

TrashMasters!™
Team **Up** to Clean **Up**



High School Division
Queens Borough
Winner

Maspeth High School

2012 GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS

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Department of Sanitation
Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling
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2012 Golden Apple Awards Contest Entry Judging Info

(This sheet prepared for judges' use by DSNY BWPRR)



ID Info: 12028
School: Maspeth High School
Grade Division: HS
Borough: Q

Golden Shovel Award contestant
(for borough Master School Composter)

2012 Project Entries received for:

School Population: total # 240

TrashMasters! Super Recyclers Received:

TrashMasters! Reduce & Reuse Challenge Received:

TrashMasters! Team Up to Clean Up Received: 5/1/2012
Maspeth High School Green Club

In its inaugural year, the Maspeth HS Green Club undertook a wide variety of cleanup and gardening projects, tying students' efforts to the Living Environment curriculum. Seven of these projects are showcased in this entry: Indoor Learning Garden; Graffiti Removal; Campus Cleanups; Persuasive Letter Writing; Recycling Program Outreach; Anti-Litter Public Service Announcement; Earth Day "Love Your Neighbor" Event.

Prior Year Entries:

first entry

School Contact Information:

Phone: 718-286-3550
Address: 91-30 METROPOLITAN AVE
Forest Hills 11375

Block&Lot: 4038860800
DOE Location: Q585
DOE Bldg: Q686

REQUIRED for Super Recyclers only:

Custodian: Ioannis Galatulas
Custodian's Phone: 718-275-2593
Custodian's Email: cq686@schools.nyc.gov

Sustainability Coord:

Contest Coordinator: Aaron Bell, advisor
Coord Phone (if different): 518-577-2244
Coordinator Email: abell@maspethhighschool.org; abell@

Principal: Khurshid Abdul-Mutakabbir
Principal Email: kmutakabbir@schools.nyc.gov

Comments (may not be relevant to judging)

Q686 METROPOLITAN AVE CAMPUS (4 schools).

Info Confirmed:

5/31/2012

Team Up to Clean Up Contest: Maspeth High School Green Club



Green Club Logo by Maspeth High School Green Club member Liezl Del Rosario.

SCHOOL INFO

- School Number: 585
- Official School Name: Maspeth High School
- (School Also Known As)
- Street Address, City, Zip: 90-31 Metropolitan Avenue, Forest Hills, New York 11375
- Phone # 718-286-3550, Fax # 718-286-4798
- Principal: Mr Khurshid Abdul-Mutakabbir, Phone #718-286-3550, kmutakabbir@schools.nyc.gov
- Contest Coordinator: Aaron Bell, Maspeth High School Green Club Advisor and Biology Teacher, 518-577-2244, abell@schools.nyc.gov
- School description — See Below

Maspeth High School is celebrating its inaugural year. There are currently 240 9th graders who attend the school. The following information appears on the Maspeth High School website:
www.maspethhighschool.org

OVERVIEW

We are a comprehensive high school that offers a diverse curriculum, several extracurricular activities and sports teams. Our mission is to introduce students to an understanding of the liberal arts and put them on the pathway to becoming lifelong learners with strong character.

COURSES AND PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Program Highlights: Extensive Fine Arts program featuring Visual Arts, Music, Dance and Theater; Advisory, Career & College Counseling, Exploratory Learning

Our instructional model is based on the Greco-Roman Trivium. We emphasize memorization, logic and technical speech. Students at Maspeth High School will partake in the following classroom activities:

Socratic Seminar – Students will sit in a circle and have an additive dialogue where they will use a text (i.e. The Iliad, Satyricon) to back up their thought. Students will be assessed on their active listening, locution and organization of facts. Socratic Seminar will be used as summative assessments primarily in English and Shakespearean Theater classes.

Debate – At MHS we use debate in our History and Civics classes. Students will participate in Team Policy, Parliamentary and Lincoln Douglas style debates as a form of assessment. We adhere to same rules and regulations that are used in competitive debates. In debate, student will learn to use technical speech to further their arguments while rebutting the arguments of their competitors.

Declamation – Students at MHS will perform 3 declamation pieces per year. A declamation is public recitation of powerful, persuasive and often political speech (i.e. The Gettysburg Address by Abraham Lincoln). Students will memorize a great speech and present it to their classmates for declamation 1, they will present to the whole school for declamation 2 and declamation 3 will be open to the greater Maspeth community.

Public Speaking – We strongly encourage public speaking at MHS. At our monthly town hall meetings, students will be encouraged to speak publically in front of the whole student body. Students will be routinely assessed on their speaking techniques and delivery. We will train students to be able to disseminate information using logic and reason and then speak using facts and figures in a public setting.

Hands on Science – Our science program at MHS will follow the sequence: Biology -> Chemistry -> Physics -> Astrophysics & Natural Cosmology. We also offer Earth Science, SAT Biology, AP Biology, AP Chemistry, AP Physics B and AP Physics C as electives. All of our science classes are 6 or 7 periods per week with hands on laboratory experience and inquiry work.

