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(Oct. 17, 2014) -- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency welcomed North Elementary School in Godfrey, Illinois, to the Agency's School Flag Program on Oct. 16.

The program alerts faculty, parents and students to the local air quality forecast to protect children's health, especially children with asthma.

North Elementary is part of the Alton School District. "By flying one of EPA's brightly colored flags each day, North Elementary School is helping to raise awareness about air quality to protect the health of students," EPA Regional Administrator Susan Hedman said. "Children are more likely than adults to have asthma, which puts them at greater risk from air pollutants that can aggravate asthma symptoms."

Each day, students at North Elementary check the air quality forecast for Alton on EPA's AIRNow web site and then raise a flag. The color of the flag matches EPA's Air Quality Index: green, yellow, orange and red. Green signals good air quality, yellow is moderate, orange means unhealthy air for sensitive groups (like children or adults with asthma) and red signals unhealthy air for everyone.

Flags help teachers know when to modify outdoor activities, which may include shortening exercise or moving exercise indoors when necessary to protect students' health. The flags also can help students with asthma take precautions when the air pollution levels are in an unhealthy range.

More information on the School Flag Program is available on EPA's AIRNow website:
www.airnow.gov/schoolflag.