

**PENNSYLVANIA GRADE SCHOOL CHILDREN LEARN LESSON IN RECYCLING BY SIMPLY LOOKING UP AT THE CEILING**

*Lausch Elementary School in Reading Reclaims 60,000 Square Feet of Old Ceiling Tiles Rather Than Dumping Them in a Landfill*

When students at M.L.Lausch Elementary School in Reading, Pennsylvania learn about recycling and its beneficial effect on the environment, they need only look up to see recycling in action.

That's because the school recently took advantage of a unique ceiling recycling program during a renovation of the school and reclaimed nearly 60,000 square feet of old ceiling tiles rather than sending them to a landfill.

Located in Exeter Township just east of Reading, the 65,000-square-foot school was constructed in 1973 and currently houses about 450 students from kindergarten to fourth grade. This past summer, the facility underwent a major refurbishment, including the installation of new doors, new paint in the corridors, a new phone system and the replacement of all the acoustical ceilings in the classrooms, corridors and cafeteria.

In a project of this type, the old suspended ceiling panels would have normally been removed, thrown into a roll-off container and eventually hauled to a landfill for disposal. In the case of Lausch Elementary, however, the old panels are finding new life as a result of a ceiling recycling program offered by Armstrong Ceiling Systems, the country's largest producer of acoustical ceilings.

**Program Offers Alternative to Landfill Disposal**

The program, which is the only one of its kind, enables schools, colleges and other non-residential facilities to ship old ceilings from renovation projects to an Armstrong ceiling plant as an alternative to landfill disposal. As part of the program, the company even pays freight costs for shipping the old ceilings, which it uses as raw materials in the manufacture of new acoustical ceilings. Over 16,000,000 square feet, or 10,700,000 pounds, of discarded ceiling tiles have been recycled since Armstrong began the program.

To participate in the program, the building owner or contractor must first verify that the old acoustical ceiling panels can be recycled. The old ceilings do not have to be Armstrong products to qualify. At Lausch Elementary, the old 2'x 4' ceiling panels were found to be recyclable and thereby eligible for the program. They were replaced with new medium textured Fine Fissured ceiling panels from Armstrong.

Following verification, the owner or contractor must then stack the old ceiling tiles on pallets and wrap them for pick-up. Once there is a full trailer load, or 30,000 square feet of old ceilings, Armstrong will arrange for a truck to pick up the material and transfer it to its nearest manufacturing facility. The ceiling panels from Lausch Elementary were shipped to the Armstrong plant in Marietta, Pennsylvania.

**Program's Benefits to Environment Are Many**

Dennis Bolibruch, Supervisor of Buildings & Grounds for the Exeter Township School District, explains the district's decision to recycle old ceilings was an easy one. "The district is very conscious about the environment,"



As a result of the Armstrong Ceiling Recycling Program, Lausch Elementary School was able to reclaim 60,000 square feet of old ceiling tiles rather than dumping them in a landfill.

# case study

he says. "For example, we have a variety of programs ranging from environmental trails at both the junior and senior high schools to the recycling of aluminum and paper at all schools. Once we learned we could also recycle construction waste such as ceiling tiles, it was simply the right thing to do."

The school district learned about the ceiling recycling program from George Leonhardt III of Supreme Ceilings in Reading, the contracting firm that was responsible for replacing the ceiling. "We explained the program to them and they quickly agreed to it because of all the environmental benefits," he states.

## **First Ceiling Recycling Job for Contractor**

For Leonhardt and Supreme Ceilings, Lausch Elementary School marked the first ceiling recycling project for the company. "Even though it was our first recycling job, everything went very smoothly," Leonhardt states. "According to our crew in the field, there was no inconvenience whatsoever, and overall, it was a good experience."

Bolibruch agrees. "Everything worked out well," he says. "This was also our first experience with ceiling recycling, but we were able to coordinate everything with the contractor so well that the entire effort evolved very efficiently."

In terms of time, Leonhardt notes that there was very little difference between the process for recycling old ceilings and that for dumping them. "When recycling, the crew does have to stack and wrap the old ceilings, but they can do that right at the site. They don't have to haul the old ceilings out to the disposal container like they do when dumping. As a result, the process is about the same when it comes to time."

Because the processes are similar in time, the ceiling recycling program has little, if any, adverse impact on demolition or construction schedules. The program can also be less expensive than the cost of local handling, transport, container fees and landfill fees.

## **First, But Not Last, Ceiling Recycling Project**

While the Lausch Elementary School may have been the first ceiling recycling job for Supreme Ceilings, it will not be its last. "We'll definitely recycle old ceilings on future jobs whenever we can," Leonhardt states. "If a similar situation like this one arises, we'll offer it again because it gives us and our customer an opportunity to do something for the environment at little or no cost."

The Exeter School District feels the same way. "Children learn about the importance of the environment and recycling in school, so it's only appropriate for schools to recycle," Bolibruch states. "And now that we know it's possible, we'll certainly recycle old ceiling tiles every time we can."