CONTEST ENTRY INFO

- Borough: Queens
- Grade Division (Elementary, Intermediate, High School): High School
- Contest Entry Title (10 words or less): Maspeth Green Club Hopes For Gold.
- Contest Entry Summary (in one short paragraph): The Maspeth High School Green Club is honored to seek designation as a *Trashmasters Team Up To Clean Up* award winner under the NYC Golden Apple Awards. The club has grown tremendously in its first year and has undertaken a number of projects that have benefited the school community and the larger Maspeth, Middle Village, Forest Hills, and Glendale neighborhoods of Queens. A golden apple award would be a great end-of-the-year acknowledgement for the hardworking participants of the Maspeth High School Green Club.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

- Student Participation: Core Group #: 20
- Student Participation: Total #: 30
- School Population: Total #240

CLEANUP AND GARDENING PROJECTS

Project 1: Indoor Learning Garden

Project 2: Graffiti Removal

Project 3: Campus Cleanups

Project 4: Persuasive Letter Writing

Project 5: Recycling Program Outreach

Project 6: Anti-Litter Public Service Announcement

Project 7: Earth Day "Love Your Neighbor" Event

Project 1: Indoor Learning Garden







Implementation

Why this: As the sustainability coordinator of Maspeth High School, I received an email about the availability of a limited quantity of indoor learning gardens from Earth Day New York. I told the Maspeth Green Club members about the opportunity and they enthusiastically agreed to apply for one. The idea of cultivating organic produce in the classroom appealed to them. We sent an email to Matthew Daly requesting the indoor garden and were awarded with one at the end of February. I left it up to the Green Club members to assemble the garden, plant the organic lettuce seeds, and care for the developing plants.

What we did: The Green Club eagerly opened the two boxes containing indoor learning garden supplies when they arrived. About fifteen of them carefully set out the contents which included a plastic "EarthBox" garden container, bags of organic potting soil and fertilizer, an aeration screen, aluminum tubes, steel chains, a beaker, lettuce seeds, seed starter trays, seeds, a fluorescent grow light, and a timer. Forty-five minutes later, they had followed the included directions and finished assembling the garden, replete with wheels. The next day a few green club members returned to plant the seeds in peat pellets.

Days later, the Green Clubbers watched with delight as the first lettuce shoots appeared. The seedlings grew rapidly under their artificial light and once they were big enough to plant in the larger garden, a group of six students trimmed the plants and transferred them to their permanent home.

The Green Club has over the last two months watered the lettuce and monitored each passing week of growth. They will harvest the lettuce within the next week and enjoy an organic salad they watched emerge from seed to table.

Project planning: I was interested in tying the Living Environment curriculum to a Green Club activity. The indoor learning garden was a perfect way to incorporate our photosynthesis, nutrition, and ecology units into the classroom. A side benefit was that all of the biology students I teach could see the productivity of the Green Club as the lettuce grew week by week.

Student involvement: The students received only limited guidance in setting up the garden, planting the seeds, and cultivating the plants. They were interested in sustainable, local agriculture and implemented the project with care and hard work. The 9th graders in Green Club watered the plants each week and even planted additional seeds in a windowsill garden. Fortunately, the growing plants

became consistent demonstration subjects for all of the 9th grade cohorts I teach. The lettuce was used to support topics ranging from the chemical reactions of photosynthesis (plants use carbon dioxide and water as reactants and produce oxygen and glucose) to nutrition to the way environmental factors affect gene expression (the plants in the garden grew far bigger and faster than those on the windowsill).

Promotion: The awarding of the indoor learning garden was featured on the news section of the Maspeth High School website (www.maspethhighschool.org). Snapshots were featured on the Green Club's homepage as the lettuce grew. The indoor learning garden packet was prominently displayed next to the garden during the March parent teacher conferences where I was able to promote membership in the Green Club.

Collaboration: The indoor learning garden was donated by Earth Day New York with support from Anvil Knit-wear, a clothing company that makes sustainable apparel and which has a long-term commitment to educating the public about organic agriculture.

Educational components: The indoor learning garden assisted in curriculum development for the following Living Environment Units (with standards in parentheses):

- Unit 3: Ecology
 - Relationships (1.1c, 1.1d, 6.1g, 6.2a, 6.2b, 6.3a)
 - Interactions (1.1a, 1.1b, 1.1d, 1.1e, 1.1f, 6.1a, 6.1b, 6.1c, 6.1d, 6.1e, 6.1f, 6.3b, 6.3c)
- Unit 4: Organization and Patterns in Life
 - Photosynthesis (5.1a, 5.1b)
- Unit 9: Human Influences on the Environment
 - Positive Influences (7.1a, 7.1b)
 - Negative Influences (7.1c, 7.2a, 7.2b, 7.2c)

The packet provided with the garden also had six lesson plans that I could take material from. They included organizational tables, facts, and illustrations. The six lessons were (in order):

- Lesson 1: Fruits and Vegetables, The Basics
- Lesson 2: Nutrition is Important for Plants and You!
- Lesson 3: What do Plants Need To Grow and Thrive?
- Lesson 4: Moving Up The Food Chain.
- Lesson 5: Organic vs. Conventional Farming Methods.
- Lesson 6: What is a Carbon Footprint?

The glossary of terms at the end of the packet, coupled with additional activities and web resources will greatly benefit my students' understanding and practice of sustainable living.

