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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 30, 2017

MEDIA ADVISORY

Wayside Schools Sets High Bar for Eco-Friendly Practices

With help from local experts, district recognized by city's sustainability office

AUSTIN, TEXAS – Local charter Wayside Schools has been ranked as a platinum member of the Green Business Leaders program, part of the city's Office of Sustainability. Wayside Schools is the only K-12 school or university in Austin that meets the criteria for such a designation.

To improve sustainability, Wayside Schools enlisted Benecras, a local firm that specializes in green practices for K-12 schools. These measures not only reduce waste and help the environment, but also provide relief for tight budgets. As a charter, Wayside Schools receives around \$1,500 less funding per scholar annually, as compared to its ISD counterparts. Cutting unnecessary costs wherever possible frees funds for scholars' educational needs.

"Wayside has gone far and beyond with regards to operational sustainability by becoming part of the Green Business Leaders Program," said Zac Ziebarth, founder of Benecras. "They're the only district in Austin that is part of that community and implementing these practices."

To receive the green award, Wayside Schools enrolled in Benecras' "Essentials Program," a year-long full-service sustainability program designed to accelerate the school's green initiatives. This program implemented eco-friendly improvements across the Wayside Schools' four campuses.

One of the most successful new practices, the Papercut Initiative, reduced printing by 15 percent across the school network, and saved 82 trees. This method requires a two-step process to print. First, staff print documents from their computer, and then they must login to the networked printer to select the items from their queue they'd like to print. In addition, staff see the cost associated with printing the documents, and are encouraged to stay within a specific printing budget.

The next green practice that accelerated Wayside Schools to platinum status is the Eco-Waste Initiative. This is a composting program that involves scholar participation. In the cafeteria, scholars separate their waste, which is then composted.

Wayside Schools is a free public charter that provides an International Baccalaureate education to primarily lower-socioeconomic scholars in Southeast Austin. As part of the IB program, scholars are encouraged to care for the world around them and become global citizens. Keeping their campuses green is part of their hands-on IB education.

"As an IB school, we encourage all of our scholars to think beyond our community," said Matt Abbott, Wayside Schools Superintendent. "Becoming a green leader in the community is helping to teach our scholars about the impact they have on our planet, and how small efforts can help change our world for the better."

Please contact Halley Cade, Wayside Schools Communications Coordinator, by email at hcade@waysideschools.org, or by phone at 512-220-9182, with any questions or for additional information.

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About Wayside Schools

Wayside Schools is an open-enrollment, tuition-free PreK3-12 public charter school network that provides over 2,200 scholars across its four Southeast Austin campuses with an International Baccalaureate (IB) education. The network is made up of three elementary

schools and one secondary school. Its mission is to prepare scholars to be college ready, community engaged, global citizens through a rigorous, community-enriched education guided by the IB framework and personalized instruction.

About Benecras

Benecras helps K12 schools improve performance through a managed sustainability program. By partnering with K12 schools nationally, Benecras Sustainability Programs have helped K12 schools lower their environmental impacts and operating costs by 50% in the areas of energy, water, waste, and printing. To learn more about Benecras, please visit www.benecras.com.