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Final Action Plan Progress Report

My action plan was to create an Environmental Leadership Club at my high school to raise awareness among students concerning environmental issues and implement changes in the high school to make it more environmentally friendly. Some of the particular goals I had in mind for the club were the following: reducing the use of plastic water bottles in the high school, improving the school's recycling system, publishing articles in the school's newspaper, and cooperating with Sustainable Jersey For Schools, an organization that gives points and certification to individual schools for taking specific environmental actions and provides those schools with grants for their work.

To begin that plan, I first had to create the club. In order to finish the entire process before the school's annual club fair in October, I began working on the action plan immediately after school started in September. I first had to find at least 15 members who would be interested in my proposal. In addition, to gain approval by the Student Organization, various requirements had to be fulfilled: a club constitution had to be created, explaining how the club would be run and what its purpose/goals would be, a club advisor had to be identified, and club officers had to be appointed. After the completion of the process a few days before the club fair, I submitted the forms to the Student Organization. The club was voted on and it was approved, with me as the president. Thus, the club participated in the club fair and began functioning officially, with new members and officers.

The first action we took as a club was to post flyers all over the school to invite more members to the club and raise awareness. Soon after, we were featured in the school's newspaper

in an article that discussed our plans and goals as a new club. We found some more passionate environmentalists and we began working on the projects I had in mind.

To reduce the circulation of plastic water bottles, we decided that we first needed to take a survey among students to see how much water they drink, how much they use non-renewable bottles, and most importantly, whether they would reduce their use of plastic bottles if new water fountains were installed in school (fountains already existed but many of them did not contain clean water). After seeing that the majority of students used plastic bottles and that about half of students were interested in the installation of new water stations, we came in contact with the school administration to talk about the survey results and discuss the possibility of buying new fountains to start making a change. We cooperated with the Supervisor of Students to submit an application for a \$1000 dollar grant from the Environmental Awareness Challenge Grant Program, and we held a bake sale in school to collect some additional money. Meanwhile, I became a member of my town's Green Team and attended meetings every month as student representative to inform the rest of the team of the club's progress.

On April 22nd, the club organized an Earth Day celebration, which was held for the first time at my school. We posted flyers that included 11 simple actions students can take to improve the environment, we sold plants like herbs and flowers, and we encouraged people to sign a pledge to protect the environment and recognize Earth Day. A few weeks later, we did announcements on THS-TV, our school's television channel, regarding the importance of recycling and details about the use and location of different bins around the school. In the end of year, we received exciting information about our grant application notifying us that we would receive \$950 for the implementation of our water fountain project in October of 2015.

Now that the 2015-2016 school year just started, I will continue my work on the action plan and ensure that the club constantly grows. I will aim to invite more students to become club members in the upcoming club fair held on September 25th. Then, with the \$950 and the money collected from the plant sale and bake sale of last year, new fountains will be installed in the school and the club will work on selling renewable water bottles with the club logo. In addition, the club will remain in contact with the school administration in order to register for the Sustainable Jersey for Schools and the club will hopefully organize another successful Earth Day celebration.

Since BELL 2014, I have tried to implement the leadership skills I learned in every part of my action plan. I have tried to engage with other students on a personal level in order to have an impact on them and encourage their participation in making the school more sustainable. I have greatly improved my listening skills in order to cooperate with all the club members and discuss ideas with them. I have improved my public speaking skills in order to make a presentation in the club fair. Most importantly, however, I have learned to use determination and concentration to ensure that my plan is successful and continues to make a difference.

Lastly, I would like to give one piece of advice to BELL students currently developing their action plan: continue working hard on the implementation of your plan, regardless of the obstacles you face, and regardless of how much work you think it might take to fulfill your goals, because in the end, it will definitely be worth it.