



NEW YORK STATE ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD CASE STUDY

Dryden Central School District - Honored for turning a grassroots recycling project into a comprehensive recycling and composting and sustainability program

SUMMARY

Dryden Central School District received an award in 2011 for turning its grassroots recycling program into one of the most comprehensive and ongoing recycling and composting programs in New York State. After signing onto the national “Go Green” initiative in 2008, the district developed an outstanding sustainability program that involves all 1,900 students and 380 faculty and staff. Elementary students and staff work together on “Green Teams” to oversee all aspects of the Go Green initiative.

Students serve as Go Green “ambassadors” who supervise and manage the collection and separation of food-related compost, recyclables, and trash throughout the school. In the middle school and high school, a student-run Sustainability Club

involving 40 students manages improvement of the recycling and composting systems throughout the school. Dryden students demonstrate a strong desire to make their school and community and our world more sustainable.



BENEFITS

The environmental benefits are remarkable. The district is diverting waste from the landfill by removing and composting 105 tons of food waste and recycling 7.5 tons of milk and juice cartons. This saves taxpayers nearly \$8,000. The program has also prevented nearly 50 metric tons of carbon-equivalent gases from being emitted. The district is actively sharing their success in hopes of inspiring others to pursue sustainable practices. Students are environmental leaders teaching meaningful practices to their peers and community members.

KEY METRICS

- 115 tons of waste diverted from waste stream annually
- 8 tons of milk and juice cartons recycled annually
- Approximately 50 metric tons of carbon-equivalent gases are not being emitted
- Apple orchard and vegetable garden managed by students for school cafeteria
- More than 1,900 students and 380 faculty and staff are environmental stewards
- \$7,150 annual savings

ABOUT DRYDEN CSD

- Located in Tomkins County
- Four schools in the district with a total student population of 1,900

NYS Environmental Excellence Award: Annual recognition of outstanding innovative and sustainable projects or programs and unique partnerships that are improving and protecting New York State's environmental resources and contributing to a stronger economy

A MODEL OF EXCELLENCE

- Students sort waste, recycle, condense trays, and reuse paper towels to line composting bins
- High school students constructed a compost facility on site
- Students plant and manage an apple orchard and organic garden on campus
- Styrofoam cafeteria trays were replaced with compostable trays
- Ongoing recycling programs for used phones and batteries
- Actively promoting sustainability by offering free home energy audits, energy-saving promotions, and selling crafts and gifts made from recycled materials
- Students conduct waste assessments and energy audits at schools
- Partners include a farmers' co-op, Tompkins County Solid Waste and Recycling and Cornell University

HIGHLIGHTS

RECYCLING - A grassroots recycling-composting program called "Green Team," which is implemented by the students.

Waste from the cafeteria is separated in a "dump" line, where recyclables are sorted. Styrofoam trays are stacked to take up less room in trash bags. Middle school and high school instructors worked with students to build a composting facility at the elementary school. A "Go Green Team" in the middle/high school implemented a recycling program at that location. The team also developed innovative projects to help "green" the school and community.

Projects include assessing waste to reduce the amount of trash going to the landfill; promoting school and community awareness by sharing ways to improve sustainability; providing homeowners with free home energy audits and suggesting improvements for energy efficiency; reading weekly green tips during morning announcements; making presentations at community meetings; and emptying recycling bins at the Dryden Dairy Days Celebration. The student Sustainability Club arranged lectures on sustainability by local professors and professionals. Students collected used phones and batteries to recycle and participated in a district-wide waste assessment.

SUSTAINABILITY - The students set up recycling at local events, had an informational booth on composting and fundraising and sold plants and reusable grocery bags. They offered activities such as making tote bags from old T-shirts. Students planted an orchard of 12 apple trees and an organic vegetable garden at the school. Both are part of the local farmers' co-op and use sustainable farming methods. The Sustainability Club teamed up with a local university to distribute energy-saving bags to community members. The bags included compact fluorescent light bulbs, coupons from local businesses for energy-saving materials and literature on energy efficiency.

PARTNERSHIPS - Partnered the local science center and university; students provided a program called Home Energy Benchmarking, which offered homeowners free home energy audits.

FUNDING

This program was funded by a community foundation and the 4th and 5th-Grade Council. Other funding came from the school district, local grants and savings from reduced landfill fees.

