



March 2, 2021

Dear Joe, Mario, and Manuel,

It is my pleasure to inform you that, together, you have been selected as the 2021 recipients of the U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Director's Award. Congratulations to the "Pep Boys" of Rhode Island!

The Director's Award celebrates an individual's exemplary efforts to administer U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools (ED-GRS) in their state. Specifically, the ED-GRS Director's Award recognizes a state education agency official who does the most to advance green schools by: running a robust competition process; connecting more schools to resources in all three ED-GRS Pillars; amplifying the stories of honorees; helping schools learn from one another; partnering with a variety of entities to bring more resources and expertise into schools; and exhibiting a dedication to exceptional school facilities, health, and environmental education through activities outside of the administration of ED-GRS.

For over ten years now, your leadership and dedication have been integral to ED-GRS' success. You gave ED-GRS a home in your state early on. You hosted an ambitious "Education Built to Last" facilities-themed Green Strides Tour in 2013. You have engaged stakeholders from various agencies and sectors to share sustainable best practices, select ED-GRS nominees, and celebrate honored institutions. You have worked to cultivate applicants in your state by formalizing the linkages between a school facilities grant program that you manage and green schools work, encouraging not only exemplary facilities practices, but also efforts to improve environmental literacy and wellness.

In this pandemic year, we find it fitting that the Director's Award, for the first time, recognizes three state officials from one state, instead of the customary individual. Together, you have demonstrated how we are "stronger together," particularly in the face of adversity. Your teamwork has paid dividends; by your account, Rhode Island's green schools have been among those in your state best equipped to handle the public health crisis.

We commend you for your work to advance safe, healthy, equitable, and efficient school facilities, wellness practices, and environmental learning. We look forward to highlighting your accomplishments during national recognition events this fall and to sharing your story.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Suarez Falken".

Andrea Suarez Falken
Director, U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools

