

SUPER RECYCLERS



Honorable Mention
High School Division

Tottenville
High School

2016 GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS

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Department and City in recognition of your school's efforts to help make New York City shine.

City of New York
Department of Sanitation
nyc.gov/zerowaste





School Information

- School Number: R455
- School Name: Tottenville High School
- School Address: 100 Luten Ave
- School City: Staten Island
- School Zip Code: 10312
- School Population: 3914

Contact Information:

- Principal Name: Joseph Scarmato
- Coordinator Name: Allmira Lika
- School Phone Number: (718) 668-8800

Contest Entry:

- Contest Grade Division: High school
- Contest Entry Title: Tottenville High Schools Super Recyclers
- Contest Entry Summary: Tottenville High School took great strides to help our community recycle and cleanup the school. With the efforts taken by the environmental club, we motivated students faculty and staff to become more aware of how to properly dispose of their waste. Our goal is to help the environment and reduce the negative impact we may have toward our beloved planet.



Tottenville High School's Environmental Club



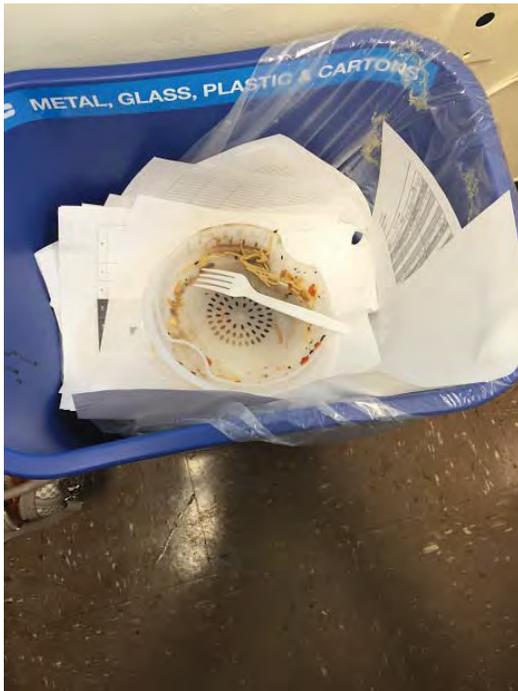
**Super Recycling for a
Beautiful Tomorrow**

Waste Prevention & Reuse Projects Implementation

- **What type of waste did you target in this project for reduction, prevention, or reuse? Explain why.**

At Tottenville High School, the Environmental Club felt that it was important to get the whole school to properly recycle paper and plastic. We want a school wide awareness that each individual has an important role to play when it comes to sustainability and our impact on the planet. The objective is make students and teachers informed about what items can be recycled and what is trash.

Our main focus was to make sure teachers and students were provided with a bin that is meant to get rid of mixed paper. Classrooms were already set up with a blue and black bin but they still weren't recycling waste efficiently. They used both bins for any trash they disposed of. No one really used the recycling rules. Our team set up a recycling center in every classroom, making sure each one had 1-2 green bins to get rid of their paper waste. The school has nearly 4,000 students and hundreds of faculty and staff. With a population this big, it is essential that we implement a successful recycling program at our school.



- **What did you do? How did you reduce this waste?**

In my own classroom, I reuse paper in a number of ways. I use the blank side of copies to write down notes, have students complete exit tickets or write out responses to questions posed in class. I make sure that every paper with blank space will be

utilized to full capacity. I also use paper as a desk liner when students are doing anything that are hands on such as planting flowers for the spring.

In collaboration with the custodial staff, the environmental club made sure all the blue and green bins had the proper signage. By labelling the bins, the staff and students can determine which items go into the green, blue or black bins. We also organized the bins into a recycling center in a designated section of the class. We asked the custodians which site would be most convenient to place the bins so that pick-up would be easy for them.



- **Project planning.** What were your objectives, and the planning and organization that drove this project?

With the help of Jacky Junttonen from GrowNYC, we were able to target our school's weakness—a lack of green recycling bins in every classroom and common areas. Together we were able to organize a strategy that would help our school "Go Green". DSNY had donated 96 green recycling bins to spear head our mission, but we needed much more than that. Our school is one of the largest in NYC so in order to really get our school earth friendly we needed to order more paper recycling bins.

After a conference with Principal Scarmato and Sustainability Coordinator, Gina Battista we came to an understanding that we needed more supplies to help our mission move forward. After a very productive meeting about the goals we needed to set, our next step was to ask Mr. Ryans, the custodial engineer at Tottenville to order another 200 bins so that we can fully equip our school for a recycling makeover. It was decided that we needed to have teachers and students work together for the program to work.



Club members are so happy to receive the new shipment of recycling bins. They are eager to help Tottenville become an Earth Friendly environment.

- **Student involvement.** Describe student efforts to plan and implement the project. Include activities conducted by classrooms, cluster, grade, school-wide, team, club, or afterschool program.

The environmental club was implemented in fall of 2014 with the help of George Padulla and Gina Battista. Club meetings are held every Thursday after school. I was asked to take over the club in November of 2014 and was eager to work with students who actually cared about nature.



Mary Sedrak, President, and Nardine Nasr, Vice President were strong role models that helped recruit many of our members. They worked hard to make sure that their fellow classmates were involved by advertising the club by various means. Group messages, posters, morning announcements and word of mouth were all strategies used to help spread the word that there was a change coming to the school. Their efforts greatly impacted our club progress. Without Mary and Nardine, our club wouldn't be the organization it is today.

Many ideas were suggested during club meetings from making bird feeders to doing school cleanups. We finally came to a conclusion that the first thing that needed to be done at Tottenville was implement a successful recycling program. Students were

telling me how bad trash bins would get. They explained to me that they would see bins overflowing with various trash items like tin foil or even worn down book bags. In some cases, the garbage would end up on the floor. The students were the ones who helped me focus the goal for our club. We decided that the club needed to reorient our school's trash disposal by making people aware of their poor choices and teach them how to make the right decisions when it comes to recycling.

The students really wanted to be part of the recycling initiative so it was crucial that they were included on the changes that were happening in the school. What we did as a team was place stickers on all the green and blue bins. This was done after school. The students had tons of fun and were really into helping our school become earth friendly. It was amazing to witness how passionate our students have become about the mission.



After we got all the bins stickered and ready to go, the students and I split up into teams. There are 3 floors and 4 wings per floor. Each of the wings has a number of classrooms so we needed all the help we could get. We had teams that were designated certain floors. Students had checklists and marked off which classroom was ready to go (contained a green, blue and black bin) or which ones needed to be

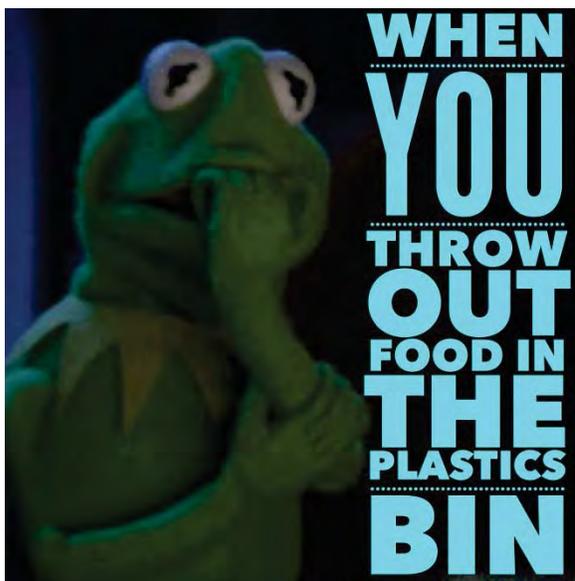
equipped with either bin. They walked around to all their target rooms and placed a green bin in every class. The environmental club ensured that every classroom in Tottenville High School was supplied with the proper recycling bins. The custodial staff helped the students get into classrooms that were locked. If no one was around, they would leave a bin by the door so that the custodian would be able to take care of that when the time comes.



The students were eager to help. With their collaboration and creativity we would never have been to reach our goal. The students were part of the recycling incentive every step of the way. From labelling bins to school cleanups, their involvement demonstrated their passion to see the Tottenville community become an exemplary for others in the borough.

- **Promotion.** Describe your efforts to promote this project; include samples of relevant announcements, memos, flyers, posters, letters, web pages, skits, songs, assembly programs, media coverage, or other special events.

Our club makes monthly announcements to help students become aware that there is an organization for people who care about the environment and want to make a difference. By utilizing some of the club member's artistic side, we had them paint posters that were placed in the hallway of the school. The students came up with beautiful artwork and their displays generated more members to join our club. The environmental club made posters that were displayed school wide. This was so that we could recruit more club members to help join our cause.



One of the best products produced by our students was the club logo for the club. Alicia Chen, junior, created the shirt. Everyone loved the logo. When we distributed the t-shirts to our team, everyone in the school wanted one. I have to order more t-shirts because our supply ran out in one day. This is also another great way to spread awareness that our club is doing great things for the school



During Spring Semester 2015, the club hosted the Tottenville High School Spring Cleanup Kick Off Event. A tremendous effort was incorporated to successfully execute this event. Our guest speakers were Borough President James Oddo and Anthony Pratt, founder of Pratt Industries. He flew in from Australia to speak to our students and staff that were invited. NY1 news, CTV and Staten Island Advance were there to cover the story for the event. Our school also invited P.S. 5 elementary students to come in and learn about the importance of recycling and played games that involved them to “dunk” recyclables in the proper receptacles. The elementary school students also made bird feeders and planted flowers in disposable water bottles. The environmental club members were teaching the younger generations how to reuse items and how to become more eco-friendly.

Recycling Champions also came and graciously donated T-shirts and water bottles to the students who helped during this event. The students were so grateful and excited. I



Borough President James Oddo and Anthony Pratt talking to students from P.S.5

Collaboration. What other schools, professionals, businesses, or community organizations did you work with on this project? How did you solicit donations or help?

With the help of Jacky Junentton from GrowNYC, we were able to focus our mission and schedule a plan to tackle our recycling strategy. Jacky was a tremendous help to our club and Tottenville's custodial staff. The task was daunting, but with Jacky, it was something that seemed feasible. She also connected with Recycling Champions to help us with various provisions for our cleanup.

During the Spring Cleanup Kick Off event, Pratt Industries donated 70 cardboard receptacles designed to recycle mixed paper. We placed the Pratt boxes in rooms that would dispose of the most paper such as the copy center and art rooms. We also had 5 trash grabber donated to our school to help facilitate the cleanup students did around the school.

While many members of our team were cleaning up the streets surrounding our school, we also had students interacting with P.S 5. We had selected classes from the elementary school come and learn about ways to reuse plastic bottles in various ways, determine which items are considered trash or recyclables and win prizes for answering questions or playing our hoops game. Our club members had so much fun and want to do it again in future. This will be a future project that we are going to aim toward. Students are still talking about the event and think fondly about their contributions to the community.

In December of 2015, Jacky was able to get DSNY to donate 96 green recycling bins to our school. We also received 15 more trash grabbers from the same organization. Our club is very appreciative of the contributions made to our cause. The donations made by others motivated our team to do more for the school and the community.

- **Educational components.** Include learning standards met, lesson plans, and exemplary samples of student work.

As I was tackling the recycling problem at our school, I was provided with a binder from the city that really helped me teach Earth awareness in a fun way. Using Jason Learning, ISRI and RRResource Guide “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle—you ready” I was able to effectively convey the message of why recycling is essential for sustainability. I had students examine retailer’s use of over packaging and by doing so they realized that to think outside of the box. They made comments that I thought were very insightful and made connections to the real world--such as the use of plastics and cellophanes to wrap packages and how it sometimes can end up in the ocean garbage gyres.

