

**Case Study**  
**John M. Clayton Elementary School**  
**School-wide Paper Waste Reduction**  
September 2011

The John M. Clayton Elementary School in Delaware achieved significant reductions in paper usage through a number of new efforts, including discontinuing the printing of weekly spelling lists and having students use white boards for copying the spelling list.

### **Background**

The Northeast Recycling Council, Inc. (NERC) was awarded a United States Department of Agriculture Rural Utility Services Solid Waste Management Grant in 2009 to provide direct technical assistance and training in waste reduction, recycling, and composting to rural schools in Connecticut, New York, and Delaware. Eight schools participated in NERC's Waste Reduction and Recycling (WR&R) project over the course of two years.

The John M. Clayton Elementary School in Delaware participated in NERC's WR&R project primarily to learn about paper use reduction with the goal of helping the school reduce its paper waste and paper purchasing costs. NERC met with school staff and provided resources on waste reduction, recycling, and composting. NERC worked with school representatives to formulate a WR&R Work Plan, outlining goals and activities to be undertaken through its participation in NERC's project. See Attachment A for the Work Plan.

### **Facts at a Glance**

The school implemented a paper use reduction campaign involving students and staff in helping it to reach a goal of reducing paper use by 25 percent.

### **John M. Clayton Elementary School Overview**

The John M. Clayton Elementary School is in Frankford, a small town with a population of under 800 in southeastern Sussex County, Delaware. The school has 540 students, drawing students from Frankford and surrounding communities. The school already was recycling paper and beverage containers, but it wanted to work with NERC to explore more cost effective options for collection of paper. Additionally, the school worked with NERC to establish and implement paper use reduction at the school. Its Recycling Advisory Committee members also wanted to explore options for a food waste composting program for when the school moved to a new location in the 2011 - 2012 school year.

### **Nuts and Bolts**

Through the WR&R project, a Recycling Advisory Committee was formed at John M. Clayton Elementary School, which included the Principal; Vice Principal; and a Teacher. NERC staff and a representative from the Delaware Natural Resources and Environmental Control also met with the Committee. Committee members set a goal of reducing paper use by 25 percent. NERC The effort began with a school-wide initiative to discontinue the printing of weekly spelling lists and asking students to use white boards for copying the spelling list into notebooks instead. Committee members also solicited other ideas from teachers and staff on reducing paper usage.

These simple steps resulted in significant reductions in paper usage and cost savings during the 2009 - 2010 school year. In the 2010 - 2011 school year, the principal announced that a monthly drawing would be held for teachers that contributed to the paper reduction campaign. The award was 50% of the savings on paper expenditures from the previous month.

### **Project Results**

The school continues its recycling efforts. The paper use reduction campaign helped to bring support for a school-wide effort to reduce paper usage by involving administrators, staff, teachers, and students in thinking about ways to reduce its paper use.

Advisory Committee members had initially hoped to begin a food waste composting program when the school moved to its new location in the 2010-2011 school year. This has yet to be realized, however.

### **Challenges and Solutions**

Challenge: Gaining teacher involvement and interest in recycling and paper use reduction.

Solution: The implementation of the monthly drawing helped to involve teachers. However, the school administration and teaching staff struggled to gain greater involvement in recycling and other waste reduction efforts.

### **Tip for Success**

Use of rewards to encourage teachers to adopt waste reduction strategies.

### **Contact**

To find out more about John M. Clayton Elementary, see its Website at [http://www.edline.net/pages/John Clayton ES](http://www.edline.net/pages/John_Clayton_ES)

This material is based upon work supported under a grant by the Utilities Programs, United States Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of the Utilities Programs.

## Attachment A

### John M. Clayton Elementary School Waste Reduction, Reuse, and Recycling Work Plan

#### Waste Management Goals and Objectives Identified

Goal One: Reduce paper use by 25%, which would reduce the purchase cost by \$161 every three weeks or \$2,737 per year.

##### Tasks:

- Discontinue the printing of weekly spelling lists.
- Ask students to use the white boards for copying the spelling list.
- Solicit other ideas from all teachers.
- Implement the monthly raffle with teachers.
- Tally monthly paper savings and translate that into dollars saved.
- Demonstrate the paper savings by showing equivalent reams of paper at staff meetings and student rallies.
- Make strategic decisions about the placement and number of printers and copiers.

Goal Two: Explore using the Paper Retriever collection program and increasing student involvement in recycling.

##### Tasks:

- Contact Paper Retriever for details on their program.
- Decide if this program is a better hauling option than your existing contract.
- Go out to bid when time to renew paper hauling contract.
- Create a recycling campaign with the kids
- Work directly with the janitors to request their input on how placement of recycling bins and collection of recyclables could work without unnecessarily adding steps to their jobs.
- Grow recycling in the school by presenting it as a Positive Behavior Support (recycling expectations).
- Create staff team to spearhead recycling program.

Goal Three: Begin food waste composting program at the new school location.

##### Tasks:

- Review NERC's composting fact sheet to figure out the number of composting bins needed.
- Begin discussing process for collecting the food waste.
- Decide who will be in charge of the composting program and ultimately responsible for maintaining it.
- Discuss information gaps to be filled and correspond with NERC on these needs.
- Principal Smith plans on calling Sussex Central High School in Georgetown to inquire about the details of their food waste composting program.
- School staff will explore possibilities of working with an area Master Gardener for the vegetable garden.