additionally, points associated with actions prior to 2013 certifications may not be accurate.

Board Leadership & Planning

Professional Development for Sustainability

20 Points

🏅 Bronze Priority 🏅 Silver Priority School District

Program Summary: Professional Development for Sustainability took place on March 2, 2016

from 3:15-5:15pm at Bartle School media center. The instructors were Irene Marx, Sustainability Educator (Cloud Institute for Sustainability-NJ Learns) and Tracey Maiden, 2nd grade teacher. The 25 participants included 4 board of education members, teachers, the business administrator, a principal and a librarian. The workshop consisted of a PowerPoint presentation, discussions, a craft activity and group activities. Topics for this 2 hour workshop included: -definition of sustainability -why educate for sustainability? -incorporate sustainable education in the curriculum -increase the school district's sustainable practices -sustainable thinking in everyday life/behaviors -resources for EfS for teachers -discussions: concerns about (lack of) sustainable initiatives and what can be done It is our hope that the participants develop a personal rationale for sustainability, then be able to effectively educate for sustainability.

PDF: [PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SIGN IN SHEET](#)

PDF: [PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SUSTAINABILITY PICTURES](#)

PDF: [PD SELECTED SLIDES FROM POWERPOINT](#)

PDF: [SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOP ON DISTRICT'S FACEBOOK](#)

School District Foundation

10 Points

School District

Program Summary: The Highland Park Education Foundation (HPEF) began in 1996 with the desire to help Highland Park public schools achieve high academic goals and build for the future. The HPEF was established by concerned parents, community and business leaders to support and sustain the educational excellence of our public schools. The "Getting the Dirt on Eating Healthy" grant provided garden plots and much needed supplies at all four schools and gave students opportunities to study plant growth and eat the vegetables they grew. All four of Highland Park's school gardens were established in 2010. After about 4 years, some of the wooden garden beds and supplies (storage box, tools, seeds) needed to be replaced and the HPEF grant helped us do that. Another grant is in support of Camp Bernie: HPEF is a long-time supporter of the annual 5th grade trip to Camp Bernie, subsidizing approximately half of the cost. Students take a three-day, two-night trip to an environmental education center in western NJ. There they spend educational and fun-filled days exploring nature, sustainability, understanding our impact on Earth, and team building. For many of our students it is their first time in the country and the first time away from their families! Students return richer in both knowledge and maturity. With decreasing funding from the state, the HPEF has generously provided funds to many teachers who applied for grants to enrich the lives of their students. Other sustainability initiatives funded by HPEF include: establishment of a nature/wildflower habitat at Irving School and beautification of the Bartle School courtyard.

PDF: [HIGHLAND PARK EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION WEBSITE](#)

PDF: [HIGHLAND PARK EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION LETTER](#)

PDF: [6 CAMP BERNIE PICTURES](#)

PDF: [2 GARDEN BEDS AND STORAGE BOX PICTURES](#)

Climate Mitigation & Renewable Energy

Buy Renewable Energy

10 Points

School District

Program Summary: The Highland Park Public School District has been participating in the Alliance for Competitive Energy Services (ACES) program for a number of years. Attached is Voluntary Enhanced Renewable Energy Product Opt-In Form 2015. It is effective May 2015-May 2017. The benefits of purchasing renewable electricity include: 1) cost savings from electricity bill 2) clean energy means less pollution/carbon emissions, so it helps the environment 3) creates demand for more renewable energy 4) reduces need for non-renewable fossil fuels 5) it's sustainable

PDF: [RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY ACES CONTRACT](#)

Food & Nutrition

School Gardens

10 Points

School

Program Summary: The Highland Park Middle School Garden was established in 2010 with a grant from Sustainable Jersey. In conjunction with Middle School staff and parent volunteers, the Middle School garden which is currently shared with the High School, plants lettuce, tomatoes, green beans, herbs, peppers, and squash. The garden twines with the sixth language arts curriculum in that students read Seedfolks by Paul Fleischman, care for the garden, plant and utilize some of the produce. More produce has been donated to the Highland Park Food Pantry, as well. Students have also written poetry and stories in the garden and about the garden. Sixth grade social studies coursework has utilized the garden for students' Be the Change project in which students planted flowers, raspberries, and strawberries and presented their projects to the sixth grade community. Future plans are in place for students to study the garden for their sixth grade science course, as well. We also plan to implement a watering schedule on Google Drive and involve the Green Team students in watering the garden.

