

COLUMNS

Going Green Can Save Our Schools Green

Tulsa Schools is facing a budget crisis and school closings. A bright spot can be found through the service learning-based findings of Webster High School's Green Team inspired by OK Green Schools Pilot Project. Several schools have joined the project, including McLain High School and the Owasso, Broken Arrow and Sand Springs School Districts.

Webster wrapped up the school year by reporting what has been accomplished and where they'd like to go with their green efforts. Written by Green Team Student President David Luthy and Vice President Shawn Harwell, their speech is so well written, that I'd like to pass it along.

"This year, we have focused our efforts on recycling and energy efficiency. In this presentation, we show you what we can do to save the district thousands of dollars while helping to save our natural resources.

Phase one of our research is dealing with the lighting. We collected data in the hallways in Studios A, B, and C, or as we know them, the main building, the annex and the broadcast building. National standards show that lighting levels in a hallway should be around 25 to 30 footcandles. By the way, a footcandle is a measurement of light levels. Our energy audits found that right now, Webster's hallways are lit at 60-70 footcandles.

Take for example the hallway in Studio C. Right now, this hallway has 21 light fixtures, with three lamps in each fixture for a total of 63 lamps. The hallway reads at 60 footcandles, double the amount of light needed or required. It costs \$423 to operate this hallway every year and \$360 to replace the lamps, for a yearly cost of \$783. So, we're throwing away money.

If we remove one-half of those

lamps, we'd not only get the best lighting, we'd also save \$211 every year in lighting costs and another \$180 in future replacement costs.

In five years, that'd mean a savings of \$1,237 in one hallway alone. Next year, Green Team will continue collecting data from our classrooms, in the hope that we create better lighting for students to learn in.

The second thing we focused on this year is recycling efforts.

We've been lucky enough to have Harley Hollan Companies partner with us this year. They've provided us with a free bin and pickup service. Harley Hollan Companies accepts more than just paper and some plastic like the recycling places we're used to.

In just one bin, they accept cardboard, paperboard, bagged Styrofoam and all sorts of other materials, so it's easy and convenient. Some years back, Tulsa Schools eliminated all of their dishwashers and began serving our meals on Styrofoam plates, which are thrown away every day.

Thanks to the partnership between Cafeteria Manager Donna Hargis and Green Team, the recycling bin has been full to overflowing every week. In just three months, our numbers show that we were able to divert 321 cubic yards out of the trash and into the recycling bin. Hargis estimates that we



BETH TURNER for GTR Newspapers

INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKERS: Green Team Student President David Luthy, right, and Vice President Shawn Harwell recently made a speech about green efforts in area schools.

recycled 75 percent of our cafeteria waste.

Our second phase in recycling has been with paper. Through a permanent loan agreement with the M.E.T., we were able to put paper-recycling bins in every classroom. And, with a loan agreement with Abitibi Paper Retriever, we were able to get our big green bin that collects paper and gives us a return for our money.

Advisor Tia Phillips teaches Green Team members to collect the paper once a week, and they put it in the Paper Retriever bin. We are not yet where we would like to be but

have a plan to increase totals next year. Also, our system is now going to be a template that Tulsa Master Recyclers will use to teach businesses interested in starting their own recycling system.

With the effort and support of our great partners, and everyone at Webster, Green Team can continue to find ways to cut costs of the utility bills, create a better learning environment and raise money through recycling. We hope that maybe we've inspired everyone to implement some of these ideas in other schools in the district."

Trash Talk



By BETH TURNER
Tulsa Master Recyclers Association