

INTRO NARRATIVE – (743 must be less than 800)

Think Globally, Act Locally: Greening Council Rock and Making an Environmental Difference

Think globally. Act locally.

These two short phrases have forged Council Rock School District's partnership with local community members and businesses in order to promote environmental acuity, responsibility and sustainability.

Nearly a decade ago, Council Rock School District solidified that partnership through the creation of its first *Green Team* (GT), an interdisciplinary endeavor involving stakeholders from every walk of life, whose sole purpose was to seek out opportunities to improve the health and well-being of its schools, staff, students and community. Now, not only is there a Council Rock School District *Green Team*, but there is a *Green Team* in each of its 15 schools as well. Thus, local actions have improved the well-being of one small portion of the planet. This is how a grassroots phenomenon begins.

The greening of CRSD has not only been accepted by its administration, it truly has been *embraced*. The time it takes to foster creative green thinking has become part of the district's daily routine, rather than an occasional occurrence. Students, teachers, community members, administrators and other district employees are afforded the time—and funding—it takes to regularly meet to identify sources of waste, then problem-solve a solution. Beginning in 2000, green initiatives have led to millions of dollars in cost-avoidance through energy management. CRSD's Energy Star rating is 84%. Meanwhile, wellness programs and personal nutritional studies promote healthy lifestyle choices in both staff and students, helping to ensure that the community will be afforded responsible decision-makers when the time comes for them to take the reins. CRSD's Environmental Plan incorporates a wide variety of environmental initiatives to improve the health and wellness of students and staff that include, but are not limited to, integrated pest management, air quality, moisture control, and chemical management.

In the classroom, environmental and sustainability education thrives, creating opportunities for all. Inquiry-based STEM instruction is enriched through the participation of professionals well-versed in the nuances of environmental education, cutting across academic levels of learning and subject matter, from kindergarten through high school graduation. K-12 science curricula fosters environmental literacy and watershed preservation. Primary grades study ecosystems and conservation; elementary students plant their own organic garden, donating its harvest to local homeless shelters; high school students discuss the effect of pollution on their view of the night sky with astronauts on the International Space Station annually. (Two CRHS South teachers have joined the NASA Network of Educator Astronaut Teachers, making it the only school in the nation to receive this honor twice.) The Art Department received an award from Newtown Borough for making recycling the focus of the Annual District Art Show.

The effort has a reach well beyond the school day and even school year. A summer program, *Camp Invention*, immerses elementary students in hands-on activities that connect science, technology, engineering and green innovation with recycled materials, while earning older students service learning credits as they mentor younger ones. The annual District Science Night engages students, professionals, and senior citizens, delivering inquiry-based instruction. Twenty unique instructional opportunities are offered to Science Night visitors in STEM topics, including environmental science, wildlife habitats, energy, astronomy, chemistry, and microbiology. CRSD also participates in programs that actively promote inquiry-based environmental literacy, such as the *Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science Annual Competition (PJAS)* that culminates with a competition at Pennsylvania State University. CRSD consistently places 30+ students in the top rankings of this 7th-12th grade state-wide event. CRSD students also apply knowledge of STEM content through extracurricular activities such as STEM Club, Botany Club, *Trout in the Classroom* (TIC) and the Environmental Action Clubs. There is reason to believe CRSD students will remain interested, active and influential in area of inquiry for years to come thanks to their participation in STEM career-exploration programs. Council Rock has partnered with Dow's *You Be the Chemist* program, Lockheed-Martin's *Engineering Career Day* and several others.

CRSD's concerted efforts will continue to drive innovative curriculum development, inspire educational leadership, build healthy community relations, and foster conservation and stewardship within the district and beyond for decades to come. These are the endeavors of a *community* of learners—not just students or staff in a school district—all of whom are committed to life-long environmental education. It is a passion with which CRSD forges its future. It is a passion with roots that are local and branches that have grown global.

This is the greening of Council Rock School District.