

# Zero Waste School Project

Chester Upland School District (CUSD)

Main Street Elementary School  
Stetser Elementary School

Stetser Elementary and Main Street Elementary Green Team students took the lead in starting a successful recycling collection pilot project at their respective schools during Spring 2015.

This is the first phase of the **Chester Zero Waste School Project**, a partnership of the City of Chester, Chester Upland School District, and the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR), working to:

- Support the City of Chester in its effort to increase recycling and strive for zero waste;
- Educate students, parents, and the community about the importance of zero waste and how to effectively recycle and compost;
- Create a model school organics recovery/zero waste program.

The Zero Waste School Project focuses on the practices of “**reduce, reuse, and recycle**” to minimize the amount of material that is disposed as trash. It also includes composting of food scraps and other organic material. The objective is to reduce the amount of waste to as close to “zero” as possible.

The advisory team, comprised of partnering organization representatives, developed an implementation plan that included creation of Green Teams, steps in setting up the pilot project, and a method for measuring progress.

## Green Teams

The participating school Principals selected students to serve on a “Green Team” so they could play a leadership role in the development of the recycling pilot project.

## Orientation Session

In an ILSR led session, Green Team Students reviewed the benefits of recycling, learned about the products that are made from recycled materials, and identified materials that are recycled in Chester.

## Trash Weigh-In

The custodial staff at each school set aside the trash and cardboard on a designated day so that the Green Team Students could weigh the materials and determine a baseline for the amount of material generated each day.



## Collection System

Initially the Green Teams were planning to use orange milk crates as recycling bins for each classroom. However, the City of Chester stepped in and provided red recycling bins for the schools.



## Promotional Campaign

Green Team Students took the lead in determining effective ways to inform all the students, teachers, and staff about the new recycling collection initiative. They used existing school resources and systems so that the project can be easily replicated in other schools.

### Colorful posters

throughout the hallways announced the new initiative.

### Green Team members visited classes

and provided a PowerPoint presentation overview of the project.

### Loudspeaker announcements

reminded students, teachers, and staff about the recycling start-up.



## Follow-Up Trash/Recycling Weigh-In

The Green Team Students weighed both trash and recycling on a designated day during the last week of school. The results accurately showed that most of the material was paper. However, the large volume of end-of-year clean out items did not allow for comparison with a typical school day.

## Measuring Food Waste

Students separated their food waste, recyclable materials, and trash during the lunch sessions as part of the Follow-Up Weigh-In process. This revealed that 20-25 percent of daily waste is comprised of food scraps including beverages (milk and juice).



The Claneil Foundation and the US Environmental Protection Agency/Region III funded ILSR to provide technical support for this project.



ILSR is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides research and technical assistance on recycling and community-based economic development including zero waste planning and implementation.

Contact: Linda Knapp (lknapp@ilsr.org)

## Future Plans

The basic recycling systems are in place for the 2015-2016 school year. ILSR will work with the School Principals and Green Team Students to explore options for addressing the food waste issue including waste reduction practices and composting.

**“We did accomplish this goal. When we went around to collect the things that were recycled and found that many classes filled up their bin as much as possible.”**

- Imani Croston

## Advisory Team

Councilwoman Portia West, City of Chester  
Recycling Coordinator Richard Knox, City of Chester  
Principal Janet Baldwin, Stetser Elementary School  
Principal April Brown, Main Street Elementary School  
Kenneth Caulk, CUSD Director of Building and Grounds  
Linda Knapp, ILSR Project Manager  
Maurice Sampson, Niche Recycling CEO