PDF: [4 MIDDLE SCHOOL GARDEN PICTURES](#)

Learning Environment

Student Participation in the Arts

10 Points

District

Program Summary: The Highland Park board of education, parents and the community are strong supporters of arts education in all the schools. High school students are required to complete one year (5 credits) of visual and performing arts classes. Sample classes include

drawing, sculpture, digital photography, choir, band, orchestra and music theory. Middle school students have one to two marking periods of art/music/drama. Elementary school students (K-5) participate weekly in music and art classes. All of the visual and performing arts teachers are certified and highly qualified. The impact of students participating in the arts has many benefits to the Highland Park community. The high school band performs during the annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day parades. Aside from entertaining the public, these performances build community and patriotism. The high school and middle school orchestra has performed in the senior center, street festivals and at a school for the hearing impaired. These dedicated music teachers continually seek new venues to connect students with members of the community who may not otherwise have an opportunity to enjoy live music.

PDF: [ARTS-SUPERINTENDENT LETTER](#)

PDF: [HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS](#)

PDF: [ALL 4 SCHOOLS PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS](#)

PDF: [MIDDLE SCHOOL PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS 2014-2015](#)

PDF: [HS ARTS PRINCIPAL LETTER 2014-2015](#)

Curriculum Mapping

20 Points

School District

Program Summary: During the summer of 2015, the Highland Park School District adopted the Units of Study Lucy Calkins' Writer's Workshop Grade 6-8. Professional Development on Writer's Workshop was provided to staff during the spring of 2015 as well as throughout the 2015-2016 school year. Additionally, time to map the curriculum was provided to staff who were paid to write new curriculum during the summer of 2015. This decision went through the administrative process, taking into account teacher need and desires for a cohesive writing program that meets the Common Core Standards for writing. Curriculum mapping occurred during the summer as staff met and determined a map, a design, through which they would map each mini lesson. It was determined through meeting, that each mini lesson should hold a common structure: a mini lesson number, focus, materials, standards, connection, teach, active engagement, link, and share. The decision was made by staff to utilize a Google Doc format to enable new members to easily access the mini lessons. There are numerous mini lessons, as each unit--personal narrative for example-- has 3 bends, and approximately 6 mini lessons in each bend, comprising 18 mini lessons per unit. Approximately 50 mini-lessons per grade level were written. The primary purpose in writing this curriculum was to take a very text-heavy curriculum which is universally acknowledged to produce powerful writing but to be very text-heavy and therefore, at times, inaccessible to teachers. In mapping this curriculum, our aim was to make each mini lessons very accessible and easy to teach at a glance. The effects of this curriculum have produced strong writing and have made our year very successful. Student work has deepened and staff has expressed an appreciation for the new curriculum. Utilizing the Units of Study from grades 3-8 produces a vertical articulation and a common language that supports writing instruction throughout the district. This common language and common program has been a missing component in our district. Writing this curriculum is essential to our new unified vision. Attached are a couple of samples of mini lessons written, one student example of work, evidence of professional development provided through the district, as well as time stamp evidence through Google Docs that this curriculum was written and implemented in 2015-2016.