Analysis

What Worked: The lettuce grew wonderfully and we anticipate a healthy, tasty meal after cultivating lettuce for only two months. The extensive yield of the plants from a mere packet of seeds was unexpected and clearly demonstrates how sustainable, local agriculture can be brought to fruition.

What Didn't Work: The only thing I can think of is that over April vacation, when the plants were slightly overwatered by school staff, mold began to grow in the soil. Thankfully, this did not affect the health of the plants and was corrected within a week.

Applicability to other Schools: I have already told teachers at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School about the project after they asked me how they could receive an indoor learning garden. The indoor learning garden is an easy way to facilitate learning and a great way to foster pride among students. The only drawback is that the expensive units (their cost runs in the hundreds of dollars) **can't fit into every school's budget!** We were very fortunate to receive the indoor learning garden as a donation.

Measuring Success: This is a project that brought truly measurable success, as the lettuce leaves grew by the day and attained a length of six inches and more in just two months. My students were happy to pose for pictures next to the growing plants and to ask questions about the type of plant in the garden and its edibility. Many students in the 9th grade population became interested in Green Club as a result of the project as evidenced by the club's growth in March and April. The Green Club members who served as caretakers learned valuable lessons about agriculture and ecology and will soon be able to experience the joy of eating food that is personally tended to.

Project 2: Graffiti Removal



Implementation

Why this: The principal of Maspeth High School, Mr. Khurshid Abdul-Mutakabbir, received notice in November from Councilwoman Elizabeth Crowley's office that a vandal had painted graffiti on public property in the Maspeth and Middle Village communities. Mr. Abdul-Mutakabbir asked me if it would be possible to have the Green Club participate in a graffiti removal project organized by Councilwoman Crowley's staff. Though the project was scheduled for that same day, six students participated.

What we did: With the guidance of an off-duty police officer, the Green Club met with Councilwoman Crowley, members of her staff, and residents of the Maspeth community to paint over the vandal's tags. They were left on numerous buildings, signs, and post office collection boxes. The club took public transportation to the site (approximately two miles from the school) and with supplies provided by the police officer, painted over marks left by the graffiti vandal. Although we were supplied with a map with numerous vandalized properties, we were able to undertake just one graffiti removal because of fading daylight.

Project planning: Very little planning went into this project, which happened to be one of its great successes. The Green Club learned about an opportunity to beautify the surrounding community and

responded with very short notice. Principal Abdul-Mutakabbir and I both thought this was a great opportunity for the then fledgling Green Club to demonstrate its commitment to community service.

Student involvement: The six green club members who participated were able to get permission from their parents in a matter of hours to participate in the graffiti cleanup after school. Jia Chen, who would later be voted president of the club, was particularly active in initiating the project. She took the time during the student lunch period to gather members of the club to help out.

Promotion: The graffiti cleanup spread by word only, mostly in the cafeteria. After we participated, the club posted photos on the Maspeth website to show the green club members in action.

Collaboration: The graffiti removal project was organized by Councilwoman Crowley's office. It was especially nice for the Green Club to meet her and to speak to her about community projects she was involved in. Councilwoman Crowley, of District 30 in Queens, has jurisdiction over some of New York City's largest park spaces, including Forest Park. She was impressed with the initiative of the Green Club and was delighted that they could assist her in making her district, and New York City, better places to live.

Educational components: The students involved in the graffiti removal learned first-hand the Living Environment Core Curriculum's Key Idea 7 which states, "Human decisions and activities have had a profound impact on the physical and living environment. Since the students of today will be the elected officials and informed public of tomorrow, the teacher should encourage a diversity of activities that will allow students to explore, explain, and apply conceptual understandings and skills necessary to be environmentally literate."

The graffiti cleanup not only allowed students to see the specific negative impact one person could have on his environs, they were able to experience a positive outcome born out of quick planning, collaboration, and care. They were able to see how one elected official has facilitated change in her community and how it takes the efforts of an informed public to help bring about that change.

Analysis

What Worked: The post office collection box we painted over was restored.

What Didn't Work: It was a shame we couldn't continue painting. The fading light of November made this project a one-stop graffiti removal for the green club members, who had to be home at a certain time.

Applicability to other Schools: Any school interested in helping their community can contact a council person or his or her staff to aid in local projects. We found that collaborating with Councilwoman Crowley's office strengthened the relationship between our school and our surrounding community.

Measuring Success: The community was cleaned up in part due to our efforts. Having an active anti-graffiti presence sends a strong message to would-be vandals. The Green Club members each told me they were happy to team up with Councilwoman Crowley's staff and community members to clean up the Maspeth and Middle Village neighborhoods.

Project 3: Campus Cleanups



Implementation

Why this: The Metropolitan Avenue Educational Campus in Forest Hills is Maspeth High School's home for one year while our new school building is built in Maspeth. The club thought it would be wise to keep the school building's surroundings pristine, as the campus is just two years old. The daily influx and outflow of students from four schools that share space in one building has put strains on the sidewalk spaces and outside gathering places (i.e. playground, sports field, lawns). Litter, especially plastic bottles, cigarette butts, and gum wrappers, builds up over time and makes the campus look less welcoming for visitors.

