

2016 TEEA Winner Youth: Kiowa Recycling Center

Karen Freelove, Teacher

Six years ago I had six young men that took the environmental science class and it was the first year it was offered and there wasn't a curriculum by the state. We wrote our own curriculum, and if you ask enough higher order, critical thinking questions, you end up with this twenty four hour recycling center.

Michael Lee, Superintendent of Booker ISD

We were implementing, you know, a new science class and the first year was really a great year for those kids. They designed this building, they learned a lot about local government because they had to go before the City Council and our zoning committee.

Laurette Wauer, Parent

Each year the program has built on something else. One year it was the community garden. One year it was getting these bins built.

Benjamin Pantleo, Student

We started welding in our sophomore year. It's definitely rewarding when people ask us what do we do. We weld but there's kids that work on the business end of this so we take huge pride in what we do.

Karen Freelove, Teacher

The community garden has been growing for the past four years. Here you see seniors working, we have elementary kids come over. We're implementing an irrigation system that the kids are building, the metal rods that will serve as a temporary green house.

Laurette Wauer, Parent

I've had three kids go through the environmental science program here at Booker. They've written grants, they've written presentations, gone and talked to businesses, school boards, City Council.

Lexi Swenhaugen, Student

We come every Friday and I just go in and I tell them, ok so we're here to pick it up this week and then they just unlock everything and we load it up and then move on to the next place.

Cynthia Rios, Student

We don't have twenty Ms. Freeloves to follow everybody around. You have to do your own job, you have to work hard, you have to get everything sorted correctly and all that so it does help everybody learn responsibility.

Laurette Wauer, Parent

They're taking life long skills that they wouldn't get from very many other programs in a high school.

Karen Freelove, Teacher

We recycle about ninety tons of cardboard a year, not to mention the plastic and paper and the things we're keeping out of our local landfill.

Michael Lee, Superintendent of Booker ISD

Besides the educational benefit, that's a real benefit to our community.

Karen Freelove, Teacher

I think sometimes I as a teacher, along with probably all teachers, we underestimate the power of kids and what they can do. The first day of class I tell them; you are no longer a kid you're an adult, you're a business owner, and for six years I've never had a kid not live up to that expectation.