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Manhattan Beach school named one of the nation's 'greenest'

April 25, 2012 | 4:35 pm

At Grand View Elementary School in Manhattan Beach, the quest to go “green” began five years ago.

On Monday, the school was recognized for its efforts by being named a U.S. Department of Education “Green Ribbon School.”

The department chose 78 schools for creating “green environments through reducing environmental impact, promoting health and ensuring a high-quality environmental and outdoor education to prepare students with the 21st century skills and sustainability concepts needed in the growing global economy,” according to a news release.

The school has 32 programs, including gardens of native plants, trash-free lunches and a “walking school bus,” in which a parent volunteer leads students in walking to school.

“We would always joke about it,” Principal Rhonda Steinberg said. “But now we can say that we really are one of the greenest schools in the nation.”

Grades of Green, a local nonprofit organization, began five years ago as a volunteer parent group at the school to promote environmental awareness among students. The organization has since branched out to more than 24 schools in the county.

Recently, the group conducted a trash-free lunch competition among 12 schools. The top three schools, one in Whittier and two in Redondo Beach, combined to divert more than 4,000 bags of trash.

That sort of parent involvement, paired with an engaged student body and staff, created an atmosphere for these sorts of initiatives to succeed at the campus, Steinberg said.

“All of those combined is the reason why we are here today,” she said.