National Louis University
Digital Commons@NLU

The Green Committee | University Committees

4-1-2010

Green Teachers

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.nl.edu/green

Recommended Citation
"Green Teachers" (2010). *The Green Committee.* Paper 1.
http://digitalcommons.nl.edu/green/1

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Committees at Digital Commons@NLU. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Green Committee by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@NLU. For more information, please contact rob.morrison@nl.edu.

Celebrating Green Teachers

Green practices by NLU teachers set the tone in classrooms and schools in many districts. In this special newsletter commemorating the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, the Green committee takes a look at some visionary ~ and common sense ~ practices by preK-12 NLU teachers. Also ~ some quick tips for greening your classroom!

Rachel Wrigglesworth

teaches fifth grade at Hermes Elementary in East Aurora and is pursuing her ESL approval at NLU. In addition to recycling, Rachel's classroom has a vermiculture installation – red wiggler worms that munch away at organic food scrap and turn it into rich potting soil. "The kids love it," says Rachel, "and we're all learning a lot about living systems. Also, believe it or not, the aroma from the installation is earthy and pleasant." Rachel says that the same worms used for fishbait work great for composting – they're hardy, eat constantly, and reproduce regularly! The project has attracted the interest of other teachers, and the kids have become aware that this makes more sense than throwing food scrap into plastic bags which are then taken by truck to landfills, only to sit encased in plastic for decades.

Austin Schwartz

is employed as a school psychologist at Fremont Middle School, Mundelein, where he is faculty sponsor of the Green Club. Austin is a doctoral student in Education Psychology: Human Learning and Development at NLU, an adjunct, and president of NLU's Green Club. (Austin is an inspiration to all of us in the Green Committee – he is amazingly productive!)

Fremont's Green Club provides outdoor recreation and environmental education activities that teach students about environmental issues that affect their community, region, and the planet. Students engage in varied outdoor activities and stewardship to strengthen their connections with natural settings and as a vehicle for personal growth. Through club discussions and service-learning, students develop a sense of personal responsibility and global citizenship.

This year, thanks to funding received through the Illinois Zero Waste Recycling Grant, Fremont was able to initiate a three-bin recycling station in their elementary, intermediate, and middle schools. The three-bin recycling station collects worn-out athletic

shoes, e-waste (e.g., cell phones), and single-stream recycling.

"We have diverted thousands of recyclables from landfills to recycling agencies," Austin recounts. Worn-out athletic shoes are donated to Nike's Reuse-A-Shoe program. Reuse-A-Shoe uses shoe materials to manufacture outdoor tracks and tennis courts in impoversihed communities.

Fremont students sorting shoes

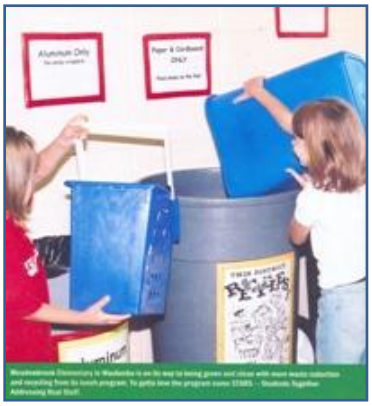
Cell phones and printer cartridges are mailed to Funding Factory as a fundraising initiative to support Fremont's media center. Other e-waste, such as cell phone accessories, are donated to Hopline, which supports victims of domestic violence.

Austin continues, "Not only do we have a single-stream recycling bin associated with our recycling bin, we have blue recycling bins in each classroom and the lunchroom. Green Club students have provided recycling presentations to elementary school students as well as to our board of education."

Ryan Bock and Dan Leffel teach science at Jefferson Middle School in

Menomonee Falls, WI. They are in NLU's IDS MEd. program. They conducted an action research project to determine the correlation between student participation in turning Thomas Jefferson Middle School "green" using the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Green and Healthy Schools Program, and how the students implemented these practices in their homes.

