



EDUCATION

## Atlanta area schools win federal environmental award

By Ty Tagami

April 22, 2016



Several metro Atlanta schools and the Georgia Institute of Technology are being honored by the U.S. Department of Education for environmentally-friendly efforts.

In Atlanta, Tech, the Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School and Paideia were named Green Ribbon Schools. The rest of Georgia was represented by Pharr Elementary in Snellville and the City Schools of Decatur.

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Tech was recognized for sustainability initiatives, including a green cleaning program with a 56 percent reduction in chemical use from 2008 through 2014. The Atlanta Neighborhood

Charter got kudos for LED lights, low-flow plumbing fixtures, energy efficient windows plus a farm to school program with a farm tended by middle school students. Paideia has one of the first LEED-certified school buildings in Atlanta with geothermal heating, and was recognized for community outreach by parents and students

Pharr, in Gwinnett County, has energy-efficient upgrades including occupancy sensors linked to air handlers plus lighting retrofits in all classrooms. Ninety percent of students walk or ride the bus, and outdoor learning areas cover nearly half the grounds, with a greenhouse and a garden fed by rainwater from the roof.

The Decatur school system just east of Atlanta, in DeKalb County, has cut its energy use and has a farm to school program with food grown at all schools, a vibrant “walk and roll” to school program and a curriculum infused with environmentalism. The school district has also eliminated use of “harsh” chemicals and cleaners.

## About the Author



**Ty Tagami**



Ty Tagami is a staff writer for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Since joining the newspaper in 2002, he has written about everything from hurricanes to homelessness. He has deep experience covering local government and education, and can often be found under the Gold Dome when lawmakers meet or in a school somewhere in the state.

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LOCAL NEWS

# Two schools win national “green” award for building and education

By Ty Tagami

April 24, 2014



Two metro Atlanta schools have won federal recognition for environmental “sustainability” in education.

Arcado Elementary in Gwinnett County and High Meadows, a private school in Roswell, were named by the U.S. Department of Education as 2014 Green Ribbon Schools for “exemplary efforts to reduce environmental impact and utility costs, promote better health, and ensure effective environmental education,” according to a statement from Georgia Department of Education.

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Students have learned about composting and recycling while studying environmental problems and solutions. The schools will split a \$10,000 prize from the Captain Planet Foundation and Turner Foundation.

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LOCAL NEWS

# Cobb to get first "green" school

By Ty Tagami

Sept 19, 2011



A Smyrna elementary school will be the first in Cobb County to meet environmental standards established by the U.S. Green Building Council.

The cost of applying for a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification has discouraged Cobb from seeking one for any new school.

But, in a new collaboration, students at Southern Polytechnic State University will learn by doing the documentation, said Doug Shepard, a Cobb schools finance official. So a school to be built at Windy Hill and Atlanta roads can open as a LEED certified school in a couple years, he said.

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LOCAL NEWS

## Six communities get 'green' credentials

By Ty Tagami

Dec 1, 2009



Six metro Atlanta communities will collect environmental stamps of approval from the Atlanta Regional Commission Wednesday.

The two counties and four cities were selected from among seven that competed for the distinction, in the first year of what the ARC is billing as the first regional "green" certification program in the country. They will each be given a "Green Communities" designation because they took steps to shrink their "environmental footprint," such as reducing energy and water consumption, cutting the amount of trash and air pollution produced or investing in solar panels and other means of producing "renewable" energy.

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"It's a way for us to set an example for the region and the nation," said Maia Davis, who manages the initiative for the ARC. The agency is the regional planning and intergovernmental coordinator for the 10 core counties in metro Atlanta.

DeKalb and Douglas counties and the cities of Atlanta, Roswell, Fairburn and Suwanee – join Cobb County and the cities of Decatur and Alpharetta on the ARC green list. The latter three were selected in the summer. All of them competed for points based on 61 criteria. Last time, Cobb scored silver; this time Roswell won that honor. The rest got bronze. None has received a gold rating yet – not even Decatur, with its eco-chic reputation and its use of rain water to wash sanitation trucks and to water landscaping.

Roswell topped the list with a host of innovations, including solar-powered lighting in a dog park, a no-idle policy for city vehicles and a mandate that all new municipal buildings over 5,000 square feet be certified by the U.S. Green Building Council for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a conservation rating system commonly known as "LEED."

These measures cost money but they also reduce spending. DeKalb, which has a LEED-certified juvenile courthouse, a "lights out" policy after hours and energy-sipping LED light bulbs in nearly a third of its traffic signals, estimates an average annual savings on building energy bills of \$1.5 million. The county also makes money by selling methane waste from landfills to be used as an energy source.

There is a "moral and ethical expectation" for local governments to demonstrate resource conservation for later generations, said Kathie Gannon, a county commissioner who has advocated for DeKalb green programs. "The county needs to lead by example," she said.





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Davis, the ARC program manager, said one of her favorite projects was in DeKalb, where the jail uses ozone in its laundering facility. That reduces reliance on detergents, a leading cause of toxic "brownfields," she said. "This ozone system has so many environmental benefits, and on top of that they say the prisoners like their clothes better because they feel softer."

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