

Chester School District Green Team 2017-2018 Annual Report

Since its establishment during the 2016-2017 school year, the Chester School District Green Team has made great strides in its impact on not only the school district, but also the surrounding community. Not only had it received a Bronze Level award through the Sustainable Jersey for Schools Program, but it continues to make strives to increase sustainability in the Chester Schools; Dickerson Elementary School, Bragg Intermediate School, and Black River Middle School. During the 2017-2018 school year, the Green Team was made up of twenty two individuals, an increase of three members from the previous year. These members include personnel from all three district schools, the district board of education, and the Chester community.

In total, the Green Team has met a total of five times throughout the school year. These dates include; October 18, 2017, January 11, 2018, January 15, 2018, May 24, 2018, and June 14. During these meetings, the Green Team worked to establish which actions were completed, gathered information to submit, brainstormed new projects, and reflected on what has already been accomplished. In the upcoming meetings, the Team will discuss their plan of action for the 2018-2019 school year, complete any outstanding projects, and finish all necessary documentation for the 2017-2018 submission.

One of the biggest undertakings that the Chester School District's Green Team has accomplished this year was establishing gardens in each of the schools and began working to build one at Black River Middle School. In Black River Middle School, the Team is partnering with a student working to complete her Girl Scout Silver Award project by installing air plants throughout the school. These plants will be utilized in the science classroom, to provide better air

quality for the school, and be incorporated into lesson across the curriculum. In Bragg School, the Environmental Club, along with the support of the Green Team and the Chester Educational Foundation, has completed their project to install an aeroponic garden. Through this garden, teachers of grades 3 through 5 will complete lessons in all subject areas with their students as well as use the garden as an opportunity to learn about growing their own food and making healthy food choices. Lastly, in Dickerson Elementary School, the Green Team aided the installation of a school garden in which students will learn about plants, growing their own foods, and making smart eating choices. By installing these gardens in all three schools, the Green Team is allowing students to gain a hands-on learning experiences across the curriculum as well as instilling ecologically friendly habits in each child.

Another accomplishment made by the Green Team is the expansion of our Staff Wellness Program. Not only has the program continued to offer the same benefits as it has last year, but has also begun the work of building a fitness center for staff to use in Black River Middle School. This center is being built through donations of exercise equipment from staff and surrounding community members. By having recycled yet still working equipment, we are able to ensure that the site keeps costs to a minimum and the equipment goes to good use. In addition, the Green Team continued initiatives set in the past year. The Chester School District has remained paperless in its payroll and purchase order operations and continued to purchase and use recycled paper. The Team has continued to offer Green Training for all staff and has encouraged teachers to implement sustainability into their classrooms. Through the Employee Wellness Program, the Team has offered classes with a registered dietician to our employees.

Goals that the Green Team has established for the upcoming 2018-2019 school year contain both goals that were not accomplished during the past year as well as new goals. One of the new goals that the team hopes to accomplish is to create a mindfulness program in order to better help students and staff. This program will aid in mental health and create an overall mindful environment. Another goal is to continue on the water bottle initiative. This will be done through working to reduce the amount of plastic water bottles thrown away in all three district schools. Finally, the last goal is to continue to offer more sustainable professional development for our staff. This will allow them to learn about sustainability issues and be able to take that back into their own classrooms and pass the knowledge down to our students.

Over the past year, the Green Team has been able to accomplish a great deal and has its sights set high for the upcoming school year. The successes of the team provides motivation to continue the program and create new and innovative projects to complete. With more meetings in place for the remainder of the year, the Team will continue to strive for completing more projects and initiatives in order to make the Chester School District a greener, healthier, and more sustainable district.