

Egg Harbor Township School District Green Team Initiatives

As the largest school district in Atlantic County, Egg Harbor Township School District understands the importance of conserving resources and protecting our environment. Testimony to our commitment, among the nearly 7,500 students and approximately 750 full and part-time employees, are the often unique and innovative conservation efforts that can be found in every office and school in the division.

Sustainable Goals

Goal 1: Integrate sustainable practices in the classrooms and throughout the District.

In 2015, a district-wide Green Team of teacher and staff member volunteers was formed to meet on a regular basis for the purpose of implementing sustainability practices into classroom instruction and district practices. Green Team members are committed to fostering the principles of environmental, economic and social stewardship through the incorporation of sustainable practices.

Goal 2: Educate the public about the importance of sustainability.

Each of the 10 district schools has a volunteer Green Team member tasked with increasing sustainability awareness throughout the school. Through their leadership, many of our elementary, middle and high schools have developed programs or clubs addressing the issue of sustainability.

Goal 3: Recycling

Recycling stations have been implemented at each school cafeteria with uniform station canisters that will remain consistent through all grade levels so that by the time elementary school children reach middle and high school, they will inherently know what goes where.

Additionally, Green Team members will work with the district's facilities department to 'green' the district's outdoor events including athletic events, graduation ceremonies, 'Fun Days', festivals, et al with new signage and recycling containers to encourage proper disposal.

Goal 4: 'No Foam Cafeteria Zone' grant program

Green Team members have met during district-wide Professional Development days to brainstorm ideas for eliminating polystyrene (foam) from all cafeterias, without negatively affecting the school budget; creating district-wide awareness about the importance of eliminating foam products; and how students will be tasked with problem solving using STEM activities. Polystyrene cafeteria trays and products are not recycled by our local Atlantic County Utilities Authority, are not biodegradable, and contribute to the amount of trash that is hauled to the dump. Data tracking by various school Green Team leaders found that more than 7,300 trays per day (or 1.3 million trays per year) are currently being used throughout the district.

“Trayless Thursday” on March 24 helped to kick off Green Team program initiatives. Additionally a flyer was developed to begin to educate the students and staff of the importance of eliminating polystyrene from the school cafeterias. Alternative, cost-effective, biodegradable food service products are also being introduced. Students and staff will also be encouraged to choose NOT to use a food tray whenever possible.

Goal 5: Expand School Gardens/Grow Successful Students

Egg Harbor Township teachers have found School Gardens to be a powerful way to improve teacher effectiveness and boost student interest and engagement in science. But Science isn't the only thing students are mastering. Our teachers have found the outdoor space is also useful for teaching math, language arts, history, technology and engineering in a fun, less-restrictive environment as students research indigenous plants that grow best in southern New Jersey soil and weather; how early settlers depended on the Great Egg Harbor River for farming, shipping and fishing; use technology and math to layout the garden plot, and hone language skills while learning new words and recording what they learn in student journals. The gardens are also wildlife habitat safe havens where students learn about wildlife species and ecosystems first-hand. We also hope to expand school gardens to have a larger impact on student nutrition.