

DIRECT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



CASE STUDY

NYSP2I Leads K-12 Pilot Program Assisting to Educate Penfield Central School District's Students & Teachers on Environmental Sustainability

The New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSP2I) at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) has a vision of fostering the transformation and development of sustainable businesses and organizations in New York State in a collaborative program committed to making the State a leader in environmental stewardship.

NYSP2I initiated a pilot program that included sustainability assessments conducted at four schools across New York State in an effort to identify opportunities for improved waste generation, water consumption, and chemical exposure through better purchasing decisions.

Challenge

NYSP2I conducted a Sustainability Assessment at Harris Hill Elementary School (Harris Hill) for the Penfield Central School District (PCSD) as part of a pilot program for a new K-12 initiative focused on New York State Schools creating a safer environment for students and teachers.

Solution

The project identified opportunities at Harris Hill by utilizing an assessment tool developed by NYSP2I, specifically for evaluating a school's sustainability practices. NYSP2I used available school data to develop a baseline and has identified opportunities for improvement.

Results

PCSD is focused on reducing impacts associated with activities that could have a negative outcome on the environment. Reducing environmental impacts will ultimately save on budget spending and the long term effects on students, faculty, and communities. NYSP2I identified the following opportunities for improvement:

1. Purchase WaterSense labeled products to provide water efficiency without sacrificing performance.
2. Continue to use certified green cleaning products avoiding products with fragrances or strong odors that may trigger asthma symptoms or other health issues and adopt green cleaning practices and create a districtwide policy for doing so.
3. Use the tools provided through New York State's Executive Order 4 (EO4) "Establishing a State Green Procurement and Agency Sustainability Program". The Office of General Services (OGS) established the creation

CHALLENGE

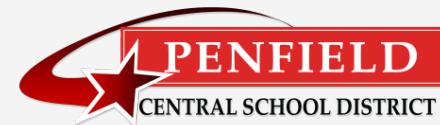
- Identify opportunities for improved waste generation, water consumption, and chemical exposure through better purchasing decisions for school districts across New York State

SOLUTION

- NYSP2I developed an assessment tool for evaluating a school's sustainability practices, including waste management practices, water and chemical usage, and procurement practices

RESULTS

- NYSP2I identified several opportunities for PCSD to improve impacts associated with activities that could have a negative outcome on the environment



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of green procurement lists and specifications of commodities, services, and technology for use and a cost calculator and approved lists of products and suppliers.

4. Improve waste management and recycling by:
 - Providing greater access to trash and recycling bins to allow for proper separation, including standardized, color coded bins, with labels and pictures;
 - Measuring the amount of trash created versus recyclables collected to find opportunities for improvement;
 - Communicating the amount of recyclables and trash being generated so that everyone can see the progress and work together to improve;
 - Celebrating when milestones are achieved!
5. Cost saving decisions were identified in the school's use of styrofoam trays due to the low cost of the material. NYSP2I suggested eliminating all polystyrene (styrofoam) used for food and beverage consumption and first encourages the use of reusable containers, then compostable containers, then recyclable alternatives when necessary (all of which should be made from recycled content or sustainably made).
6. NYSP2I's cafeteria waste audit revealed that almost 45% (by weight) of the discarded waste consisted of food. NYSP2I suggested working with Waste Management to use a food waste collection bin or use the services, like Impact Earth, for example, to establish a cafeteria waste segregation system to enable a recycling and food waste collection system in cafeterias.

In order for PCSD and Harris Hill to continue to have a strong impact on their community, NYSP2I suggested they implement the following policies:

- Review and update PCSD policies to include sustainability goals
- Communicate areas of opportunity to PSCD Board, staff and the community
- Develop a PCSD Sustainability Team (in addition to individual school teams) to continue sustainable progress and incorporate sustainability into the classroom and across the district
- Measure and monitor progress towards goals
- Communicate status against goals and how it compares to the baseline, showing successes or the need for improvement
- Encourage involvement by faculty and students to foster success
- Seek funding for additional professional development opportunities and green implementation projects (e.g., NYSAR3 Green School Grants)
- Apply for awards and recognition to build pride in accomplishments (e.g. Green Ribbon Schools)

"NYSP2I conducted a thorough review of our current practices and in turn, provided us with valuable recommendations to reduce our environmental impact and to promote sustainability."

– Alan McNiff, Director of Facilities
Penfield Central School District

NYSP2I PARTNERS

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