Dan and Ryan found that the environmental curriculum changed the way the students lived their lives. Students in the study learned to conserve energy and water, recycled, reduced car use, and were more involved in their community. They found that the majority of the students who took part in the environmental education curriculum and participated in the recycling program at Thomas Jefferson also improved their conservation strategies at home.



The Green and Healthy Schools program promoted the development of the necessary skills and expertise to address to develope attitudes, behaviors, and commitments to make informed decisions and develop community participation. By completion of the Green and Healthy Schools program, students at Thomas Jefferson Middle School had found numerous ways to contribute to a safe, clean and green school that promoted a productive learning environment, and in so doing, helped conserve and protect natural resources.

"As school districts and administrators look for ways to be more efficient, a green school creates a healthier, more productive environment for students, faculty, and staff, in addition to the obvious benefits to the environment and the taxpayer," explained Ryan and Dan. And along with turning the middle school green, plans are now in place to add solar panels to the roof of the school...

More information about the Wisconsin Green and Healthy Schools program can be found by clicking here.

Diane Harty teaches 7th grade science at Abbott Middle School in Elgin. She is currently getting her ESL approval and is about to enter the MEd program in Curriculum and Instruction. She and another teacher are the sponsors of Abbott's Environmental Club, "S.A.V.E." which stands for "Student Activists Value the Earth." The club has on average 15 to 20 members.

Over the past four years S.A.V.E. has initiated numerous school and community recycling programs. "One year we held the wildly popular "Share and Wear" program, in which we collected 675 pairs of gently-used jeans for children, young adults, and adults and gave them to three Head Start facilities in Elgin. Students who brought in jeans were allowed to wear jeans instead of their uniform pants on a specific day!"

explains Diane. In addition, they collect and recycle: printer cartridges, cell phones, mp3 players, batteries, eyeglasses, gym shoes, bottle caps, plastic bottles, aluminum cans, and paper milk cartons.

If you're not impressed yet, they have even created a disposal system for non-recyclable styrofoam trays! Since styrofoam isn't currently recycled, the club devised a system to pack and dispose of the trays so that they take up less volume, saving on disposal costs. (The goal, however, is to have the school purchase only recyclable items.)

During Earth Week, the club raises funds through selling "Green Grams" which allow kids to send each other an earth- friendly note and a lollipop with an earth-centered message. The club also sells pencils and rulers made of recycled materials and earth-friendly bracelets (which earn extra credit points on science quizzes!).

S.A.V.E. holds an annual Earth Week Raffle, with prizes including family passes to the Shedd Aquarium and Brookfield Zoo, tickets to Disney movies "Earth" and "Oceans," and much more. "The money we raise allows us to plant trees and butterfly gardens on our school grounds, go on club field trips, and provide materials for future environmental programs," Diane explains. They also have an "Earth Tip of the Day," which is read daily during lunch time announcements.

This year, S.A.V.E. is also collecting clothing, shoes, towels, sheets, blankets, and pillows to donate. They have placed a large, very visible red bin on the perimeter of the school property, encouraging the community to participate too.

S.A.V.E.'s students are very invested, dedicated members. "The real gratification we get is seeing the joy on our students' faces when they admire the colorful blossoming cherry trees that have been planted by the environmental club."

Diane concludes, "It's a small piece of the fabric that makes Abbott Middle School a wonderful tapestry."

Green your Classroom!

**No onsite recycling available? Take turns collecting recyclables and taking them to your residential recycling location. .

** Reuse paper from computer printer errors

** CARPOOL with colleagues ~ or try the bike!

**Get to know Metra, RTA, and PACE!

Chicagoland has some of the best public transportation in the nation!

**Bring CFC bulbs to Home Depot – all their stores accept unbroken CFC bulbs!

TEACHERS LEAD THE WAY, ON EARTH DAY and EVERY DAY!

from The Green Committee

Kristin Lems/*, Newsletter editor