



School Recycling Case Study: Wake County, North Carolina

Program Name: Wake County Government FEED THE BIN School Recycling Program

Number of Students: 134,776 students attend participating schools.

Number of Participating Schools: 152. Out of 156 schools in Wake County, North Carolina, 152 schools (97 percent) participate in the FEED THE BIN program

How much paper was recovered for recycling in 2008? 808 tons

Grades collected: old corrugated (cardboard) containers (OCC) and mixed paper. Mixed paper includes: old newspapers (ONP), old magazines (OMP), direct mail, and office paper.

Why was the program established?

Prior to the FEED THE BIN (FTB) program, the Department of Environmental Services (DES) in Wake County, North Carolina maintained free community recycling sites at 38 schools, known as the igloo program. As municipalities began to offer curbside recycling, the need for community recycling sites declined. However, population growth and the corresponding growth in the number of schools in the county resulted in the need for school recycling. The igloo program was very costly and could not be provided to all schools.

Wake County's Environmental Stewardship Agenda stated that "students will become environmentally literate and motivated to be active environmental stewards." The igloo program accomplished neither objective. DES piloted several alternative school recycling programs, eventually resulting in the FEED THE BIN.

The program is sponsored by the DES and provides mixed paper collection throughout the Wake County Public School System. It also provides complimentary educational resources for students and teachers. The FTB program began in 2004 in 25 participating schools, and by 2008 152 schools participated in the program.

How is the program administered?

FEED THE BIN (FTB) program is an innovative approach to school recycling focusing on student education and participation. Each school participating in the program selects a student group to take responsibility for their paper recycling. Roll carts, rather than dumpsters, were selected so that students could take an active role in collection. Once a week, students push the roll carts through the school to collect paper from classroom

bins. Participation in FTB provides students with a solid foundation of environmental stewardship.

In addition to pick-up services, FTB provides schools with individual recycling bins for all classrooms and office spaces, and 64 or 96 gallon roll carts for paper collection. Schools can collect office paper, notebook paper, brochures, direct mail, magazines, newspapers, and corrugated containers.

Each participating school selects a staff member to be the Recycling Coordinator. Initially, FTB meets with the coordinator and school administration to review the specifics of the program and sign a partnership agreement. New Recycling Coordinator Workshops are held each semester. Recycling Coordinators, administrators, and custodians receive electronic program updates and participate in an annual meeting held each January to summarize results and plan for the next year.

Participating schools are also required to schedule an educational presentation for their students each school year. Staff educators conduct programs about FTB and the environmental and economic benefits of recycling to student clubs, science classes, and the entire student body. FTB staff has created a curriculum that is available on-line and that is taught in a workshop for elementary and middle school teachers annually. Teachers can receive continuing education credits for their participation.

How are students educated?

At the elementary school level, students are educated during full school assemblies that include information on how to collect recyclables with FEED THE BIN (FTB), closing the loop, and landfills. Middle and high school presentations are designed for smaller audiences to allow for increased student participation. These presentations also provide additional details about the economic and environmental benefits of recycling. The newest FTB educational program is a capacity building workshop for student groups that want to increase their recycling efforts at school.

Three full-time educators make up the FTB staff. During the 2007-2008 year, FTB educators gave 334 presentations to more than 37,688 students.

How are improvements measured?

Each month, recycling data is posted on the FEED THE BIN (FTB) website for each school and it is shared with students during middle and high school presentations.

In January 2008, a waste composition study concluded that only 13 percent of the school's waste was paper that could have been recovered for recycling through FTB.

What partnerships have been formed?

The program partners with the North Carolina Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance to provide schools with Recycle Guys activity books, posters, stickers, and cartoons.

Additional resources:

Wake County Government

NC Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance

Contacts:

Chrissie Koroivui (Christine.Koroivui@co.wake.nc.us)