

Egg Harbor Township Schools

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Slaybaugh Elementary School Complex Crowned State Recycle-Bowl Champion

EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP – If it was up to elementary school children in Egg Harbor Township, the antiquated ‘Three R’s’ of learning would include four more R’s for Rethink, Reuse, Reduce and Recycle.

E.H. Slaybaugh Elementary School Complex was recently named the 2018 NJ State Champion of the Keep America Beautiful Recycle-Bowl, the national recycling competition for K-12 students, teachers and school communities.

During the four-week program, participating schools track and report the amount of recyclable material they collect. At the close of the competition, the school in each state (and the District of Columbia) that collects the most recyclable material per capita is named state champion with a national champion chosen from state winners.

Slaybaugh recycled a total of 9,610 pounds during the four-week program to capture this year’s State crown, which was the result of a collective effort of more than 800 preschool through third-grade students in two schools that make up the elementary school complex.

First-, second- and third-graders actively participate in recycling at lunchtime, but it doesn’t stop there. Like a fine-oiled machine, all Slaybaugh students and custodians use teamwork skills to ensure recyclables are collected throughout the entire school.

Every classroom and ‘specials’ area (computers, gym, music, etc.) has a recycle container, and each hallway has a centrally-located larger recycle bin. Students in each class are responsible for getting the classroom recycle container out into the hallway.

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Designated student stewards from each classroom handle the recycling from ‘specials’ areas and are also responsible for monitoring the classroom containers to make sure the items are all recyclable.

With help from their teachers, preschool and kindergarten students transport their classroom recycle container to the hallway where first-graders then empty them into the larger bins.

Third-graders team up to empty all remaining classroom recycling containers into the larger hallway bins. As ‘upperclassmen,’ they also get to roll the containers to the cafeteria where custodial staff meet them to assist. Together, the students weigh and tabulate the daily totals. On Fridays, the team captains and custodial staff calculate weekly totals and report back to the class to be announced.

Since 2015, generous mini-grants received from the EHT Education Foundation have enabled Slaybaugh students to take field trips to the Atlantic County Utilities Authority (ACUA) Haneman Environmental Park. While there, students tour the recycling facility and landfill, seeing the waste management process from beginning to end, and solidifying classroom learning with real world experiences.

As a culminating activity to the ACUA field trip last year, first grade students conducted a mini-waste audit in their classrooms, giving each classroom an opportunity to rate themselves on how well they were recycling and sorting materials in their classrooms.

Second- and third-grade classes also conducted a building waste audit to identify how much food and recyclables were thrown into the trash. Third-graders took what they learned and turnkeyed it into a week-long “Slaybaugh Goes Green Sustainability Assembly” that was presented to all kindergarten through third-grade students and staff.

The assembly featured a student-facilitated recycling skit and PowerPoint presentation, student-led stations that educated their peers in everything ‘green’ including: recycling; plastic and plastic pollution; negative effects of oil spills on oceans and marine life; air quality; aquaponics; sustainability; energy conservation; renewable and non-renewable energy; and composting. This year, students plan to add a recycling infomercial to spark interest in next year’s Recycle Bowl competition.

“The Recycle Bowl competition has led to a change in both attitude and lifestyle that have become second nature for students, and created everyday routines that are practiced throughout the year -- not just during Recycle Bowl,” said Donna Efstatos, third-grade teacher at Slaybaugh Elementary.

“We are truly proud of that accomplishment. Being first in the state is an amazing honor and reinforces the consistency and teamwork that we have worked so hard to achieve,” said Jane Wilhelm, first-grade teacher and Recycle Bowl coordinator for Slaybaugh Complex. “Now when the students leave Slaybaugh and go on to the upper grades, recycling is already a part of their vocabulary and they are

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knowledgeable about recycling practices,” Wilhelm added.

“It’s always exciting to see students from across the country and from all age groups get excited about recycling at school, at home or on the go,” said Keep America Beautiful Youth and Education Program Manager Kathryn Joblon. “Schools that participate in Recycle-Bowl competitions have been measured as recycling 10 percent more than schools that don’t participate,” she added.

The 2018 Recycle-Bowl competition spanned over four weeks during the fall, culminating on America Recycles Day on Nov. 15, 2018. It engaged 721 schools and more than 261,000 student participants, collecting over 1.3 million pounds of recyclables which prevented the release of 1,842.68 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO₂E). This reduction in greenhouse gases is equivalent to 4.5 million miles driven by an average passenger vehicle, and 643 tons of material recycled instead of landfilled, according to Joblon.

Slaybaugh has received over \$5,000 in environmental/sustainability grants over the past two years alone, empowering students to be a part of the solution for a healthier school and community. “The waste audits and Recycle-Bowl competition provide Slaybaugh students with opportunities to learn and demonstrate that by recycling properly and reducing the amount of trash hauled to the landfill, they are helping the district save money and positively impacting the environment at the same time,” beamed Principal Kevin Fricke. “I’m very proud of the students and the staff.”

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Waste Audits:

Between 2017 – 2018, Slaybaugh’s student Green Team worked in cooperation with Atlantic County Utilities Authority to complete one of ten district waste audits conducted at every individual Egg Harbor Township School. The waste audits included an initial walk-through to evaluate how well waste and recycling was collected, if recycle bins were clearly marked, if they were as accessible as trash bins, and if there was an understanding among the student body about what should go into each bin. After that, students rolled up their sleeves, put on their protective gloves, and emptied trash and recycling containers onto large tarps, separating the contents into trash, recycling and compostable materials/food waste to weigh, analyze and identify areas for improvement. After completing the audits, ACUA recorded the strengths and weaknesses and submitted recommendation reports back to school leaders.

About Egg Harbor Township Schools

The largest district in Atlantic County with more than 7,300 students, Egg Harbor Township Schools has developed a robust environmental education program over the years that has been driven primarily by student interest and staff facilitation through hands-on, grant-funded instruction that improves recycling,

reduces waste, encourages composting and energy conservation, and promotes indigenous planting that conserves water and helps provide vital habitat for birds and other wildlife. Sustainability efforts have earned the district two Green Ribbon Schools' awards from U.S. Department of Education, two NJ Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards, two Green Flag Awards from the National Wildlife Federation, awards from the US Department of Environmental Protection Agency and NJ Department of Environmental Protection, and countless others. More than \$125,000 has been secured in grant funds since 2006 for environmental sustainability projects in the district.

About Keep America Beautiful

Keep America Beautiful, the nation's leading community improvement nonprofit organization, inspires and educates people to take action every day to improve and beautify their community environment. Established in 1953, Keep America Beautiful strives to End Littering, Improve Recycling and Beautify America's Communities. We believe everyone has a right to live in a clean, green and beautiful community, and shares a responsibility to contribute to that vision.

Behavior change – steeped in education, research and behavioral science – is the cornerstone of Keep America Beautiful. We empower generations of community and environmental stewards with volunteer programs, hands-on experiences, educational curricula, practical advice and other resources. The organization is driven by the work and passion of more than 600 Keep America Beautiful affiliates, millions of volunteers, and the collaborative support of corporate partners, social and civic service organizations, academia, municipalities, elected officials, and individuals. Join us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#). Donate and take action at kab.org.

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