



COLLECTION AND TRANSFER>WASTE REDUCTION

PepsiCo's Recycle Rally Program Challenges Schools to Reduce Waste, Increase Recycling

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Mallory Szczepanski | Jun 14, 2018

Reducing waste and increasing recycling in K-12 schools requires effort from all parties, including teachers, students, parents, suppliers and waste and recycling companies. And to help these schools get started with their waste reduction and recycling efforts, PepsiCo is inviting U.S. schools to participate in its Recycle Rally program.

The Recycle Rally program was born out of PepsiCo's Performance with Purpose initiative, which focuses on people, products and the planet. With Recycle Rally, PepsiCo aims to make a big impact on recycling by giving schools an opportunity to develop effective recycling programs and the next generation of lifelong recyclers.

"The mission of the program is to inspire K-12 students nationwide to become proud and frequent recyclers," says Tom Mooradian, manager of environmental sustainability at PepsiCo. "And since the program launched in 2010, more and more schools and students have expressed interest in the program and recycling, which is very exciting to see."

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Showcasing its growth, the 2017-18 program saw a 450 percent increase in recycling totals from the previous year. This massive uptick is due to many factors, including more schools participating, more schools ramping up their recycling efforts and the timing of promotions and challenges.

Beyond promoting recycling on campus, schools in the 2017-18 program reached out to their communities to get involved in local events and to ensure that recyclables were ending up in their proper waste streams.

“The students were really taking the lead this year on many efforts and making sure that whole communities were involved in their recycling goals,” says Mooradian. “They stayed on top of their tracking duties and took it upon themselves to make sure they were improving their recycling rates month after month.”

Recycle Rally is a point-based program, and to keep track of their goals and milestones and to earn reward points, schools utilize a self-reported system where they can easily log information. Schools can participate in two different leagues for the annual contest—the Universal League and the Challenge League—as well as various monthly challenges. The Universal League allows schools to report their data in a simple manner by tallying the amount and size of recycling bags collected. That total is then translated into an estimated number of bottles and cans to determine how many reward points they will earn. The Challenge League requires more effort, therefore the schools have the opportunity to earn more points. Schools participating in that challenge receive a digital scale and are required to separate and weigh their different waste streams. Eligible materials that can be counted for credit include aluminum, PET and HDPE. Other materials that can be collected for tracking purposes but do not count toward totals in the program include other plastics (PVC, LDPE, PP, etc.), mixed paper, glass and other materials (scrap metal, aerosol cans, etc.). Compost is currently not one of the eligible materials, but it is encouraged and something that PepsiCo is looking at adding in the future.

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“The annual contest always has a large cash prize tied to it,” states Mooradian. “This year, the top school—Arnold Elementary School in San Antonio—was awarded \$20,000, and Pine Forest High School in Fayetteville, N.C., was awarded \$15,000. Schools that make it into the top 25 also earn cash prizes, which make a big difference to schools that are seeing changes and budget cuts.”

This year was Arnold Elementary School’s first year participating in Recycle Rally, and its successful recycling efforts quickly paid off.

“Arnold Elementary’s first year participating in PepsiCo’s Recycle Rally was a huge success,” says Paul Perea, a teacher at Arnold Elementary School. “Our students showed great enthusiasm for the environment and got involved in community events to recycle an incredible amount of material through the competition!”

This year’s top performing schools drove a lot of volume by getting creative in their recycling efforts. Pine Forest High School, for example, partnered with local businesses, ran radio advertisements, held events, got surrounding communities to participate in its efforts and more. In fact, the students were recycling so much that the school had to limit the amount of material students could bring with them on the bus to school to two bags per day because some kids were loading the buses up with too many bags of recyclables, comments Mooradian.

“Since first getting involved in PepsiCo’s Recycle Rally competition in 2015, we’ve increased our commitment to recycling dramatically, and we’re thrilled to have topped our 2016 efforts,” says Linwood Starling, a teacher at Pine Forest High School. “Pine Forest High School is proud of how big of an impact our students make in the Fayetteville community.”

Other effective and efficient recycling methods included pairing recycling bins next to trash cans, having a designated team of students operate as a green team/recycling team and having students take the lead to help other students expand their knowledge of recycling. Mooradian says if students take the lead, other students tend to follow suit.



While these schools often start their own waste reduction and recycling methods, PepsiCo offers general recommendations via a list of common acceptable and unacceptable recyclable materials, quiz games and other customizable resources on its website.

“It all comes down to education and getting students engaged,” says Mooradian. “There is not a one-size-fits-all solution, so we try to produce customizable resources that teachers and administrators can utilize as education tools that make sense for their individual school. Teachers have a wonderful way of getting through to students, and these resources serve as an easy tool to communicate the importance of recycling, how to recycle properly and how to change common behaviors.”

Many schools are drawn to the program because it’s free, and it’s a way for them to earn valuable rewards and financial incentives. Schools can sign up for the program anytime via Recycle Rally’s website and connect with program experts to get their waste reduction and recycling efforts off the ground.

“No matter what your goals are, Recycle Rally is an easy way to help you make a difference and help you earn prizes that can pay for needs within your school,” states Mooradian. “Between our annual contest and our monthly challenges, there are ways to win gift cards, cash and other prizes for taking action and raising awareness. Plus, it’s free, fun and good for the planet.”

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