

April 6, 2010

To: A.U.S.D. Board of Education

From: Richard Uhsmann
Albany High School
Special Day Class Teacher

Re: Board Report

Thank you for this opportunity to share some information about an incredibly important educational program happening at the high school. The program I am referring to is known as the AHS Recycling Team. The Recycling Team is composed solely of Special Day Class (SDC) students under my direction. There are currently 7 students and 2 staff involved in the program. The primary goal of the program is to provide recycling services to the entire high school campus but the secondary goals are as equally important. These include but are not limited to: serve as environmental leaders & advocates for recycling efforts on campus; reduce the cost of waste management for the high school; build vocational skills and develop good work habits; and learn about the environment especially the 4 R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle & Rot),

The recycling program has been around for more than eight years, and was started by Mr. Richard Thompson, the previous SDC teacher. I simply expanded upon the concept with my arrival at Albany High. The program now serves as one of the few service learning projects on campus. During the first three years of my tenure at Albany High, I was an active member of the Service-Learning Waste Reduction Project (SLWRP) along with two other Albany High teachers under the auspices of the Alameda County Office of Education.

The SLWRP was a partnership between the Alameda County Office of Education, StopWaste.Org's irecycle@school program, and middle and high schools in Alameda County. SLWRP seeks to empower students by increasing their waste reduction knowledge through engaging active learning experiences. A team of teachers (typically about five from each school) receive support and training from ACOE and StopWaste.Org to develop in-class lessons as well as practical school-wide waste reduction strategies on campus.

Students learn first hand the importance of recycling on a daily basis through this service learning experience. According to the National Commission on Service learning, service-learning:

- “links to academic content and standards;”
- “involves young people in helping to determine and meet real, defined community needs and;”
- “is reciprocal in nature, benefiting both the community and the service providers by combining a service experience with a learning experience.”

The primary emphasis is upon the relationship between humans and their environment. Students learn scientific information related to environmental science, and put their learning into action. The service learning experience provides students with an opportunity to give back to their community while being environmental leaders. In addition, students gain valuable training in vocational skills including teamwork, and problem solving.

Although no longer a part of the SLWRP Project, the Recycling Team has continued to provide this invaluable service to the high school community. Three times a week the recycling team gathers all of the recyclable materials placed into every classroom's blue or yellow recycling bin. These co-mingled materials such as bottles, cans, paper, etc. are collected in rolling bins, and then brought to the large outside recycling container for direct disposal by the Waste Management Company. Our team has recycled approximately 16,000 gallons of material every academic year for the past 8 years, and we have held several Earth Day events. It is in cooperation with all of the high school's students, faculty, staff and administration that this project continues to be successful. It is now just a part of our school culture that we all recycle on a daily basis. The team has also coordinated recycling education efforts with the Earth Team, the local student club interested in the environment and environmental action sponsored by the other former SLWRP teachers.

Hopes and dreams for the future:

- an AUSD school-wide celebration of Earth Day
- an AUSD school-wide effort toward recycling and composting

I invite everyone to come and visit us in Room 219 to learn more about our recycling efforts, and see the SDC students in action. This project is truly a win-win situation. Thanks for your continuing support and advocacy on behalf of all A.U.S.D. students.