

Starside Elementary

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Starside's environmental journey began many years ago and our program is student-driven. Our students suggest activities and have passed their concerns on to their parents and our community. One parent told us before she takes the trash out her son has to go through it to make sure nothing in there should have been recycled. Starside is a K-5 school and when our 5th graders went to middle school they had to add an environmental class for them, because of their interest.

Starside recycled 28.61 tons from August '08 to November '09. We have a group of students who stay after school on Thursdays that have named themselves Earth Keepers. This group recycles, plants and takes care of our school grounds. As a building we recycle paper, cardboard, ink cartridges, cell phones, plastic bags, glass, cardboard and aluminum cans. The pull tabs off of the aluminum cans we donate to Ronald McDonald House Charities.

Last year our staff started an aluminum foil ball and the students started bringing foil to add to the ball. Grandparents were even saving foil. Then one of our students named the ball Bob and he became our mascot. He is now 36 inches across and is still beloved by the students. We had a staff member who created a comic book about Bob the Ball's Adventures. This year we started another ball and the kids decided we should name it Betty. So we now have another mascot Bob's sister.

We have a sculpture in front of our building made of plastic water bottles that the kids have named "Recycle, Reuse and Reduce", and we do not sell water in our teachers lounge vending machine any more. We have made a cereal box reading house and a milk jug igloo as we illustrate the fun in reuse.

We were named a Kansas Green School of the Year last year and as a result of that we were featured in a national educational magazine, Scholastic News. We have received a grant for biodegradable lunch trays, bigger recycling bins for each classroom and each 3rd, 4th and 5th grade class now has a worm composters to dispose of cafeteria waste.

We have just been notified that we are going to be able to add a wind/ solar feature to our building. The exciting thing about this is that we can watch, through our website, how much energy we are producing with our solar panels and wind turbine daily. The next project we would like to begin is a school garden. We would use the produce we grow to help feed families in our community. We would also like to become a monarch butterfly way station.

One day recently a new student came to breakfast and a teacher sat him by someone in his own grade and said to use this time as you eat breakfast to tell (the new student) about Starside. The first thing out of our students mouth was "We recycle, reuse and reduce here".