



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
Department of Education**

September 16, 2016

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: 2016-2017 Green Ribbon Schools**

The Virginia Department of Education is pleased to announce that the Commonwealth will participate for the sixth year in the United States Department of Education's (USED) Green Ribbon Schools (GRS) award program. The GRS award program is open to both public and private schools and public school divisions. The program is intended to recognize schools and school divisions that are: 1) reducing environmental impact and costs; 2) improving the health and wellness of students and staff; and 3) providing effective environmental and sustainability education based on sound science and civics.

The applications are intended to focus on measurable and verifiable results wherever possible and Virginia's applications, though based on the national criteria, provide ample opportunities for schools and school divisions in the Commonwealth to highlight Virginia-specific emphases and initiatives. Over the last four years, Virginia has had a total of eight public and private schools recognized by the GRS national selection committee as achieving this prestigious award. This year's state GRS application has been significantly amended to promote a more streamlined completion process and ease of use for schools and school divisions.

In order to proceed in applying for the USED Green Ribbon Schools award program, a nonbinding GRS Intent-to-Submit form included in the state application packet should be submitted electronically by November 4, 2016, to the Virginia Department of Education. The next step is to complete and electronically submit by December 2, 2016, either the school application or the school division application to the state review committee. An expert panel will carefully review all GRS applications and all state applicants will be notified as to their status on or before January 31, 2017.

Virginia is permitted to forward to USED up to five PreK-12 school or school division state nominations. Of these five total nominees, at least one must be a private school and one must be a school or school division with schools that have at least 40 percent of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (either Title I or Title I eligible). After a national selection committee has reviewed all participating states' nominees, USED will recognize 50 or more national GRS awardees. Of Virginia's five state nominees for 2016-2017, potentially all may be designated as national GRS awardees. The new cohort of GRS recipients will be invited to an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. in July 2017.

Additional information about the USED Green Ribbon Schools program can be found on the Virginia Department of Education [Green Ribbon Schools](#) Web site. The GRS applications must be completed and received electronically in .pdf format by the Virginia Department of Education by Friday, December 2, 2016, no later than 4 p.m. For additional information, please contact Eric M. Rhoades, Director, Office of Science and Health Education, by email at [Eric.Rhoades@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Eric.Rhoades@doe.virginia.gov) or by telephone at (804) 786-2481.

SRS/EMR/rt

Attachments:

- A. [2016-2017 Virginia Green Ribbon School Application](#) (Word)
- B. [2016-2017 Virginia Green Ribbon School Division Application](#) (Word)

