

Case Study
Sayles School
School-wide Recycling and Reuse in Arts
September 2011

Recycling programs have helped the Sayles School in Baltic, Connecticut comply with the State of Connecticut's mandatory recycling requirements and saved money through reducing waste. The Sayles Showcase provided a visual venue for students to combine reuse and art.

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 Sayles School agreed to participate in NERC's WR&R project in order to expand its recycling efforts and to promote better awareness about recycling and reuse. NERC worked with the student recycling club members 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

As a part of its annual parent-student event called "Sayles Showcase," kindergarten, seventh, and eighth grade students created art and science displays with used and found objects.

Sayles Elementary School Overview

Sayles School is located in rural southeastern Connecticut. The school is located in the village of Baltic and encompasses all of the Town of Sprague, including the villages of Hanover and Versailles. The school currently has about 375 students in preschool through eighth grade. The population of Sprague is just under 3,000.

The Sayles paper recycling program has been running for a number of years. However, little additional education or promotion had been conducted since the program's inception. A school waste audit found a significant amount of paper in the school's garbage. Additionally not all classrooms had collection bins. Sterling Superior, a local hauler, provides 60-gallon carts on wheels for the collection. Classrooms dump its classroom bins directly into these carts. The carts are pushed out to the parking lot on collection day by the custodial staff.

The school also collects cardboard and steel cans for recycling. Sterling Superior provides dumpsters and hauling. The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) sponsors a redeemable beverage container recycling bin in the cafeteria and in the hallways. The PTO also has a cell phone collection box, but little has been done to promote the effort.

Nuts and Bolts

The student-led Recycling Advisory Committee expanded its paper and beverage container recycling efforts through participation in NERC's WR&R project. Students assessed which classrooms needed paper recycling bins. Students also made collection boxes for beverage container recycling.



With assistance from NERC staff, students designed recycling signage and a recycling presentation. Members of the Committee distributed paper recycling bins (donated by the Town) to the classrooms needing them.

Students used cardboard boxes for beverage container recycling and distributed these to all classrooms. Students displayed signage around the school and posted signs on the recycling bins. They also presented an overview of the recycling program to all classrooms.

The Recycling Committee students collected the redeemable containers from the classrooms and used the funds for student activities. Students also worked with the computer science instructor to recycle used inkjet and printer cartridges accumulated from the school for student fundraising.

As a part of its annual parent-student event called "Sayles Showcase," kindergarten, seventh, and eighth grade students created art and science displays with used and found objects. The kindergarteners studied circles and shapes using bottle caps and similar objects, as well as creating junk art, models, etc. with used materials. The seventh grade created statues using 2-gallon soda bottles, covered with cloth and paper-mache heads to depict its heroes. The eighth graders used found objects to make biomes and other models.

Project Results

During the 2010 - 2011 school year, the Sayles Elementary Student Recycling Advisory Committee was particularly active and enthusiastic. Students set goals for ensuring that each classroom had recycling bins and signage. They provided educational presentations to all classrooms. The students were proud of their achievements.

The teacher advisor, however, was not supportive of the students taking on additional tasks, such as bottle-drive fundraising. Additionally, many of the students in the Recycling Committee graduated in the spring of 2011. Without additional student involvement and limited teacher staff direction, the beverage container collection from the classrooms was suspended.



The integration of reuse into art and science in the school proved very successful in helping to promote greater awareness of the importance of reuse and creative ways to reuse everyday items. The Recycling Club members were particularly proud of these activities. Moreover, the Sayles Showcase is very popular with parents, so the school's reuse activities also achieved a wide audience.

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: Maintaining teacher or staff support and dedication for advising the Student Recycling Club, provide direction when needed, and spend the necessary time to participate in meetings and events with the students.

Solution: Lack of dedicated staff at the school continues to be a problem.

Tips for Success

Dedicated students to organize and take action to carry out the recycling, provide promotion, and enthusiasm for reuse and recycling.

Contact Information

Information about Sayles School can be found at its Website at www.saylesschool.org.



