

## Appendix C: Award Announcement for Minnesota's School Environmental Health Excellence Award

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### **School Environmental Health Excellence Award 2014 Presented to Mankato Area Schools**

An award presentation will be held at 10 am on Tuesday October 28<sup>th</sup>, at the Intergovernmental Center, 10 Civic Center Plaza, Mankato.

### **Mankato Area Public Schools Recognized for Healthy Environments**

The Minnesota Department of Health has awarded the Mankato Area Public Schools a '2014 School Environmental Health Excellence Award'. The district has demonstrated a comprehensive school environmental health program that meets and exceeds state and federal requirements and guidelines for a healthy environment. Some of the key features of their environmental health program are:

- indoor air quality plan
- asbestos management plans
- maintenance schedules for ventilation equipment
- integrated pest management policies
- district chemical hygiene plan
- radon testing
- lead in water testing
- and employee health and safety training records

The district staff have accomplished much to protect and promote a healthy environment and effective learning conditions. We congratulate their accomplishments and thank the district staff, administration, and school board for serving as a leader for all districts in the state.

### **Award Process**

All public schools in MN were invited to complete a survey in the spring of 2014 about their environmental health programs. About half the state's districts completed the survey. Of these, 62 districts indicated completion of most of the criteria for a comprehensive school environmental health program. MDH invited these districts to apply for an award and five districts applied.

MDH reviewed the written award applications in June 2014, including the application from Mankato Area Public Schools. The application was submitted by Joe Meixl, the district Environmental Health Coordinator. The detailed application consisted of 22 questions, spanning a broad spectrum of environmental health areas. These areas are described further at the MDH website:

[www.health.state.mn.us/schoolenvironments](http://www.health.state.mn.us/schoolenvironments).

The Mankato Area Public Schools' application demonstrated completion of most of the criteria, and was selected as one of three finalists. To further evaluate their program, MDH staff met with Joe Meixl in early September. MDH reviewed his written plans and policies, and toured parts of the school building. The site visit confirmed that the school district's plan met the criteria for excellence in environmental health, and Mankato Area Public Schools was given the award.

### **About the Award**

Three schools are being presented with MDH School Environmental Health Excellence Awards in the Fall of 2014. They are Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Schools, Hopkins Public Schools, and Mankato Area Schools.

The MDH School Environmental Health Excellence Award is the capstone event of a 2-year project: 'Advancing School Environmental Health in Minnesota'. This project was funded through a 2-year grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. MDH developed a state plan, conducted extensive training, researched and wrote new guidance and articles, created a new website, conducted marketing, surveyed schools, and ultimately, selected schools for the award.

The MDH award is based on the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Award. The Green Ribbon Award covers three pillars: sustainability, health, and education. The MDH award focuses on the health pillar. We encourage schools that have applied for the MDH Award to take the next step and apply for the Green Ribbon Award.