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## 2014 Winning Schools' Recycle for Education Computer Lab Contest Entry Summaries:

### ATLANTIC:

#### **Florenceville Elementary School, Florence Bristol, NB:**

Being eco-responsible is truly part of this school's DNA. A student eco club educates every class on composting, reducing paper towel usage and recycling cardboard and bottles and cans. The eco club and school management have a strong focus on not only raising awareness about the importance of environmental stewardship within the school community, but are proactively engaging with students' families, community members and environmental non-profit organizations. Among other notable programs, the schools has created a partnership with the Wicklow Potato Centre to install a weather station, has an outdoor classroom and a garden, where they grow flowers, pumpkins and flowers and use their own compost to provide nutrients to the plants. Their current room that is called the computer lab has outdated computers and not enough for each student in a class to work independently on projects. Access to new computer equipment and tech devices will allow their students to think globally and act locally.

#### **River Hebert District High School, River Hebert, NS:**

This school demonstrated ongoing commitment to eco initiatives, but one that truly stood out was their flagship program dedicated to "pollinator bee home" construction. Students utilize scrap lumber materials from local lumber mills to build homes for the Mason Bee, a unique bee to the region's ecosystem that makes its home inside small holes in the wood. In 2013, the school built 50 of these homes which were, in turn, distributed throughout Nova Scotia. The school is also focused on improving food security, the role healthy food plays in a sustainable community, and what they can do to put their ideas into action. Last year, they installed garden beds at a local senior's retirement facility, and the initiative was so well-received, that this year, installations have been also requested by a local grocery store, another senior's home and a women's shelter. With new technology, the team at River Hebert hopes to continue doing research that will enable them to participate in sustainable environmental programs driven by regional universities and municipal organizations.

### ONTARIO:

#### **Erin Public School, Erin, ON:**

Erin Public School has many eco initiatives on the go – from a strong recycling program, that has helped reduce the amount of waste by almost 75%, to an Earth Hour that the school has every month. But the latest addition to their roster of environmental programs and the one they are most proud of is their "Water Rockers" team – a group students, teachers and parents. Their goal is to encourage both the school community and local neighbourhood to use reusable drinking containers daily. Each month, the Water Rockers walk their downtown area to interact and engage with Erin store owners and tell them about local and global water research. The team encourages local businesses to join their "The BLUE W Program", which celebrates customers who have reusable drinking containers by offering free water refills and discounts on coffee and tea. Plus, some stores are even selling their Water Rockers-designed bottles that say "ERIN: OUR LOCAL WATER ROCKS!" So far, the team sold almost 200 bottles, with the proceeds going to environmental projects at their school. New computer equipment will help students with their environmental research projects and will allow them to literally connect to nature, wildlife and environmental issues.

## **Blessed Pope John Paul II Catholic Secondary, Scarborough, ON:**

The outstanding efforts of this eco team have earned them the opportunity to be featured in a live recording of a radio show at the CBC profiling their involvement in the building of a large single use plastic water bottle boat to draw attention to the need for elimination of plastic water bottles. Their lobbying paid off, leading to the banning of plastic water bottles in all Toronto Catholic District School Board buildings. If that wasn't enough, the Eco Council at this school was instrumental in organizing an electronic waste recycling event in conjunction with the Ontario Electronic Stewardship, which resulted in a collection of over 770 tons of waste. The Council also organized its first Environmental Conference in conjunction with the University of Toronto titled "Our World, Our responsibility", drawing more than 400 participants. Some Council members have been trained as eco-mentors to be able to deliver workshops to elementary school students and in order to engage them in the environmental cause. This school will be using the new technology to research current environmental problems, communicate with researchers from around the world via Skype, and work directly with high school students abroad to develop strategies to address problems that impact us all.

### **WESTERN:**

## **Oak Lake Community School, Oak Lake, MB:**

This school was designated a community school by the aboriginal education directorate in 2005 with the goal of building character today for communities of tomorrow. They have taken that mission to heart and chose to do that by educating students to become strong environmental citizens and change agents in their local and global communities. And their efforts haven't gone unnoticed – in 2012, Oak Lake was designated Canada's #1 green school by FedEx and Tree Canada. One of the initiatives that they are most often complimented on is the "Sowing Seeds of Hope Learning Gardens" Created through a partnership between a number of local organizations, these learning gardens involve the students in every aspect of food production. Students work with community volunteers and staff members to start seeds under grow lights, plant them in raised beds, fertilize with compost, tend throughout the season, harvest the fruits and vegetables, and turn the produce into healthy snacks. An aboriginal stone circle, sensory garden, and colourful student-painted mural provide a place for outdoor learning. The skills acquired through this project, have led to employment for students through local programs such as Eco-Warriors and community's market garden. A new lab will allow this school to continue and expand their paperless push. Students will build knowledge through internet research, consult experts, collaborate with other classrooms, and think critically and creatively, all without using a single sheet of paper or cracking a textbook!