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Attachment A

Sayles School Recycling Advisory Committee Work Plan

Introduction and Background

Sayles School currently collects paper and cardboard, beverage containers, and steel cans from cafeteria for recycling.

- All offices, cafeteria, and kitchen in the school complex recycle cardboard. Sterling Superior provides a dumpster and hauling.
- Classroom and office paper recycling has been going on for a number of years. Sterling Superior provides 60-gallon carts on wheels for the collection. Classrooms that have collection bins dump their bins directly into these carts. The carts are pushed out to the parking lot on collection day by the custodial staff.
- There is a redeemable beverage container recycling bin in the cafeteria and in the halls. Containers are collected for the school's Parent Teacher Organization (PTO).
- The PTO also has a cell phone collection box, but nothing has been done to promote this.
- Kitchen staff recycle steel cans. Sterling Superior provides a dumpster and hauling.

The school paper recycling program has been running for a number of years. Little additional education or promotion has been conducted since the program's inception. Not every classroom has paper recycling bins. A school waste audit found a significant amount of paper in the school's garbage.

School waste audit results also found a significant number of beverage containers in the school waste stream. Students would like to provide beverage recycling bins in each classroom. Additionally, students would like to integrate recycling with school goals for fundraising by sponsoring a school/community beverage container recycling drive. This would help increase recycling awareness at the school and also in the community.

Goals, Strategies, Tasks

Goal One: Reinvigorate and increase school-wide participation in the paper recycling program

Strategy: Develop school-wide education and promotional campaign.

Tasks:

1. School Recycling Advisory Committee members will develop a presentation for the recycling program.
2. Committee members will make the presentation to students.
3. Committee members will post signage on all classroom and office paper recycling bins.
4. Committee members will make posters and display throughout

5. NERC staff will provide Committee members with environmental benefits from the School's recycling.
6. Committee members will display and announce recycling and environmental benefits data.
7. NERC staff is available for additional educational and promotion as needed.

Timeline: February - May 2010

Measures of Success:

1. Increased paper tonnages, as measured by reports from hauler and recorded on end-of-school-year waste assessment
2. End-of-school-year walk-through waste assessment of paper in school garbage.

Goal Two: Expand school and community recycling, as well as school revenues, through sponsoring a redeemable beverage container recycling drive and expansion of beverage container recycling in the school.

Strategy: Develop and implement recycling drive. Conduct school-wide education and promotional campaign for both the recycling drive and the importance of recycling beverage containers at school.

Tasks:

1. NERC will provide recycling fund drive options, logistics tips, and other information necessary to implement the project.
2. School Recycling Advisory Committee members will determine the type of fund drive to be implemented.
 - One pilot event for potential expansion next year to annual, quarterly, or monthly event.
 - Multiple events before end of school year.
 - One day or multiple day event where donors can drop-off materials at a specified location.
 - Determine date(s) and time for the recycling fund drive.
3. Committee members will determine specific logistics for the collection and storage of the redemption containers.
 - Where will the collection occur?
 - Will materials be stored or transported following the collection.
 - If stored, how will the materials be stored?
 - Who will staff the collection and how many people are needed?
4. Committee members will determine how the collected redemption containers will be transported to the recycling center.
 - Where will collected containers be recycled?
 - Who will provide transportation?
 - If an ongoing event, will additional people needed to help transport materials?
 - Will others be needed to assist in cashing in the redeemable containers for money.
5. Committee members will discuss the expansion of the school's beverage container recycling, perhaps adding additional collection containers in hallways.
6. NERC will provide resources for outreach and promotion of the recycling fund drive

7. Committee members will develop outreach and promotional materials for both the recycling fund drive and to increase participation in the school's beverage container recycling program.
8. Committee members will record tonnages recycled, participation in the event, and evaluation and recommendations for program continuation.

Timeline: February – March, 2010

Measures of Success:

1. Amount of redeemable containers collected, as measured by actual weights of materials or recorded volumes of materials.
2. Number of school and community members bringing in redeemable containers to the fund drive.
3. Troubleshooting comments and concerns—documented reporting of problems, issues, solutions, and recommendations for continuing the drive next school year.