PDF: [GRADE 6 ELA UNIT 1](#)

PDF: [GRADE 6 ELA UNIT 2](#)

PDF: [GRADE 6 ELA UNIT 3](#)

PDF: [GRADE 6 ELA UNIT 4](#)

PDF: [GRADE 6 & 7 WRITING UNITS AND LESSONS](#)

School Grounds

Biodiversity Project

10 Points

School

Program Summary: The Rutgers Water Resources Program provided the support and funding for installation of a rain garden through a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The garden will house native plants that attract butterflies and bees (pollinators) will be very beneficial to the ecosystem and the school will strive to create an optimal habitat. The Middle School has no budget/expenses for this project. The garden was planted on June 16th. 6th graders in science class helped with the planting and watering. They learned about the importance of native plants that attract pollinators to our ecosystem. Over the summer and into next school year, we will engage students in the care and maintenance of the native plant areas. The annual maintenance activities will be performed by facilities staff, teachers, students and community volunteers. Types of maintenance include watering, weeding, pruning, mulching and replanting. During the summer, teachers who work in the building and summer camp staff and campers will assist with maintenance. In addition, high school students who need community service hours will be encouraged water and weed the garden throughout the year. At least one teacher will utilize the new schoolyard habitat by creating lesson plans and activities for next year.

PDF: [PLANTING PICTURES1](#)

PDF: [PLANTING PICTURES2](#)

PDF: [POLLINATOR GARDEN PLAN LAYOUT AND NATIVE PLANT LIST](#)

PDF: [HIGHLAND PARK PUBLIC SCHOOLS FACEBOOK POST](#)

PDF: [RAIN GARDENS LESSON PLAN](#)

Green Infrastructure Installation

10 Points

School

Program Summary: The Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resource Program installed a beautiful rain garden at the Middle School and High Schools, with both schools sharing the same outside grounds. Science teachers from both schools were very interested in getting their students involved in learning about benefits of rain gardens and the role of native plants in the rain garden. This project is important and exciting because of the adoption of Next Generation Science Standards. Having a rain garden, a vegetable garden, and butterfly garden, offers students numerous opportunities to learn about and contribute to environmental stewardship. On June 16, 2016, RCE program associate, Sara Mellor, gave a talk to 6th grade science class about the benefits of a rain garden capturing stormwater runoff in preventing flooding and contamination of local waterways, how a rain garden works and the benefits of planting native plants to attract pollinators. The students enjoyed being outdoors and planted butterfly milkweed, black eye susan, bee balm, goldenrod, purple coneflower, blue flag iris, new england aster, etc. Funding for this project came from a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and

installation was performed June 13-16, 2016. Maintenance of the rain garden will be a joint partnership between the middle and high school science teachers and their students during the school year. In the summer, staff and campers from summer camp that takes place in the middle school will maintain the rain garden. Maintenance will include watering, pruning, weeding and replanting. The facilities department will assist as necessary.

PDF: [PICTURE OF WHERE RAIN GARDEN WILL BE INSTALLED](#)

PDF: [RENDERING-PRELIMINARY CONCEPT OF RAIN GARDEN BY RUTGERS](#)

PDF: [RUTGERS RAIN GARDEN PLANS](#)

PDF: [RAIN GARDEN PLANTING AND COMPLETED PROJECT PICTURES](#)

PDF: [RAIN GARDEN PUBLICITY/PROMOTION-DISTRICT FACEBOOK POST](#)

Student & Community Outreach

Green Team

10 Points

 Bronze Required School District

Program Summary: The Middle School used energy efficient appliances and recycled non-mandated materials. By purchasing 150 Chromebooks in the MS, students submit papers and homework via email. Several teachers place assignments, lecture notes and handouts online using a blog or website to which their students have access. This has enhanced our paperless initiative in both schools. Movie nights were sponsored through the High School and shown at the local public library were shown in April, highlighting several documentaries on environmental issues that were sponsored through a grant. Both the HS and MS had environmental education tables at the HP Earth Day Festival on April 19th, 2015. Food drives and social actions have taken place by the student action committee in the Middle School, a subset of student council. Wellness Day and Diversity Day are focal in the High School and Middle School respectively. Both the HS and MS received Capacity Building Grants and we additionally received Health and Wellness grants, allowing us to purchase water bottle filling stations. Additionally, as a result of these grants, both schools offer weekly vinyasa yoga for staff at Kinetics, a local gym. Plans to purchase water bottles and monitor bottle usage are in place. Staff professional development offers yoga for staff, as well. Our edible garden continues to be utilized and cared for by both middle and high school students. Finally, an outdoor classroom has been installed for both schools' usage. A student environmental club, as well as a staff wellness program is in development.

