**Bin It! Creating a Recycling Program at Singapore International School**

**By: Year 7 International Class, SIS@Danang**

**Background:**

When choosing our project for the GSL Global Goals Competition, our team wanted to choose something simple and straightforward where we could make a big impact in a short period of time. As we considered the possibilities, recycling became the obvious choice, which addresses **Global Goal #12: Responsible Consumption and Production.** In many western countries, recycling efforts have been going on for a long time. In Vietnam, however, most people are not aware of the importance of recycling. In fact, many people do not even put their rubbish in a bin! At our school, Singapore International School (SIS) @Danang, we discuss recycling in our classes, but as a school, we have not had a program in place to collect recyclables. So, we decided to create a recycling project at SIS@Danang, the first time this has been done at any SIS school!

**Research, Planning and Roll-Out**

We started out by doing research about what should go into the recycle bin. It was much more complicated than we realized. In the end, we decided to keep our first attempt at recycling very simple, and focused on specific items that many students use: plastic bottles, aluminum cans, cardboard milk and juice cartons, and glass bottles and jars (although we do not have very much glass on our campus).

Because there was so much to do in a short amount of time, we divided ourselves into two teams:

Team #1: Presentation and Digital Portfolio Team

Team #1 was the “Presentation and Digital Portfolio Team.” This team created the PowerPoint presentation to educate students and staff about the project. The presentation (a) discussed why recycling is so important; (b) showed pictures of the terrible effect that plastic waste has on animal and sea life; (c) explained which items would be recycled and which would go in the normal rubbish bin; (d) taught students where the recycle bins would be located and how to use them; and (e) had a “Fun Quiz” to make sure everyone understood. Our entire class delivered this presentation at a school-wide assembly (Grades 3 – High School). By the end of the presentation, students had learned a lot about why it is important to recycle and how to recycle at SIS@Danang. As for our younger students (Kindergarten – Grade 2), we prepared a simpler version of the same presentation and delivered it in their classrooms.

At the conclusion of the project, Team #1 created a digital portfolio to show everything we accomplished. We decided to use pictures with a musical background to tell the story.

Team #1 members were: Nguyen Le Viet Ha, Team Leader; Phan Anh Thao Nhi, Secretary; Le Quoc Truong Nguyen (Nick), Member; and Dong Quoc Tri (Happy), Member.

Team #2: Logistics, Signage and Written Report Team

Team #2 was the “Logistics, Signage and Written Report Team.” This team made the posters to advertise the project, decided bin placement, monitored our progress and wrote the written report at the end. We started with five small bins: two in our canteen where students eat, one on the first floor where students and parents enter, one just outside the school, and one in the staff lunch room. Our principal and teacher helped us to buy special bins from a local store. We used a different color bin liner (blue) so that it would be easy for the janitors to identify the recyclables.

As for signage, we made four types of signs to post around the school and decided where they should be placed. Pictures of these signs are in our digital portfolio. Two of the signs encouraged people to recycle in general, and were hung in various locations around the school. The other two posters provided instructions (with pictures) about which items should be placed in which bin; these were hung above the recycle and rubbish bins. We did need some assistance from our principal and her Vietnamese staff to communicate with the janitors about the new recycling process. They were very excited to help!

Team #2 members were: Dao Ngoc Huy Cuong (Toto), Team Leader; Le Thi Ngoc Han (Jane), Secretary; Phan Chau Duc (Tin), Member; Vu Lam Hoang Nhi (Nina), Member; and Tran Tue Man (Sumi), Member.

**Monitoring**

Once the recycling project was rolled out, we worked together to make sure that students were using the bins correctly. For two weeks after our presentation, we monitored the usage of the bins, particularly in the student canteen, to make sure that students were sorting their recyclables and regular rubbish correctly. Team #2 created a schedule for our class to take turns watching the bins during morning recess, lunch and afternoon snack. We began with 15-minute shifts, but after a day or so, decided that shorter shifts would work better so that no one had to miss much recess or lunch!

With 5-minute shifts, our monitoring schedule worked well. However, it took a couple of weeks until students never had to be reminded of the proper bin. We also did “spot-checks” of all of the bins, and over time determined that students and staff were properly sorting recyclables and regular rubbish.

**Changes and Improvements to the Process**

Throughout the project, we constantly asked ourselves how we could improve our process. First, we made some changes to our team leaders. At the beginning, we were given the opportunity to volunteer to be team leader. Over time, however, it became clear that other members of the team were actually taking the lead in moving the project forward.

Second, we needed a bigger recycling bin in our canteen. When we started the project, we purchased small bins because we were not sure how much recyclable material there would be. Our project was so successful that it soon became clear that two small bins in the canteen were not nearly enough. With the support and funding of our school, we purchased a full-size recycling bin for our canteen!

**Next Steps**

We have been very pleased with the results of our initial recycling process, but realize it is only a first step. Next steps include (1) continuing education on the use of the bins; (2) sorting different kinds of recyclables; (3) recycling cardboard and paper; and (4) helping other SIS schools roll out our project.

**Conclusion and Reflection**

In conclusion, we have been very pleased with our results. We started as a school where recycling was discussed, but there was no process in place. Now, SIS@Danang is a school where students and staff try hard to use recycle bins and even remind each other when someone puts an item in the wrong bin. It is important that we give reminders in our assemblies from time to time, as sometimes we still see some rubbish in the recycling bin. We look forward to continuing the recycling effort next year, and expanding our process to cardboard and paper. We also look forward to helping roll out our project at other SIS schools!

Finally, this project has really made us think about the power of teamwork. In the beginning, we did not see how we could roll out this project in such a short period of time. However, by “dividing and conquering,” we were able to take advantage of all of our strengths to get the job done. We are very proud of the contribution we have made to our school, and thank the GSL Global Goals Competition for the opportunity!