

Project Title Used Marker and Crayon Collection

School Tuckahoe Elementary

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Brief summary of the project

Each year, 15 - 20 fifth grade students at Tuckahoe choose to participate in Green Team, a year-long commitment through which they learn about nature and the environment and serve their school community through a variety of projects. This school year (2019-20), the group continued with an effort started last year - school-wide collection of used markers. Rather than going into the waste stream, used markers are sent to Crayola as part of their ColorCycle program, which repurposes the plastic into other useful items. Last year, Green Team collected about 3,000 markers and shipped them to Crayola. This year's collection resulted in even more markers, although a final tally will have to wait until the start of next school year due to the shut-down.

This year, Green Team students also expanded the effort so that it now includes collection of used and broken crayons. These will be sent to the nonprofit organization The Crayon Initiative, which ensures that old crayons are sorted, melted, and re-made into new crayons for distribution to children's hospitals. As of the closing of school in mid-March, Green Team students had collected two storage-file boxes of crayons from our school community.

An important aspect of the marker and crayon collection project is the leadership opportunity it provides for Green Team students, which builds confidence and a sense of agency. They organize outreach efforts, personally visiting every classroom periodically to see whether teachers have questions or need collection boxes or signage and to collect markers and crayons. They also team with students involved with our school news program (News@Nine) to produce news segments to keep the school community informed about Green Team efforts including the marker and crayon collection project.

Getting Going

How did the project start? The project started as a result of conversations with last year's 5th grade Green Team students about how they could help the environment and their community. Students wanted a project that they could oversee, that would reach and help educate the whole school, and that was feasible. After some brainstorming and research, the group decided to go with the ColorCycle program. At the end of the year, one of the art teachers, whose students go through a lot of crayons, passed along information about The Crayon Initiative, and this year the Green Team added crayon collection to their project.

Who were important people to contact at the beginning? I informed school administration and I also did a short presentation at a staff meeting. Green Team students personally spoke with each teacher and appeared on our school news program at the start of the year.

What are the threshold resources that need to be identified at the beginning before proceeding further? (For example, robust parent volunteer network, elevated loading docks, nearby outdoor spigot.) The Crayon Initiative does not provide free shipping labels to get crayons to them. Green Team has not yet addressed how to approach fundraising to cover shipping costs. With the early closing of school, this challenge will fall to next year's group.

What are the policies (if any) from APS or elsewhere that may affect the project and need to be considered? Nothing applicable to this project.

What budget and/or funding sources were needed? We still need to address fundraising to cover shipping cost to get our crayons to The Crayon Initiative. Student-led fundraisers (e.g. bake sale, sale of student-made items) and PTA grant will be on the list of possible funding sources for discussion when school resumes.

Implementation

Did you pilot or test the project and then scale it up? If so, describe your process. No, this program was very easy to implement. We started by offering small collection boxes (e.g., shoeboxes) and ColorCycle signs to all teachers. We got inquiries from families asking whether they could send in used markers from home, so we set up a collection box in the main office that families could add to. In the second year, we invited our community to add used crayons to the same collection boxes, so no scale-up was needed. There will be additional work when we pack up the markers and crayons to ship to Crayola and The Crayon Initiative.

As you rolled the project out, how did you present this to students and encourage their participation? Student-to-student communication was effective. Fifth grade Green Team students were excellent spokespeople and promoters of their project. They visited every classroom to speak personally with teachers and sometimes with classes. They also worked with our News@Nine team to get the message out to all fellow students via video news segments.

Approximately how many students were actively involved, and how many were affected? A nice thing about this project is that, although it was led by about 15 students, every student in the school could be actively involved simply by making sure used markers and crayons in their classrooms went into the collection bin. So, the project had an impact on our whole school community of just over 600 students.

What obstacles were overcome? Are there continuing obstacles? What lessons did you learn from doing this? Since this was a school-wide effort, communication was critical. Because Green Team students were the leaders and spokespeople for this effort, it was important to discuss and practice with them how they would conduct themselves and communicate when visiting classrooms to promote the

program. Before sending them out to interact with teachers and classes, we did role-modeling and practice. One lesson learned was that our school community needed multiple, varied reminders and explanations about the program over time.

Will the project continue into future years? If so, how will you keep continuity? Do you plan modifications? Yes! Now that this program is in place at our school, I will encourage and support its continuation. Green Team has also led or assisted with other sustainability efforts over the past two years including creating energy-saver light switch covers for classrooms, hosting a low-waste lunch week event, and planting for pollinators.

What effect has it had on the school? The marker and crayon collection project provides a very positive and easy way for every student at our school, even the youngest children, to play a role. It also provides real leadership opportunities for Green Team students.

Are there photos that could help others visualize how this worked for you? If so, please insert them here.

↳ Bridget Bishop Retweeted

 **M.Egan** @TESschoolyard · Jun 5, 2019

Almost 60 lbs of used markers collected by @TuckahoeGrade5 Green Team students this year @TuckahoeSchool ! Instead of going into the trash, the plastic in these markers will be repurposed into other useful products through @Crayola ColorCycle program. #APSGreen



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M.Egan @TESschoolyard · Jan 7

@TuckahoeSchool 's Green Team now collects old crayons for @ShareYourColors to make new crayons for children's hospitals! Add used markers (Crayola will repurpose) & crayons to collection bins around school & reduce waste! #APSGreen #TuckahoeRocks



Replication

Do you have resources you used that would be helpful for someone trying to replicate this project? Would you be willing to share them? There is very helpful information on the websites:

<https://www.crayola.com/colorcycle> (Note that Crayola is temporarily not accepting markers at this time due to the COVID-19 pandemic.)

<https://thecrayoninitiative.org/> (The Crayon Initiative is eagerly still taking crayons to fill a growing need for crayons at hospitals.)

What else should someone wanting to implement a similar project at their school know? This project is easy to implement at the elementary level and unifies the school in a common goal. Students feel very proud when they see how many items they have kept out of the waste stream.