What we did: The Green Club performed three campus cleanups over the course of the year and will perform a fourth in June. On each occasion, members of the club donned plastic gloves and picked up litter that had accumulated outside the school building. They used trash bags to dispense of the litter. Their cleanup efforts focused on sidewalks and recreational spaces. It is important to note that this project did not replace the regular cleanups conducted by school staff. It was entirely supplementary.

Project planning: The primary objective of this project was to beautify the Metropolitan campus and to enable the green club members to participate in a community service activity. One of the first goals of the Green Club was to remove litter around the school to encourage appropriate stewardship of the shared spaces of the Metropolitan Educational Campus.

Student involvement: The Green Club planned one campus cleanup for each quarter. They were able to acquire gloves and bags from the school custodial staff and on each occasion, cleaned around the school in a loop.

Promotion: The Green Club Campus cleanups were promoted in our Wednesday meetings. Pictures of each event were posted on the Maspeth website.

Collaboration: The Metropolitan Educational Complex’s custodial staff was instrumental in providing us with gloves and bags for the cleanups.

Educational components: As with the graffiti cleanup, Living Environment Core Curriculum’s Key Idea 7 applies. It states, “Human decisions and activities have had a profound impact on the physical and living environment. Since the students of today will be the elected officials and informed public of tomorrow, the teacher should encourage a diversity of activities that will allow students to explore, explain, and apply conceptual understandings and skills necessary to be environmentally literate.”

Analysis

What Worked: The campus cleanups were a great success. The students made the campus look litter-free and saw the power of their own hard work.

What Didn’t Work: The necessity for four campus cleanups demonstrates that students, staff, and visitors to the school continue to litter on the campus. Remedial action against the problem might be a great help but preventative programs would certainly assist in making the campus a cleaner place.

Applicability to other Schools: Many high school students have told me that it is the “janitor’s job” to pick up after them, whether inside or outside a classroom on the school campus. By taking initiative, the Green Club demonstrated that it is a schoolwide responsibility to keep shared spaces clean. Any school can activate in such a way.

Measuring Success: The campus was made beautiful because of the efforts of the Green Club. Students who attend other schools on campus seemed intrigued to see students their age acting as caretakers of the property. The Green Club was praised by teachers at Maspeth, at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School, and at Metropolitan High School.

Project 4: Persuasive Letter Writing



Implementation

Why this: During one of the campus cleanups, the Green Club noticed that the Metropolitan Educational complex trash removal policy was seriously flawed. The custodial staff bagged the building's daily garbage which included food waste and left the bags in a large unprotected pile overnight before pickup. Each night wild and domesticated animals would venture onto campus attracted by the scent of food and ransack the bags. By the next morning, most of the plastic bags would be torn and waste would be scattered everywhere. Worse still, milk flowed out of the opened bags like a small river and went sour, especially on hot days. The Green Club thought writing a persuasive letter to the Superintendent of Schools for District 24, Mr. Juan Mendez, might convince school policy makers to purchase a dumpster to store the bags of garbage and prevent wasteful practices. After all, not only did the daily mess look unsightly, personnel hours were being spent to clean up after it, plastic was being wasted to re-bag it, and human and animal health were put at risk because of it.

What we did: The Green Club composed a letter to Juan Mendez and sent it to his office in early February. It read:

Dear Mr. Mendez:

The Maspeth High School Green Club would like to bring an issue affecting our school to your attention. Our members have noticed problems resulting from the absence of a dumpster outside the school building at the Metropolitan Avenue campus. Animals such as raccoons, stray cats, and roaming dogs have been destroying the plastic garbage bags that are left overnight outside the loading dock and eating the food waste inside. This is very unsanitary for our school community and environment which doesn't benefit us or the animals eating the garbage. The animals have become very dependent, relying on the garbage as their food supply. They can also get injured by the food containers or sick from spoiled food. The custodians responsible for waste management are having a hard time picking up the trash after it is strewn on the pavement. Each day a staff member must sweep up the mess and repackage the trash in new plastic bags. This wastes time, plastic, and money. It is also a human health risk, especially in the summer, because the discarded food spoils. It is not uncommon to walk beside the school and smell rotting milk, which flows from the ripped bags and stays behind on the pavement even after the daily cleanup. The river of waste flowing from a pile of ripped garbage bags is unsightly and unwelcoming for students, teachers, and parents.

We think placing a garbage dumpster outside the loading dock would be an easy and relatively inexpensive solution. Then, custodians could simply throw the school waste into the container where it wouldn't be raided overnight. The garbage would also be concealed from the view of walkers and drivers.

Sincerely,

The Maspeth High School Green Club

Advisor: Mr. Aaron Bell

Project planning: This was the first Green Club project that aimed at a policy change for our school environment. The Green Club members saw an environmental dilemma and sought to correct it by writing to school authorities.

Student involvement: Jia Chen, President of the Green Club, wrote the rough draft of the letter with input from her fellow members. One week later, she submitted the draft to me and the entire club edited the document where necessary. After composing the final draft, the Green Club conducted a signature petition in the school cafeteria to gather support. Over thirty students signed the letter that was sent to **Superintendent Mendez's office**.

