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Schools check on recycling progress

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Recycling coordinators at Leon County Schools got a glimpse as to how well their school's recycling efforts are doing for the first time Monday.

But they didn't get the chance to compare their efforts to other schools.

More than 20 coordinators met at Leon High School, and they were given a customized breakdown.

In addition to questions geared toward city and county officials who keep tabs on the numbers, coordinators listened to what other schools were doing.

"It was extremely helpful," said Emily Ruddell, the recycling coordinator at Hartsfield Elementary School.

Since August, the school district has recycled more than 190,460 pounds of paper and 10,460 pounds of cans and bottles, according to Anja DeLoach, recycling and special-services coordinator for the city.

Although numbers were not available for schools in the incorporated areas, DeLoach said, recycling in schools in the city has increased by 91 percent.

That's an improvement from last year when all schools combined recycled only 4 percent of materials. Although some schools had bustling recycling efforts, the district decided to have a more collective approach starting in August.

Merry Ortega, director of secondary schools, said she's cautious about putting each school's recycling numbers in the public eye. She said some people may view the numbers as a "good school vs. bad school" perspective if some schools have not had any or significant increases their recycling percentage.

The results that each coordinator received Monday pertained only to that person's school and did not give results for other schools in the district.

"The purpose is not to go from school to school," said Ortega, adding that some schools may not have all the tools needed to recycle. "Each school has a unique situation."

Susan Babcock, recycling coordinator at Kate Sullivan Elementary School, said students have to be "heavily chaperoned" on her campus since there's construction going on, which makes it difficult to reach the large recycling containers.

"We've had a tough time getting things rolling," she said. But she added, "I really see the value, big value, in this."

In addition to putting a coordinator at each school, the district has also created a "Green Team" consisting of students from various schools.