PDF: [GREEN TEAM DOCUMENTATION](#)

PDF: [GREEN TEAM DOCUMENTATION](#)

Community Education & Outreach

10 Points

 Bronze Priority  Silver Priority School

Program Summary: Highland Park Middle School partnered with Sustainable Highland Park and the borough for the Earth Day Festival at Highland Park's Environmental Education Center on April 19, 2015. Two fun and educational activities were featured. The "Is it recyclable, compostable or

trash" game challenged participants to place various items (including cat hair, pencil shavings, napkins, aluminum foil, glass jars, old toothbrushes and plastic bags) in the correct bin. They learned that many items are either recyclable or compostable and very few items belong in the trash. The other activity was a make-and-take greenhouse planter using plastic water bottles. Participants chose to plant a bean or sunflower seed. They learned that a planter can be made by using recycled materials (plastic bottles). The goal of this annual festival is to enlighten the public on living a "green" and sustainable lifestyle. The students met with the club advisor to plan and develop activities for the green fair, then collected the necessary materials (plastic bottles, recyclable and compostable items, etc.) and made posters for their tables. They also met several times with a representative from Sustainable Highland Park to discuss their ideas for activities and how to attract fair goers to their tables. The students did a wonderful job of promoting the fair by posting flyers all over the school, announcing the fair multiple times on the PA system and informing their families and friends about it. In addition, the school sent the green fair flyer electronically to all the students' parents/guardians. For the second community outreach and education, the Middle School once again participated in the Highland Park Earth Day Festival on April 17, 2016. Students offered fun and educational activities highlighting the many uses of cardboard and toilet paper rolls. They made a tri-fold display on "facts about paper waste and creative ways to reuse cardboard." The craft activity included making pencil holders, a desk caddy that can hold paper clips and post-it notes, and hanging decorations made from toilet paper rolls. Participants personalized their take home crafts with stickers and coloring with markers. Many people were amazed to find cardboard can be repurposed into something useful or to make decorations. This event was very well attended and was heavily promoted via posters, lawn signs, flyers at the library and other public places and email to students' parents.

PDF: [EARTH DAY FESTIVAL FLYER](#)

PDF: [EARTH DAY PICTURES](#)

PDF: [EARTH DAY EXHIBITORS/VENDORS SPREADSHEET](#)

PDF: [EARTH DAY FESTIVAL FLYER 2016](#)

PDF: [EARTH DAY 2016 PICTURES](#)

Civic & Stewardship Volunteer Initiatives

10 Points

School

Program Summary: 6th Grade Social Studies classes completed a "Be the Change" social action project during the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years and will be soon begin the project for this year. Students chose an issue they felt strongly about, conducted research to learn more about it, completed an action to support the cause and/or raise awareness, and presented their projects to staff, community, and family members. Examples of projects included a collection drive for a local animal shelter, anti-bullying lessons and sustainability lessons presented to elementary school students, collaborating with food services to plan two Meatless Monday lunch events, and working in the school garden. Several groups held a Health and Wellness day in which they presented projects to 7th and 8th grade students on topics including childhood obesity, nutrition, fitness, drug and alcohol abuse, and mental health awareness. One group of students attended a workshop presented by the water resources program at Rutgers in which they made a rain barrel and followed up by visiting 3rd grade classes and teaching them about water conservation. Students in Action, an offshoot of our Student Council, has done several fundraising events for the local chapter of CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children) during this school year. The events included a movie night and a school dance. Funds raised went towards gift cards, gift baskets, and interactive games for the children served by the organization.

