

Ogdensburg School District

Ogdensburg, Sussex County

Ogdensburg is a single-building district located in northwestern New Jersey, a part of the state with a healthy bear population. This was an important consideration, given the district's waste diversion sustainability initiative. Due to the curious wildlife, the NJSSP team leaders focused on indoor efforts such as paper reduction, food service and increased recycling rates; outdoor composting was not feasible until safety could be guaranteed.

The operations of a school/district involve everything from staff to resources to curriculum. Although the original team leader was in an administrative position, leadership was transferred to two teachers for the remaining 18 months of the project. Their work focused on waste diversion and increasing environmental literacy. During this time, the teachers coordinated Green Apple Day of Service events, submitted a Green Ribbon School application, expanded the district's book collection to include more environmental texts and initiated negotiations with the food service provider. The focus established by the principal/superintendent, allowed the newer team leaders to maintain momentum and build off a unified approach. Over three years they highlighted successes and communicated to students, parents and staff that their effort was impactful.

Operations with students, parents and staff were easier to manage than working with outside vendors. For example, district stakeholders wanted to transition from single-use trays to reusable, washable trays during lunch periods. Their food service vendor was resistant to change for many reasons and the district had to weigh the benefits and drawbacks, especially the increased lunch costs that would be passed on to students' families. In a case such as this, it is critical to include contracted vendors who could assist with sustainability efforts at the outset of your discussions. Together the principal/superintendent, district green team, board of education and food service vendor could have openly discussed their goals and evaluated solutions to meet the needs of their community and environmental efforts.

While these negotiations are on-going, the team leaders continue with district-wide events, environmental education and community awareness efforts.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE

Reduce outbound waste by **10%**

SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

positive outlook
ability to event plan, analyze and to be able to objectively evaluate projects and progress



WORDS OF WISDOM

Have a team in place that will be willing to take on a project challenge for many years. It will not get done in one year. Time and planning are key. Engage many people at all levels to progress the plan faster and easier.

Michelle Cooper
and Claudia Lenscak,
team leaders