Promotion: The club mentioned the project to Kate Mooney, a guest speaker and staff member of Councilwoman Crowley who came to the school to speak to members about environmental issues impacting neighborhoods in Councilwoman **Crowley's district**.

Collaboration: Principal Abdul-Mutakabbir told the Green Club that he has tried in vain to remedy the same issue. We mentioned the persuasive letter campaign to Kate Mooney, who encouraged the club to continue advocating for change.

Educational components: The letter writing campaign allowed students to experience Performance Indicator 7.3 of the Living Environment curriculum first-hand. It states that students must be able to **"explain how individual choices and societal actions can contribute to improving the environment."** The Green Club identified a specific environmental problem and developed a remedy for it. Not only **did they seek to understand how the Metropolitan Educational Complex's lack of a dumpster impacted** the landscape, human health, and the health of wild and domestic animals in the neighborhood, they assessed the costs and benefits of their proposed solution. As Major Understanding 7.3A states, **"Societies must decide on proposals which involve the introduction of new technologies. Individuals need to make decisions which will assess risks, costs, benefits, and tradeoffs."** The Green Club knew that a one-time cost (that of the dumpster) would be offset by years of benefits to the Metropolitan Educational Complex.

Analysis

What Worked: The Green Club successfully brainstormed ideas for a persuasive letter and articulated their ideas in a convincing letter. They chose a recipient for the letter, researched his address, and mailed the letter and student signatures to him.

What Didn't Work: Unfortunately, the garbage pile at the Metropolitan Educational complex persists. A dumpster was not purchased for the school and we did not receive a written or verbal reply from Superintendent Mendez. The students were disappointed but have remained devoted to their cause. They plan this spring to **re-address the issue, perhaps calling Councilwoman Crowley's office or calling Mr. Mendez's office directly**.

Applicability to other Schools: Writing a persuasive letter that identifies an area in need of improvement at a school can be done by any class, grade, or club. Although time and effort are required, the ultimate cost is insubstantial (a stamp and a page to print on). The Green Club was proud to campaign for something that seemed reasonable and effective to them. Although they didn't effect change through their initial effort, they are determined to explore other options for the school that has housed them for one year. Perhaps a dumpster will be one legacy of the Maspeth Green Club as it moves to its new home. In addition, the club learned valuable lessons about avenues for change that it will carry into the future. Other projects will certainly present themselves and this first letter will serve as a strong platform for future action.

Measuring Success: Although the ultimate goal of the persuasive letter, that of acquiring a dumpster for the long-term health of the school environment was unfulfilled, the Green Club was successful in its effort. The members were able to identify a problem on campus, develop a persuasive argument, and pen their thoughts in a formal letter to a person holding power. This served as an interdisciplinary activity bridging what students learned in English class with what they learned in Biology.

Project 5: Recycling Program Outreach



Implementation

Why this: The Green Club students noticed soon after the club's inception that many students at the school were unaware of the formal NYC DOE recycling policy. Although the school had designated containers to contain recyclables and trash, along with printed instructions on stickers nearby, most students were indiscriminately throwing all waste, recyclable or not, into all three containers.

What we did: The entire 9th grade student population meets once per month for an afternoon *Town Hall*, consisting of a 40 minute period on the school's B-day schedule. The Green Club was eager to oversee the implementation of the DOE recycling program by educating the Maspeth school community about proper waste disposal. In front of an auditorium full of students, the Green Club members spoke to their peers and teachers about effective waste management. They demonstrated with props (a plastic bottle for the blue recycling container, sheets of paper for the green recycling container, and soiled food containers for the trash) how to dispose of common waste items. One

member created easy-to-remember word associations to make the task easier, deeming “green the color of trees, for paper,” and “blue the color of water, for water bottles.”

Project planning: Before the Town Hall assembly, Green Club students spoke to the head custodian at the school to ask if the school recycled its waste. When he said it did, they went about developing an action plan. At first they hoped to create tops for the three containers in every classroom to make indiscriminate dumping more difficult. They proposed outfitting the green container with a thin slot top for paper products and the blue container with a circular opening for plastic bottles. When they presented this idea to the head custodian, he told them that union rules would prevent extra steps in waste disposal for his custodial staff. The Green Club regrouped and decided that education could be just as influential as container manipulation. The club met once after school and twice during lunch periods to discuss how to present the DOE recycling policy to the student body.

Student involvement: The Green Club stood before the entire grade and used a PowerPoint to display the “With your help, it’s all falling into place” poster. They used props to demonstrate what and how to recycle. Before talking about recycling, Jia Chen summarized the goals of the Green Club.

Promotion: The Town Hall was one of the first opportunities for the Green Club to identify itself on campus. Before that, many students did not know that Green Club existed and still others did not know that the club met after school on Wednesdays. Seeing a group of students devoted to helping the school environment encouraged non-members to join.

Collaboration: Yanni, the head custodian at the school, spoke to the Green Club on more than one occasion about how the club could assist his staff.