As a class, we explored our impact on the environment by calculating individual carbon footprints. Using a website, students logged on and completed a survey about their daily activities. They used information based on their everyday actions and were able to calculate how many pounds of carbon dioxide they generate each year. Students were surprised by the notion that they were creating so much greenhouse gases on their own. One of my students, Lauren DeMeno, was so upset that she exclaimed “my family needs to take less vacations! Travelling on airplanes so much is creating too much carbon dioxide!.” I provided sample lesson in a folder to be viewed.

Project Analysis

- **What worked? What were the most successful aspects of this project?**

Based on my observations, I felt that personally speaking to students and staff was the most effective way to get our school community to recycle properly. We gave speeches to certain classes. We were also invited by certain teachers to speak to their class on how to recycle properly. I saw a lot of progress by proactively spreading the word to everyone and getting students to ask questions about what is trash and what is recyclable. Students like to be engaged by using visuals and leading by example

I also suggested to teachers to designate classroom monitors in each classroom so that they don’t have to focus on student’s waste disposal. It is easier to have a willing monitor to sit close to the recycling area so that they can help out others if they are confused.

- **What didn't work? What were the least successful aspects of this project?**

It is hard to make everyone feel as passionate as you do about the environment. People don't consider the consequences of what happens when you don't actively participate in the recycling cause. Sometimes people scoff at you when you tell them that you need to recycle and you are breaking the law if you don't. Although there were few who choose not to cooperate, we need to enforce awareness for our cause. I believe that the Environmental club should hold a school wide assembly to teach about the benefits of recycling; what is trash and what is not and the implications to our planet if we don't start to make this an everyday habit.

- **Applicability to other schools. What advice would you give to other schools with similar populations who want to replicate your project?**

I think that all local high schools should host a recycling fair to the younger generations. It is essential to start great recycling habits at a young age so that it becomes second nature by the time they reach high school. All other high schools should invite a local elementary or middle school in the area and have them learn about the importance of recycling and teach them best practices. Our youth should teach each other about the need for sustainability because they are able to communicate with one another the best. An adult tries to teach the younger generations about the virtues of life, but when children learn from someone they can relate to, it becomes a more memorable and lasting experience.

- **Measuring success. Describe how you measured the success of your project. Include charts or graphs, if possible. Explain any impact on the students or community.**

Success was evident in many different ways. When I first made my recycling center in the classroom, students kept asking me questions like "which bin does this go in?" That made me really happy because they cared about my passion for helping the planet. When they asked me questions about certain items and which receptacle it belongs in, that shows me that they also care. When a student stops and thinks about their action, it becomes evident that the program is working. The environmental club also reported success based on their observations made during the school day. They noticed that teachers are using their recycling center properly and in a few classrooms they assigned recycling monitors. Those students are in charge of making sure that everyone is using the right bins for the items they throw away.

The custodial staff was a tremendous help when it came to actually getting rid of the trash and recyclables. We did not have the proper trains set out for the collection of the waste produced by classrooms and staff center. Mr. Ryan ensured that this will happen and it did. I was so excited to see that he ordered all the supplies needed to start

proper waste removal. This will make it easier for the custodians to comply with recycling regulations. It is a team effort.



- **Future plans.** How would you use contest prize funds to further enhance your waste prevention initiatives?

I would like our school to become part of the Zero Waste program. During our conference with the principal, our next goal will be placing receptacles in the hallways. We also need to get our cafeteria properly set up. Next year, we will be having containers that will consist of blue, black, brown and red (liquid waste) in all of the cafeterias.

It would be an exciting endeavor to consider if a school of our size starts composting. We would like to erect a green house on school grounds and start a site that can grow fruits, vegetables and other flora that can be utilized for sustainability and beautification. Together with students, faculty and staff I believe we will be able to help make tomorrow a much more beautiful place.