

Evan Doyle - BELL Summer 2011

Through the Environmental Club at my high school, we have implemented some fantastic programs for recycling and composting. I feel fortunate to belong to a community that values environmentally responsible actions and is open to ideas. In my Action Plan, I wanted to improve the existing recycling and composting programs at the high school and to decrease the amount of waste produced by the cafeteria in order to reduce the amount of garbage produced at the school. The idea for this plan followed a waste audit that I was involved in with the Environmental Club. We collected a day's worth of trash generated at my school and separated it into categories; recyclables, compostables, liquid waste, and garbage. We evaluated the data collected during our waste audit and compared it against how the school disposed of its waste. It was readily obvious that we did not dispose of our waste in the most environmentally or economically responsible way, and that far too much waste ended up in garbage that could have either been composted or recycled. This data gave a starting point and foundation to measure against.

I originally identified three specific objectives to improve our disposal of waste: 1. Ensure that we maximize the benefits of recycling, 2. Increase our level of composting, and 3. Reduce our non-recyclable, non-compostable waste. I discussed my action plan with the Environmental Club's staff sponsor and received support to proceed with proposing the action plan to the Environmental Club members. With her support, I proposed the concept of my plan to the Environmental Club members during our weekly meetings. The club agreed to help implement this plan and student volunteers to assist with the project were recruited. I organized student volunteers to monitor the recently implemented bins in the cafeteria that sort between recyclables, compostables, liquid waste, and garbage. The volunteers assisted students in the sorting of their trash as they throw it away to help educate them about proper waste disposal. I believe this helped to encourage students to participate in responsible waste disposal. Through the successful programs implemented by the Environmental Club, we have seen significant reductions in waste at the high school.

I attended the Leadership Institute Symposium on Social Action this past November (2011). I found the Symposium valuable in that it allowed me to collaborate with other individuals who had similar or even vastly different action plans and discussed the ideas they were considering to use to solve their problems. In addition, I found it quite helpful to attend the skill-building seminars on effective communication and dealing with high school administrators. I also found that, following the Symposium, I had gained a great deal of confidence regarding my action plan, due to talking with others about the status of their plans, as well as learning about new ways to expand and improve my own action plan. I found it quite helpful to use the

others at the Symposium as a sounding board for my ideas to see what parts of my plan I could change or improve.

The Environmental Club will be conducting trash audits at the middle schools this spring. We hope to begin an expansion of the waste reduction programs of the high school to reach the middle schools, and eventually the elementary schools. Judging by the overwhelming success of the programs in the high school, it seems likely that similar accomplishments will take place in reducing the waste in the rest of our schools.

Working on my action plan has helped me to become a stronger contributor to the Environmental Club. With such a strong base of hard-working and determined individuals, our Environmental Club is able to accomplish broad and important goals. I feel lucky and proud to be able to help lead the club. I would like to continue to work on the objectives of the action plan at the high school. Ideally, it would be wonderful to expand similar waste reduction programs to all the schools in town, so there is obviously still a great deal of work to be done. Fortunately, the community has a very dedicated Environmental Club with many excellent ideas that is working toward the same goal, and I am glad to be a part of this social action. I find that I am well motivated by those around me with similar goals, and as such it has been a great help to be a part of this club. I feel that I have been able to contribute what I learned from the Brown program to our Environmental Club, helping to form and carry out social change in the field of waste reduction and responsible environmental policy.