Educational components: This project made standards 7.1a and 7.1c of the NYS Living Environment curriculum clearer to the students of Green Club in particular and Maspeth High School overall. 7.1a states, “The Earth has finite resources; increasing human consumption of resources places stress on the natural processes that renew some resources and deplete those resources that cannot be renewed.” 7.1c states, “Human beings are part of the Earth’s ecosystems. Human activities can, deliberately or inadvertently, alter the equilibrium in ecosystems. Humans modify ecosystems as a result of population growth, consumption, and technology.” By encouraging the recycling of resources, the Green Club lessened the human toll on the environment, even if at a small scale. If done across NYC school systems, such small changes add up! Advising their peers to consider their role in the consumption of resources and the disposal of wastes, the Green Club members promoted individual and group responsibility.

Analysis

What Worked: After the assembly, students at Maspeth High School remembered the word associations the Green Club came up with. More recyclables made it into appropriate containers than before.

What Didn’t Work: Not all students adhered to the recycling initiative. A more disciplined effort by teachers to monitor the recycling efforts of students in classrooms could have helped. A reward for “best classroom recycling” could be made available in the future as an incentive.

Applicability to other Schools: The New York City Board of Education recycling policy is clearly stated in Chancellor’s Regulation A-850; “All schools are required to recycle in accordance with the

New York City Recycling Law and Mayoral directives. **Chancellor’s Regulation A-850** currently prescribes how schools should implement recycling plans, including the principal’s appointment of a Sustainability Coordinator from school-based staff, who can lead recycling efforts and will be the point person for sustainability related initiatives. If a school is located on a campus (i.e., a building containing more than one school or program), the principal for each school shall appoint a Sustainability Coordinator. Sustainability Coordinators from each school shall hold periodic campus-wide sustainability meetings to coordinate their efforts with the custodian, principals, and other relevant school staff to implement the School Sustainability Plans.” **As the Sustainability Coordinator and Green Club Advisor at Maspeth High School**, I was ideally positioned to assist the Green Club members in their recycling project. Other schools seeking to improve their own programs should coordinate an effort between the Sustainability Coordinator, the Principal, and the Head Custodian. The New York City public school system is comprised of not one school building but over one thousand. Better adherence to good policy could have a truly noticeable influence on the resource consumption in our city.

Measuring Success: Many students learned about the specifics of the NYC DOE recycling program for the first time through the Green Club. Although the mixing of recyclables with trash still occurs, there has been a noticeable improvement in waste management at the school.

Project 6: Anti-Litter PSA

Green Club Anti-Litter Public Service Announcement for New York City Parks

Added a week ago • [Share this video](#)



Also listed in [Green Club](#)





A Message From The Maspeth High School Green Club

For a CLEAN and GREEN Earth, Please Do Your Part!

Implementation

Why this: The advisor to another very active club on campus, Ms. Anderson of the Maspeth High School Key Club, informed me that the New York City Parks and Recreation Department was holding an anti-litter contest. The task was to create a thirty second video as a public service announcement that would “creatively encourage the public not to litter and to use the appropriate receptacles to discard garbage and recyclables in [NYC] parks and green spaces.” Originally the Key Club was to create a script and complete the PSA with the help of the Green Club. When other projects superseded this one for the Key Club, the Green Club entered the project on its own.

What we did: Hoping to keep the PSA within the requested time frame yet still powerful in its message, I brainstormed ideas that would demonstrate the immediacy of litter’s affect on the environment. I envisioned a world where each litterer would instantly experience a shift in color and tone in the landscape once making the decision to litter, a shift that would ultimately make them reconsider. Knowing my video editing skills were limited, I took the idea to the Green Club students who became the actors and the videographers for the project.

On a beautiful April day, a handful of Green Club members joined me outside the school building to create the PSA. Two students acted out separate littering scenarios while two others filmed them on a handheld Flip Camera. The remaining students were informal directors and offered conceptual tips and advice for improvement. Even with a number of blooper-worthy takes, we quickly built a collection of quality video shorts for the PSA.

The edited scenes proceeded as follows:

Scene 1: Kinju, one of the Green Club students, walks on a path surrounded by green grass. The birds are singing around her. She finishes a plastic bottle of water and carelessly throws the bottle to the ground. The bottle drops in slow motion and strikes the ground, instantly triggering a shift in the landscape from green plants and blue skies to a grim black and white. The birdsong ends abruptly too. Kinju, realizing her actions have caused such a bleak change, turns and picks up the bottle. The moment her hand makes contact, she restores the beautiful green surroundings. The birds continue as before. Kinju walks away with the bottle, smiling in acknowledgement after having done the right thing.

Scene 2: Valerie, a second member of Green Club, stops next to a flower bed of daffodils and takes out a piece of gum. She pops the gum in her mouth and thoughtlessly drops the wrapper into the flowers next to her. As in the scene before, the wrapper falls in slow motion, and upon striking the ground, the landscape goes black and white, muting the yellow hue of the daffodils. Valerie swings her head around as she notices the consequence of her actions, startled by the color change and silence. She reaches down to pick up the litter and restores the color and sound to the environment as she does so.

Summary: After "A Message From The Maspeth High School Green Club" appears on screen, five members of the Green Club stand together, side-by-side. Jia, the president of the Green Club speaks aloud, "Every time you litter..." and all of the members add their voices in unison, "you make the world a little less green." The PSA closes with this text, "For a CLEAN and GREEN Earth, Please Do Your Part!"

