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A Department of the City and County of San Francisco



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Press Release

FOUR SAN FRANCISCO SCHOOLS HONORED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE

San Francisco, CA – At a ceremony in City Hall, the San Francisco Department of Environment honored four San Francisco schools for their outstanding commitment to recycling and composting: Chinese Education Center Elementary School, French American International School, Thomas Edison Charter Academy, and Balboa High School.

“I congratulate this year’s four honorees and the teachers, principals, school staff, and of course, the students, for their leadership on Zero Waste and making our schools such sustainable places to learn, work, and play,” said Debbie Raphael, Director of the San Francisco Department of the Environment. “I believe that environmental leadership comes in all shapes and sizes, and these schools truly model a commitment to helping our planet that inspires us.”

The annual awards ceremony, hosted by the Department of the Environment, honors San Francisco K-12 schools – public, private, or charter – that have gone above and beyond in their efforts to reduce waste and promote greater environmental awareness and participation amongst students and staff.

This year’s awardees represent a diverse array of schools from across San Francisco who are leading by example. Chinese Education Center Elementary School, based in Chinatown, is recycling and composting 80% of their waste thanks to the commitment of their school custodian, Li Qing Yip, and the vision of Principal Victor Tam. French American International School, located in Hayes Valley, has a Green Ambassadors program to educate students about composting. The school also participates in electronics recycling, food and clothing drives, and Bike and Roll to School events.

Balboa High School's Wilderness Arts & Literacy Collaborative (WALC), a special program that integrates academics with environmental literacy, engages students in habitat restoration in McLaren Park, the sorting of waste in classroom bins, and field trips to national parks. Thomas Edison Charter Academy, located in the Mission, established composting and recycling during breakfast and lunch service and created a "Green Team" of students who help sort waste every day.

"Our Green Team members have become role models to other students and to our community," said Dennise Acio, Food Services Manager at Thomas Edison Charter Academy. "At Edison, we are integrating sustainability concepts into our education system by engaging students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Working with children reminds me every day of the importance of creating a sustainable environment for our future generations."

"The schools we are honoring this year are not only embracing environmental behaviors and practices, they are transforming the culture of their schools to be places where being good stewards of the earth has become a part of everything that they do," said Tamar Hurwitz, Environmental Education Manager at the San Francisco Department of the Environment. "Students are learning that their actions have the power to protect nature. This motivates them to keep doing more."

At the awards ceremony, each of the four schools was acknowledged for their environmental stewardship and presented with an award made entirely from reused materials sourced from SCRAP, a San Francisco based non-profit creative reuse center and materials depot. Students who attended the ceremony received Eco-Hero medals and enjoyed a special appearance from *Phoebe the Phoenix*, the Department of the Environment's School Education mascot.

The School Education team at the San Francisco Department of Environment provides free award-winning programs and curriculum to more than 20,000 students annually at all K-12 public and private schools in San Francisco.

About the San Francisco Department of the Environment

The San Francisco Department of the Environment creates visionary policies and innovative programs to improve, enhance, and preserve San Francisco's urban and natural environment, leading the way toward a sustainable future. By developing wide-ranging environmental programs, fostering groundbreaking legislation, working collaboratively with key partners, and educating the public on comprehensive sustainability practices, the department makes it easy for everyone in San Francisco to protect their environment.

High-resolution courtesy photos of the award recipients for publication are available upon request with the Department of Environment

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