PDF: [MEATLESS MONDAY LETTER](#)

IMAGE: [WATER CONSERVATION LESSON FOR 3RD GRADERS](#)

IMAGE: [ANIMAL SHELTER SUPPLY DRIVE](#)

IMAGE: [HEALTH AND WELLNESS DAY](#)

PDF: [SNOWFLAKE DANCE \(CASA FUNDRAISER\) FLYER](#)

Student Learning

Education for Sustainability Grades 4-12 Social Studies

10 Points

School

Program Summary: The concepts of global interdependence and sustainability are woven throughout the curriculum in our eighth-grade Global Civics course. After learning about these concepts early in the year, students applied them to current events by reading news articles related to the plight of refugees and the links between climate change and displacement. Students synthesized their analyses through Socratic Seminars in which they practiced dialogue skills. Later in the year, students will learn how public policy is formed and the rights and responsibilities of citizens to influence it. They will be charged with researching a current issue related to sustainability that is under consideration at the local, state, or national level. After considering various proposals related to the issue, the students will use their collective voice to try to influence public policy by writing letters to the appropriate elected officials. Toward the end of the year, students will engage in a Model United Nations conference that will include topics centered on sustainability. As they assume the roles of diplomats from various countries, students will work to build consensus for global resolutions on topics such as access to clean water, displacement, and climate change. In preparation for the conference, students will research the backgrounds and interests of their assigned countries, develop ideas for resolutions, and prepare position speeches. They will focus their efforts on finding sustainable solutions to the root causes of global problems. At the end of the conference, each committee of students will present its resolution to the entire eighth-grade class. Through the aforementioned exercises, we hope that our students will gain knowledge and skills that will help them to become informed and active global citizens. In particular, we hope they will be mindful of their potential to work toward sustainable practices on the local, state, national, and global levels.

WORD: [CURRENT EVENTS SEMINAR ASSIGNMENT AND RUBRIC_HIGHLAND PARK SOCIAL STUDIES](#)

WORD: [LETTER TO ELECTED OFFICIAL RUBRIC_HIGHLAND PARK SOCIAL STUDIES](#)

WORD: [EFS QUESTIONNAIRE_HIGHLAND PARK SOCIAL STUDIES](#)

WORD: [MODEL UN POSITION SPEECH ASSIGNMENT](#)

PDF: [GLOBAL INTERDEPENDENCE UNIT_UPDATED STANDARDS](#)

PDF: [STUDENT WORK_HIGHLAND PARK SOCIAL STUDIES](#)