Project planning: Apart from the concept, I did very little planning for the PSA contest. There was no formal script and the message that appeared at the end of the PSA was devised on the spot with the help of the student actors and directors. The Green Club participants capably took the idea and created the rough cuts needed in less than an hour.

Student involvement: I was very proud to see the students act out the parts so convincingly and to have other students get the best angles as new videographers. The participants were able to showcase their creativity and their cause while having fun. I edited the clips with the program iMovie.

Promotion: We received wonderful news from the NYC Parks Green Teens. They wrote, "Thank you Aaron for your awesome PSA and engaging young people to become stewards of our green spaces! We would like to display your PSA on our blog <http://greenteensnews.blogspot.com>. Also, we'd like to debut your PSA in a local outdoor movie night site in your local neighborhood so your students, families and friends can watch it!"

The video was also posted on the Green Club portion of the Maspeth High School website. It can be viewed here:
http://www.maspethhighschool.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=145789&type=d&termREC_ID=&pREC_ID=video

The Green Club can only benefit from such positive exposure on the World Wide Web and on the big screen in the local area. **The PSA cultivated the group's creativity and showcased its individual members' skills.**

Collaboration: Without the suggestion of Ms. Anderson and the Maspeth High School Key Club, the Green Club would never have known about the anti-litter PSA contest. Being recognized by the Green Teens of the New York City Parks and Recreation Department expands the reach of the club and provides the group members with valuable ideas and collaborative opportunities for next year.

Educational components: This project highlighted the Living Environment Core Curriculum's Key Idea 6 which states, "Plants and animals depend on each other and their physical environment. The fundamental concept of ecology is that living organisms interact with and are dependent on their environment and each other." Even if dramatizing the affect of a single littering event on the environment, the Green Club's PSA helps to clarify that humans are part of, and stewards over, their physical and living environments. Humans have a profound impact on the plants and animals that inhabit the Earth with them, and just as importantly, are reliant on those plants and animals for their

own wellbeing. The Green Club anti-litter video sought to emphasize the interrelationship between people and the environment and to indicate the power of choice.

Analysis

What Worked: The video was a hit with the Green Club members and with the biology classes I showed it to. The simple yet strong imagery and the positive group message were highlights. One non-member complimented, **“this reminds me of something I’d see on the Disney Channel!”** The video transitions and sound effects helped convey the message.

What Didn’t Work: The PSA ran over the 30 second time limit. It was nevertheless accepted and praised by the New York City Parks and Recreation Department. I also tried my initial video editing while visiting Hong Kong over April vacation. After coming up with what I thought was a desirable final product, the codec software in Microsoft MovieMaker incorrectly formatted the rough cuts to create the finished movie, splitting the screen. I had to redo the PSA using Mac software.

Applicability to other Schools: The contest was open to any teens age 13-17 in New York City. We were lucky to hear about the contest by word of mouth. Connections like this have brought us many opportunities this year. Other schools looking to elevate a new club out of its infancy should remember to keep their eyes and ears open for new ideas!

Measuring Success: Principal Abdul-Mutakabbir offered this about the video; **“It makes me SO proud.”** The Green Club members did not require praise but were happy to hear it anyway. For me, the main success was hearing the Green Club members say after filming, **“that was really fun.”** When people can take a stand on an issue, convey a message positively, and have fun while doing so, that is noteworthy!

Project 7: Earth Day “Love Your Neighbor” Event





Implementation

Why this: Kate Mooney of Council member Elizabeth Crowley's office suggested during her visit as guest speaker that the Green Club could team up with other volunteers to clean up Queens as part of the "Love Your Neighbor" Earth Day event. The Green Club selected the Edsall Avenue site because it was relatively close to school. They had also heard that Edsall Avenue's green spaces had been particularly hard hit by the neighboring "trash train" which carries garbage through Queens.

What we did: Four members of the Green Club met me at 9:30 AM on Saturday, April 21st at Atlas Park Mall which served as the command center for the various "Love Your Neighbor" cleanup efforts. Dori Plaski, another member of Councilwoman Crowley's office, met the Green Club there. As site coordinator for Edsall Avenue, she provided us with hats, rakes, and gloves. After a quick photo-op with other volunteers, we walked to Edsall Avenue to begin the cleanup.

The side of the road was lined with trash, especially non-biodegradable plastic containers and bags. It was evident that the nearby train loses a large quantity of the garbage it carries as it makes its way

through the borough. Additionally, trash had accumulated at one end of Edsall Avenue because of sloppy practices by a private sanitation company based there.

The group joined neighbors already at the site and worked for three hours to rake, scoop, and bag debris. Potted plants that had been placed streetside as part of an earlier beautification project were cleared of weeds and repositioned. The volunteers first removed brush and weeds before tackling the garbage hidden underneath. By the end of the project, **the "Love Your Neighbor" participants at Edsall** filled more than twenty large plastic garbage bags with trash.

Project planning: Kate Mooney provided the information for the Edsall Avenue cleanup by email after informing our club about Earth Day neighborhood cleanups when she visited as guest speaker. I contacted the site coordinator, Dori Plaski, to inquire about specifics. The Green Club met after school the Wednesday before the event to establish a meeting time and place and to distribute permission slips.

