

Dear “Think Green, Win Green” Judges,

Through extensive research, we have discovered many things Joel Barlow High School can do to make “Barlow” a greener school. With the “Live Green, Win Green” grant, these suggestions can be implemented to create a more eco-friendly school environment.

This past year, Barlow has changed our food service provider from Sodexo to Chartwells. Chartwells is a more eco-friendly food provider that focuses on organic food and environmental stability. A quote from their website shows this fact: “ We seek to partner with suppliers who embrace sustainable practices. For example, we ask our suppliers to use recyclable containers when making deliveries at our facilities.” However, in our cafeteria, we would like to make some changes in the serving materials. When we polled Barlow students about how to make Barlow more eco-friendly, the most common comment was ‘get rid of the Styrofoam trays.’ Styrofoam trays take 100 years to decompose. Much of the debris we find in the ocean is Styrofoam. Also, Styrofoam has been linked to bird and wildlife starvation. We believe that with this grant, we can get more eco-friendly serving materials. We believe that bio-compostable trays, utensils, and napkins would help reduce Barlow’s harmful waste. The best option we have found is a company named BioSmart. They sell biodegradable and bio-compostable trays, knives, forks, spoons, plates, and napkins. The prices range from product to product, but one example price for a package of 10,000 napkins is \$44.87

(<http://www.biosmartbiodegradable.com?BiodegradableFoodserviceSupplies>). These are the best option for Barlow because they are both biodegradable and bio-compostable, and they can also stand up to high temperatures of 212° F and are sturdy enough for thick foods. We would also like to get compost bins and informational posters to inform the general Barlow population of how and why we should compost. We would love to implement these changes, but we lack the funding to carry out these proposals. This grant could help us pay for items, such as the serving utensils, trays, posters, compost bins, and the necessary staff needed to manage and transport the compost.

One initiative that Chartwells has implements in Canada is the clean plate project. Students and faculty at the school estimate the wasted food at that school and they use this as a benchmark to reduce waste. As the students and faculty lower their waste, the reduction is changed to a dollar amount. That money is then donated to food banks or given back to the community. By creating this program at our high school, we would be offering an incentive to reduce students’ waste.

Another suggestion from Barlow students was about paper consumption. Many students appreciate the fact that Barlow encourages double-sided printing. However, many students complain about the paper wasted by their teachers printing huge packets. We would like to put in a paper quota for each teacher, meaning that they get a certain amount of paper a year based on the number of students in their classes. If they go over their limit, they will not be able to print or copy any more paper. We believe this will encourage teachers to use Google Docs or their e-boards to decrease the amount of paper used. We could also buy recycled paper with the grant provided. This would definitely help the environment because saving one ton of paper could “save enough energy to power the average American home for six months. Save 7,000 gallons of water. Save 3.3 cubic yards of landfill space. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by one metric ton of carbon equivalent,” (MTCE). It would be an amazing accomplishment if Barlow could have this kind of an impact on our environment.

We would also like to establish a no-idling zone for buses and student pickup and drop-off. When car engines are left running as parents and bus drivers wait for students, the engine creates air pollution. To do this, we would need to hire a staff member to monitor this area and create noticeable and effective informational signs to promote and remind drivers of this initiative.

Some other Barlow students suggested, “getting rid of the TVs.” Barlow has TVs dispersed throughout the school to project daily announcements. However, leaving the TVs on during the day wastes much energy. We propose to turn on the TVs only when students are in the hallway, including 10-minute break and passing time. This would greatly decrease the energy waste. We could show short videos that promote eco-friendly lifestyles, reminding people to conserve and recycle resources in their daily lives.

Although the recycling club does a great job at Barlow reducing the amount of trash at school, we believe that adding reverse vending machines would greatly increase the number of people that recycle at Barlow because it provides a monetary incentive for doing so. One company that sells this type of machine is Reverse Vending Corporation (<http://reversevending.co.uk/reven300.php>). This is an effective and sustainable product because it will benefit Barlow indefinitely.

Although Barlow has had many improvements to become more environmentally friendly, we believe that these proposals will make it even better. With the help of this grant, we can make these changes a reality. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

The CT Academy for Science and Research (CTASR), Joel Barlow High School (Redding, CT)