Student and Staff Wellness

Staff Wellness Program

10 Points

Program Summary: A Staff Wellness Program has been developed at Highland Park Middle School. 1. To begin, warm vinyasa yoga is offered to staff members of the Highland Park School District, focusing on staff members of the Highland Park Middle School and Highland Park High School. Yoga is offered to staff members at a local yoga studio, Kinetics, housed at 409 Raritan Avenue in Highland Park. Directly after school on specified Wednesday, from 3:15-4:15, between the months of November and March, staff meet at the studio and take a yoga class designated for Highland Park staff. The class is intended to be progressive and build week-to-week in intensity. The response from staff has been excellent. It is a fabulous opportunity for staff to decompress, stretch, and become healthier. It is also an opportunity for staff to utilize downtown Highland Park resources. Prior to class, staff sign up on the Google doc, declaring their intent to attend class and Dara Botvinick sends out weekly reminder emails to staff, inviting all to sign up for yoga. As many as forty individuals utilized the yoga classes. 2. From the very beginning of the year Safeschools courses to ensure the safety of staff and students were mandated by the district to ensure safety for all. All staff members were given time and required to take courses on the following: Pandemic Flu, Asthma Awareness, Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Prevention, HIV/AIDS Awareness. All staff members were given time to take these online courses to be completed by October of 2015. Additionally, Saint Peters Hospital Mobile Unit came to the High School on Oct. 8, 2015 to give flu, pneumonia and dtap shots to approximately 30 staff members. This helps staff be current on their immunizations without taking time off to go to their physicians which decreases staff absenteeism. They take our staff's insurance so there is no cost to them. 3. We developed a Staff Wellness Committee comprised of our Health and Wellness Team Members: Dara Botvinick-6th Grade ELA Teacher Corey Carter-6th Grade Science Teacher Gina Dunatov- Technology Teacher Terri Mitchell- Home Economics Allison Ford- 7th and 8th Grade Mathematics Teacher Ilana Waltuch- School Nurse Irene Marx- Community member and Municipal Green Team We met on the following dates as well as informally, discussing our plan to further wellness in our school formally. 1/12/16; 2/18/16/ 3/17/16; 6/15/16 In these meetings we discussed creating a survey for Staff Wellness to understand the staff needs and desires. We also discussed incentives for staff wellness actions. 4. March 18th, Diversity Day was held school-wide. Planned and executed by staff, wellness activities included: a talk by Olympic running medalist Joetta Clark Diggs, meditation workshops, yoga workshops, tai chi workshops. Staff and students partook in the day. Staff has since expressed a desire to schedule the meditation workshop for staff members next year. 5. Corey and Dara met informally in early May and based upon the Wellness Committee's ideas, we crafted a health and wellness survey for staff. This was sent to staff via Google Forms on May 5. Staff filled this out by May 11th. We had a number of staff responding. In this survey it became clear that many of our staff have made some healthy choices for health and wellness but have difficulty following through. Thirty-eight of our staff, or 97.4% stated that they would participate in a Staff Wellness Program which organizes staff health and wellness activities. Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, as well as lunchtime were put forth as optimal times for such activities. Based on the survey results, allergies, back care/injury prevention, heart health, healthy eating/nutrition, physical exercise, sleep, stress management, and weight management were all areas of strong interest and concern for staff members. An optimal wellness activity would be 30-45 minutes. 6. After the results of the survey, the Staff Wellness Team met and discussed incentives. We decided upon gift certificates from the following locales: Dick's Sporting Goods, Massage Envy, Trader Joe's, and Whole Foods Natural Market. These gift card incentives will be given out next year by our Staff Wellness Team for attendance and accomplishments in our varying wellness activities: 5K runs, obstacle course race, lunchtime walks, yoga attendance, Pickle Ball play, and the volleyball tournament. The Staff Wellness Team will meet at the beginning of September to set the first incentive in place. 7. Many staff members attended CPR training to update their CPR certification on June 15th. If a vast number of a community are trained in using CPR and the AED, if a staff or student needs CPR, their chances of surviving are greatly increased. Taking CPR is an important step in ensuring wellness as a community. Our School Wellness Plan is in place and growing. We have implemented PD to improve our health awareness, have had immunizations occur on the school site for staff, have formalized our Staff Wellness Committee. We have implemented Diversity Day, a staff wellness survey, weekly staff yoga, and an incentive plan to utilize the information from this year's survey to improve health

and wellness for staff, continuing into next year.

PDF: [SAFESCHOOLS.PD.](#)

PDF: [STAFF WELLNESS SURVEY PART I](#)

PDF: [DIVERSITY DAY 2016](#)

PDF: [STAFF WELLNESS SURVEY PART II](#)

PDF: [CPR PHOTO](#)

PDF: [YOGA SIGN UP AND TESTIMONIALS](#)

Student Safety

School Travel Plan for Walking and Biking

10 Points

School

Program Summary: A Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Travel Plan for Walking and Biking at the middle school has the support of Keep Middlesex Moving and the NJ SRTS Resource Center at Rutgers, and was completed in June 2016. The plan has the buy-in of the school principals, the Green Team, and the superintendent. Highland Park schools already promote active travel through their own policies and programs, such as walking school buses and the bi-annual Walk to School Day, and the Borough of Highland Park benefits from a compact and connected street network with sidewalks. The plan will build on current conditions to identify short term and long-term actions that could be taken by the school, municipality, police department, and other organizations to improve the safety and ease of walking and biking to school. The plan will include all required elements of a school travel plan specified by the NJ Department of Transportation including a school description, a working group, a map of the school neighborhood, a walk and bike assessment, identification of the barriers and opportunities associated with walking or biking to the school, a list of goals, actions and priorities to increase walking and biking to school, and a strategy for evaluating progress. As of January 2016 the participating schools are conducting student travel tallies to record how students get to school today, and a working group is being assembled.

PDF: [HIGHLAND PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN FOR WALKING AND BIKING](#)