Student involvement: Four students volunteered their Saturday to participate in the cleanup. They took public transportation to Atlas Park Mall and devoted themselves to pulling weeds and clearing trash for three hours before receiving a donated lunch from California Pizza Company.

Promotion: The Glendale Register devoted a two page **color spread to the Earth Day "Love Your Neighbor" cleanup crews. The Green Club featured prominently in the photos. The student volunteers** also appeared on the front page of the newspaper's online component, posing with Councilwoman Elizabeth Crowley. Here is an excerpt from the online article:

The Glendale Civic Association hosted a Love Your Neighbor event for Earth Day on Saturday, April 21st. The event encouraged local residents to spend time outside enjoying the day, chatting and cleaning the neighborhood together.

Volunteers from the Maspeth High School Green Club, the New York Municipal Credit Union joined Councilwoman Liz Crowley's office and local residents to remove trash and debris from community-shared blocks. Many students and neighbors came out to rake leaves and weed overgrowth while others collected trash and swept sidewalks and drains.

The street revitalization and beautification project focused on a cleanup of public gardens, sidewalks and railroad sittings throughout Glendale and Ridgewood.

"Earth Day is not just about solar panels and electric cars. It is also about what we can do in our neighborhood to keep our planet beautiful," Crowley said. "Collecting trash, recycling and planting gardens go a long way to keep our City clean. I am thankful to the Glendale Civic Association and to all the volunteers who came out and made this event a success."

Photos: Michael O'Kane

Photos of the event were added to the Maspeth Green Club's photo album on the school website.

Collaboration: The Green Club once again teamed up with **Councilmember Crowley's office** to positively impact the community. Dori Plaski and Kate Mooney were both essential ingredients to the project. The Green Club members were happy to work alongside community volunteers (mostly residents of Edsall Avenue but also students of Queens College and members of the New York Municipal Credit Union). They showed how pride in community can prevail over environmental obstacles. One 68-year-old resident, Mary Ann, worked hard from start to finish.

Educational components: Key Idea 7 of the Living Environment Core Curriculum was put on display. **It states,** "Population growth has placed new strains on the environment - massive pollution of air and water, deforestation and extinction of species, global warming, and alteration of the ozone shield. Some individuals believe that there will be a technological fix for such problems. Others, concerned with the accelerating pace of change and the ecological concept of finite resources, are far less optimistic. What is certain, however, is that resolving these issues will require increasing global **awareness, cooperation, and action."** **The Green Club participants were at first overwhelmed by how much trash had built up on one short street in Queens.** Through hard work and cooperation, however, they revitalized a space and brought smiles to community residents.

Analysis

What Worked: The Edsall Avenue stretch we focused on was transformed in just a few hours. To see the number of bags of garbage produced was both satisfying and frightening at the same time, especially as the same street had been cleaned up before.

What Didn't Work: The volunteers were confined to one side of a fence on Edsall Avenue. Although it looked pristine following the cleanup, a large quantity of trash remained on the train side of the fence. This clear visual contrast made our efforts less fulfilling. It is clear that only a policy change (i.e. better covering trash in the open train cars) will bring long-term change. It is a shame that **repeated "trash train" runs will spoil Edsall Avenue once again and necessitate another cleanup,** whether on Earth Day or any day. Likewise, it was disappointing to see some volunteer groups leave after just an hour (or less) of work! The two Queens College volunteers walked away after showing very little effort, seemingly more interested in a photo-op than in the cleanup. It is striking to think how much cleaner the Queens communities would be with persistent care.

Applicability to other Schools: The cleanup was strenuous and is perhaps not the best activity for students in poor physical condition. For students who want a truly hands-on learning experience, an Earth Day cleanup is a great idea! The donated supplies (rakes, gloves, hats, garbage bags, water, food, etc.) ensured a no-cost effort for our club.

Measuring Success: The Green Club received a City Council Citation from the Council of the City of New York which read, "Whereas, a great city is only as great as those persons who give exemplary service to their communities, whether through participation in voluntary programs, through unique personal achievement in their professional or other endeavors or simply through a lifetime of good citizenry; and Whereas, such service which is truly the lifeblood of the community and the city, so often goes unrecognized and unrewarded; now, therefore be it Resolved, that as duly elected members of the New York City Council, we recognize that in Maspeth High School Green Club we have an outstanding citizen, one which is worthy of the esteem of both community and the great City of New York." **It was signed by Councilwoman Elizabeth Crowley April 21st, 2012.** The students were congratulated by Dori Plaski who wrote, **"Thanks again for bringing the Green Club out to help us on our clean up. They were great and we wouldn't have been able to accomplish as much as we did without them."** Others at the site noted how hard-working the Green Club was and the participants earned a

friend and role model in Mary Ann. All of the students told me they enjoyed working outside. They were surprised at how much they were able to accomplish.

Overview

The Green Club would like to thank the DSNY for awarding schools with Golden Apple Awards. The Maspeth High School Green Club is honored to be considered in the *Trashmasters Team Up To Clean Up* Contest. The seven projects listed above, even if not revealing every activity of the Green Club, give an accurate picture of our efforts.