## **Lillian Osborne High School, Edmonton, AB:**

Lillian Osborne from day one has worked to establish a new school culture that values environmental stewardship. Their school Pillar – "Environmental Leadership for the 21st Century" – is actualized through small projects, which then together promote innovation, inquiry, increased global awareness and action. Speaking about global awareness, for over two years, the school has partnered with a school in Taishe, China, in a project entitled "East of the Mountains". Through video conferencing, data-collection projects, and cross-cultural exchanges, students collaboratively research, compare, and problem-solve issues relating to water in particular, and to culture more generally in their twin cities, both east of the mountains. To save trees and promote an organic lifestyle, the school organized a Farmers' Market in their parking lot, which funded online e-books. A new computer lab would open the doors to new learning and creative problem-solving, both in the Arts (media) and Sciences disciplines, and will help take environmental initiatives to the next level through stronger communication, collaboration and sharing.

### **BRITISH COLUMBIA:**

## **Alderson Elementary, Coquitlam, BC:**

Thanks to the recycling and waste management efforts of this school, they have been able to reduce the amount of garbage for their entire school to only four bags. The school uses environmental programs to provide engaging, hands-on experiential learning to its students. Two examples are the "Salmonids in the Classroom" program offered in conjunction with the department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Community Garden project. Salmonids are raised in the classroom and then released into a local stream. Children learn the importance of protecting natural resources such as water, salmon and forests. Through the Community Garden initiative, created in partnership with VanCity Credit Union and the Burquitlam Lions Club, the school was able to engage students, their parents and the local community. Parents helped with the construction of raised wooden planter boxes, and all classes have a space in which to grow and harvest food. Several community groups are also involved and grow food that is donated to the local food bank. And most recently, an intergenerational partnership has been developed with a local extended care facility, where seniors will assist children to plant, tend and harvest the garden. A new computer lab will allow students to show their learning in a greater variety of ways such as creating power point presentations, podcasts and videos. Teachers will be able to supplement the hands-on environmental learning by quickly accessing online lessons, materials, and information.

## New Westminster Secondary, New Westminster, BC:

This is a school, that in addition to many more traditional eco initiatives like recycling, using 100% compostable cafeteriaware and paper towel composting, also keeps bees on the rooftop, and students harvest the honey to be sold for fundraisers! Sustainability is a key focus at this school and a major part of the curriculum, with globally important topics such as resource depletion and climate change being emphasized in a number of subjects. Among other creative campaigns to raise awareness around environmental issues, one notable event was “ecoFEST” – an environmental youth festival organized by New Westminster’s student. The event was designed to open up discussion about pertinent environmental issues and raise funds to purchase a residential wind turbine, which is being used to charge reusable batteries. In 2012 the Environment Club organized Take Back the Power of the Tap – an initiative that advocated for the elimination of bottled water in vending machines and raised money to install three water stations. Through taste tests, students realized that tap water actually tasted better than bottled water. New computers will greatly improve energy efficiency and student access to technology at this school.

## QUEBEC:

### John Rennie High School, Pointe-Claire, QC:

John Rennie’s largest initiative towards a more eco-friendly society is its Haden Gardens. In addition to growing a variety of vegetables, spices and herbs, the garden also features a fish pond where a species of fish, now extinct in the wild, are kept in the summer months. Steps to allow their introduction were taken when the school reduced the nitrate levels in the pond’s waters (through water sampling, testing and filtering). The school also purchased a solar panel to demonstrate to students how solar energy works and allow them to charge their devices. Due to the heightened focus on recycling, quantity of waste that’s being properly disposed of has increased dramatically since they began their journey, from 610 kg in 2008 to 5,500 kg in 2013. The school will use their new computer lab to keep its students and staff updated on innovative ideas to reduce waste, maintain a healthy garden and reuse materials within the school building.

### École Saint-Antoine, St-Gédéon, QC:

École Saint-Antoine’s location near a small marsh instills eco-responsible behaviour in its students. Their “Small Marsh in Class” program allows students from Kindergarten to Grade 6 to participate in activities that help them understand their impact on the local ecosystem. They are also active recyclers, collecting batteries, ink cartridges, pop tabs and clementine boxes for projects in their greenhouse and they use recyclable items for various art projects. Their greenhouse is the core of their environmental education program. Throughout the year, students plant and care for different plants. Last year, students prepared a mini herb garden and tomato plants which were then given to seniors in their community. As part of their “A Garden for You” project, students hope to distribute a balcony planter and garden plants, such as small tomatoes, to senior community homes. They also collect any waste from snacks and lunches to use in their compost and participate in the “Horti- youth” program within their municipality which integrates them further into the horticulture program. The new computer lab will help the school continue their environmental efforts and enhance learning, allowing them to research the environment, plants and species conservation.



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