

SUMMARY OF GREEN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Oxbridge Academy is fortunate. Educators, staff, administration, parents, and students have been able to affect change and policy in the school since its inaugural year. This enabled unique and amazing opportunities for students to remove bottled water and encourage reusable bottles through filtration stations throughout the school, effecting energy efficiency through economic evaluations, or supporting dining facilities use of locally sourced organic foods. Administration and building engineers give of their valuable time to listen to student research results regarding sustainability; take their suggestions into account and either institute recommendations or morph recommendations to better-fit feasibility. This pervasive attitude of respect allows students to gain a sense of ownership in their school. It is rarely a top-down manifestation of environmental initiatives, but more of a collaborative effort. This includes a team of educators that manage projects throughout the school to encourage collaboration and cohesiveness. Educators are also given time on Wednesday mornings to collaborate and integrate their specialties. Additionally we have an art department and a STEAM Lab dedicated to assisting teachers in projects with supplies and creativity and the lake out back was tested for human health to allow clubs, teams, and classes to utilize it. Educators are fairly environmentally aware and conscious in all their endeavors: paperless courses that use electronic textbooks, web sites for assignment management, and email for submission and return of assignments; double sided B&W copy machines, recycled goods, conservation of energy and water, gardening, and organic food health. We are always asking each other for tricks to computer programs to decrease waste and bringing in unwanted objects from home to either donate or use in project development.

Students share these philosophies. When they desire to change a policy or system they are aware they need to write proposals, petition administration, and appeal to the student body in order to have those changes come to fruition. For instance when students wanted to use the lake on campus for fishing, paddle boarding, and kayaking they first went to the Director of Athletics, then followed the procedure that secured funding for chemical testing of the water to assure both lake and human health. The lake was deemed safe and students have been enjoying it in several different courses! It was the students who insisted on recycling themselves when they noticed incorrect recycling practices. They divided the school into sections, have a sign up sheet, and recycle paper and comingled objects in all parts of the school daily. This includes the request for earth friendly "take-away" containers from lunch, and larger recycling bins in the cafeterias. STUDENTS requested these things!

Parents, siblings, students, teachers, staff, and administrators all participate in community-service. Tomorrow we are all going to plant hundreds of trees in the Everglades with the Marshall Foundation! However, this kind of community response is normal at Oxbridge. There is always a variety of people that put in sweat equity on the Green Clubs monthly projects intended to benefit state and national parks, refuges, and preserves. They understand that protection of what is wild is for everyone! Animals, plants, people, and future generations! This is why OAPB is a vital part of the Annual Sea Level Rise Symposium and why so many students participate in independent and class research projects designed to benefit their neighbors and the community at large.

These research projects usually involve data that organizations would like to have but either cannot afford the analysis or do not have the manpower to commit to the process. By creating long-term data collection with stakeholders, for stakeholders, students gain valuable field sampling experience, learn computer-modeling skills in GIS and statistics, increase their professional social networks, and potentially master the concepts employed in science, math, economics, digital media, government, sociology, and anthropology. Their writing skills improve, they begin to think critically, and their confidence soars after their presentations at professional conferences. The pride they feel is evident in the glow of their skin and their wide bright reflective eyes matched only by the enthusiasm in their voices as they retell their story again and again to friends, family, and OAPB staff.

Yet! By far! Their favorite is Field Day! Field days are academic as well as artistic and physical. Administration supports this integrated curriculum with an overarching theme that gives all students a chance to participate and succeed. This happens approximately 2-3 times a year, involves the entire school, and students compete for points based on team colors. Teams are not divided by grade to encourage camaraderie among ages and reduce bullying. Students will compete for spirit points through an academic brain bowl; artistic designs on organic cookies or recycled materials used as flags, out door games tailored to theme, mathematical treasure hunts, or any other creative endeavors staff and students can dream up!

It is the joy, enthusiasm, and dedication exuding from an entire community that enables
such amazing endeavors to come to fruition.