

Gables Elementary School

Neptune Township, Monmouth County

Gables Elementary School is the sole representation from a former Abbott district involved in the NJSSP. The district boasts two recently constructed facilities that earned the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold and LEED Platinum certification. Gables Elementary is the oldest facility in the district, which drove the project team’s excitement and interest in finding ways to reduce operating expenses and prove that old buildings can still perform.

The district leadership, district nurse, school principal and teaching staff came together on various efforts to address the ever-increasing asthma rates in their student population. The facilities director, a facilities trainer in the state, successfully transitioned to micro-fiber towels, backpack vacuums, green cleaning products and high efficiency HVAC units. The team worked together to earn the school an asthma-friendly award and continues to strive for healthy learning environments. Some best practices are student-friendly signs in the lavatories thanking students for not wearing fragrances. By creating a culture of respect, adults and students are able to work, play and learn in a safer environment.

While maintaining good indoor air quality and tracking nebulizer administrations, the school green team engaged students by starting a composting program. To make sure their efforts at targeting cafeteria waste would be successful from the onset, the team collaborated with the director of science curriculum to create lesson plans and processes.

During a site visit, the green team shared observations of a shifting culture among the staff at Gables. They recalled the moment they walked into the first NJSSP all-team training with their Styrofoam coffee cups and pads of paper and admitted that they learned more than they expected by looking around the room at the people who brought reusable beverage containers and even some cutlery and cloth napkins. Over the past three years, by leading through action, the team members have changed their habits and now serve as role models for their peers. Neptune School District and Gables Elementary are leading through transformative environmental education programs, best building practices and using their buildings as teaching tools for students and the community.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

Establish a program that reduces landfill waste to composting. Reduce asthma instances by **10%**

SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

- collaboration
- ability to start with simple goals
- observe and listen

“ WORDS OF WISDOM

Through vertical and lateral collaboration, Gables Elementary and Neptune School District achieved recognition for addressing a common health issue (Asthma) plaguing children and adults, and continue to expand environmental education to include building operations.

Sally Millaway and Michelle DeRitis, team leaders ”

