Schools to expand recycling

Lafayette declares pilot program a success

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The Lafayette Parish school system plans to expand recycling to every school in the parish after a successful pilot program brought big reductions in waste going to landfills, along with the prospect of saving money on garbage bills.

In a pilot program started last year, roughly 36 tons of material that would have otherwise gone in the trash was recycled, according to figures from the school system.

That figure represents about 20 percent of the total commercial recycling over the same time period for all of Lafayette, and the reductions were so dramatic the school system’s waste contractor has recommended reducing the number of dumpsters at schools with recycling programs.

“As we go into the next school year, we are going to put recycling containers at all the other sites,” said school system Planning and Facilities Director Kyle Bordelon.

The school system had no organized recycling until the School Board approved a pilot program in August after two parents at Woodvale Elementary — Amanda Waddle and Catherine Schoeffler Comeaux — took the initiative to launch a recycling effort there to demonstrate the impact it could have systemwide.

Waddle recalled in an interview last year on how surprised she was to learn there was no recycling at her daughter’s school.

“I said, ‘The school doesn’t recycle? Really? How can that be?’” Waddle said. “We have to change that.”

In about five months, students at the school recycled 2,598 pounds of paper and 1,692 plastic bottles, more than enough to demonstrate the possibilities for school officials.

“We were not doing any type of recycling,” Bordelon said. “We decided to delve a little deeper and try a little harder.”

The pilot program started with five schools but quickly grew to 18 schools and two administrative sites by the end of 2016.

Bordelon said the plan is to expand the program next school year to all 42 schools in the parish and four administrative sites.

Reducing the number of dumpsters at the 20 sites with recycling last school year will result in savings of about $25,000, Bordelon said, and he expects more savings with the expansion of the program.