



Norton Park Eagles



By Temaria White

Context

Norton Park Elementary School is located in Smyrna, a small suburban community in metropolitan Atlanta; it is one of sixty-four elementary schools in the Cobb County School District. Norton Park Elementary was built in 1961. The school has had numerous renovations and additions within the last two years. The community consists of older homes, apartment complexes, mobile homes and new subdivisions. The current student enrollment is 690 students, kindergarten through fifth grade, which is a 14% increase since the last SACS study in 1995. The students entering are from various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds (8% Caucasian, 32% African- American, 55% Hispanic, 1% Asian and 4% Multi-Racial Students). In addition, more than 300 students (over 40%) qualified for ESOL services, and 16% are eligible to receive special education services. The staff consists of 75 certified employees and 39 classified personnel. Norton Park Elementary School uses the America's Choice Reform Model to incorporate best practices in reading, math, and writing in the classroom through daily workshops. This is the school's ninth year of implementation.

While Norton Park Elementary has made adequate yearly progress the last three years, there are two subgroups that struggle to make gains, students with disabilities along with ESOL students. These students struggle to make adequate yearly progress in the area of math. Other challenges facing Norton Park are parental involvement and parent communication, especially with non-English-speaking families. The school has made an effort to bridge the communication gap by using a parent liaison, hiring a diverse bilingual staff, and providing additional community involvement within the school culture. Another challenge Norton Park faces is the transiency of staff and students. During the 2009-2010 school year, the student transient rate was 53%, along with 10 new staff members. These challenges impact staff development, continuity of instructional practices, and implementation of school programs.

In the past, Norton Park Elementary has been recognized as a Distinguished Title I School and has received recognition as an ASCA Model Program.



The Cobb County School District initiated a system-wide energy and resource conservation program striving to conserve resources through the efficient and conscientious management of utilities, by establishing best practices, providing environmental outreach and education, and supporting individual school efforts. Prior to the 2009-2010 school year, Norton Park Elementary had supported the conservation of natural resources through campus clean-up, outdoor classrooms, a gardening club, and water conservation through the use of rain barrels.






Norton Park Elementary has been recognized by the *Marietta Journal*, the local school district, and partners in education for their efforts in educating staff and students on conserving natural resources. The Going Green initiative supported school administration with further resources and recommendations to improve these conservation programs existing within the school environment. Although Norton Park has had the materials and recycling company on board, the school was not utilizing them effectively to benefit the school environment. Therefore, the Going Green Committee designed a pilot program called the Green Team to educate fourth and fifth grade students as well as a special needs classroom on the importance of Going Green by recycling paper and aluminum cans and conserving energy. Each week the members of the Green Team completed a weekly journal about their experience with recycling and recommendations. All benefits received from the recycling program will be allocated to the school's performing arts program.



Action Plan

| Timeframe | Activities |
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| August | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The green team coordinator met with the school principal and discussed the importance of the green team and the benefits the school can receive by recycling the materials used on a daily basis. |
| August | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The green team coordinator sent out an e-mail seeking interest in developing a green team under the campus clean-up umbrella. |
| August | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with all interested parties to have a Q & A session and develop Green Team Guidelines |
| August | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Green Team Committee presented the information to the staff at a faculty meeting |
| August-September | <p>The Green Team Committee met to develop the program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee developed the permission slip for student participation • Created incentives for student and staff participation • Created a rubric for class participation and contest • Developed classroom lesson plans • Created an application for student selection in 4th and 5th grades |

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| September | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee selected students for the Green Team  |
| September | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permission slips were given out to students selected |
| September | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student orientation outlining their roles and responsibilities of being a member of the green team. |
| September | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Kick-off of the recycling program (recycling box decorating contest)  |
| September-May | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student recycling program ran  |
| September-May | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly journal entries required from team members |
| September-May | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted monthly meeting to receive feedback from staff and students |
| September-May | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrated success stories |

Recommendations

- The success behind our program was the constant reminders through e-mail and *Eagle Eye News*. The school-wide recycling contest also increased the initiative by adding incentives for class participation. There was also a critical buy-in from the staff, students, and the community.
- The implementation of the program was a success. The downfall was keeping the staff motivated to support the program due to many initiatives occurring within the school to meet Adequate Yearly Progress.
- Incorporate Georgia Standards in the initiative to increase student achievement.
- Have a scheduled pick-up time for the recycling company.
- Continue to review daily procedures with committee and students to decrease any behavior problems