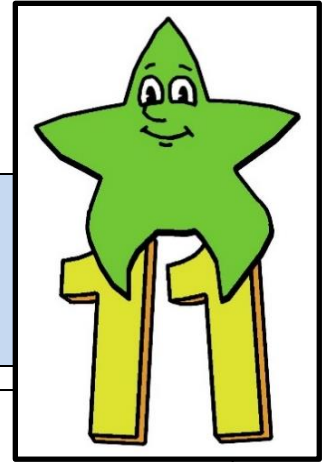


Zero Waste School Parties and Events



eco-cycle

Snapshot

With a little advanced planning, large (schoolwide) and small (classroom) celebrations at school can incorporate Zero Waste methods, leading to fewer waste items and a healthier environment.

<https://bit.ly/eco-cycle-zero-waste-schools-guide>

Objective: Little or no trash will be produced during school parties and events.

Age Groups: K-12th grade and adults

Setting: Classroom or larger space(s) on school property

Project Duration:

- Planning meeting: 30 minutes
- Organizing materials and volunteers: 1-2 hours
- Party or event: varies

Materials:

- Waste-reduction tip sheet
- Internet access (for researching party suppliers)
- Reusable or compostable partyware
- Zero Waste Event signage or banner (for all-school events)

Why This Project Matters:

Like the winter holidays, year-round parties and events can produce large volumes of trash. Common party-planning trends often encourage the use of disposable cups, plates, utensils, decorations, and sometimes trinkets or favors, all of which are destined for the landfill. When the party fun is over, bags of waste are discarded, posing further harm to the environment.

Project Summary:

Parents and school staff who plan school parties and events will learn about recyclable, compostable, and reusable options for common party accessories, and will make other party-planning choices with Zero Waste in mind.



Implementation:

Classroom parties:

1. Coordinate a meeting with parents or staff members who are organizing the parties. Allow enough time for questions, brainstorming, and discussion.
2. Provide party planners and teachers with tips on reducing party waste (see Zero Waste Event & Party Tips below).
3. If choosing to use reusables (the least-wasteful option), give organizers a list of discount/thrift stores that stock reusable cups, plates, and utensils (see Checklist for Zero Waste Event & Party Kits below). If choosing to use compostables, give organizers a list of stores/internet sites that stock BPI-certified compostable partyware. Plastic-coated paper plates, bowls, and cups must be kept out of the compost. Plain paper napkins are compostable. Aluminum foil, metal cans, drink cartons and plastic bottles can be recycled. (Juice pouches are not recyclable.)
4. Consider creating or buying reusable party decorations for each class.

5. Coordinate the placement of extra compost collection bins, if needed, and the emptying of those bins into the school compost dumpster (or the transport of the compostables to a compost facility if compost collection is not established at the school).

All-school events:

1. Coordinate a meeting with parents or staff members who are organizing the event(s). Allow enough time for questions, brainstorming, and discussion.
2. Provide party planners with tips on reducing party waste (see printable Zero Waste Event & Party Tips below).
3. Provide organizers with a list of stores/internet sites that stock BPI-certified compostable partyware. Planners may also consider using durable cups, plates and/or utensils if seeking the least-wasteful option (see Zero Waste Event & Party Tips below). Ask for parent volunteers to take and wash reusables at home or utilize the school's kitchen dishwasher if possible. Another option is to have families bring their own reusable cups, plates, utensils, and napkins that they can use and take back home.
4. Plastic-coated paper plates, bowls, and cups must be kept out of the compost. Plain paper napkins are compostable. Aluminum foil, metal cans, drink cartons and plastic bottles can be recycled. (Juice pouches are not recyclable.)
5. Consider creating or buying reusable decorations that could be used at multiple events.
6. Recruit parent, student, and/or staff volunteers to monitor waste stations during the event and assist guests with their waste sorting.
7. Display signage that the event is a Zero Waste event to educate the school community.

Assessment:

Monitor the school's classroom trash and/or trash and compost dumpsters to gauge the success of the project in reducing waste. Let the school community know how successful the effort has been. Success will grow with repeated events and the change in school community culture.

Related Activities:

Trimming Holiday Waste – Chapter 7
Conducting a Waste Audit – Chapter 30

Extensions:

- Save the trash bag(s), if any, from the party or event and conduct a trash audit (see Conducting a Waste Audit, Chapter 30). Discuss with students and staff what was found in the trash and brainstorm ideas for how to avoid those items at future parties or events.
- Have a class or student group monitor the trash, compost, and recycling to prepare a report on the success of the project. Share the report with the party or event planners for future improvement.



ZERO WASTE EVENT & PARTY TIPS

Use these suggestions to help reduce waste at events:

Reducing and reusing help the Earth the most! Recycle and compost everything you can.

PLATES



Durable plates can be washed and reused.



Plain, uncoated paper plates are compostable and generally less expensive.



Avoid colorfully-decorated plates, which are plastic coated (must be landfilled).

UTENSILS



Durable utensils can be washed and reused. Provide finger foods which require no utensils.



Compostable utensils must be BPI certified.



Avoid single-use, plastic utensils (must be landfilled).

NAPKINS



Cloth napkins can be washed and reused. Students can create their own napkins from bandanas, old-t-shirts or fabric.



Paper napkins and paper towels are compostable.

DRINKS



Durable cups can be washed and reused.



Bottles, cans and cartons are recyclable. Empty liquids before recycling!



Compostable cups are available for hot and cold beverages!



Avoid juice pouches and single-use straws (must be landfilled).

TABLECLOTHS



Wash and reuse cloth or plastic tablecloths.



Avoid single-use disposable plastic tablecloths (must be landfilled).

Encourage event attendees to bring their own reusables.



Look for BPI certified compostable cups, utensils, and products.



COMPOSTABLE
IN INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES
Check locally, as these do not exist in many communities. Not suitable for backyard composting. CERT # SAMPLE

Create Your Own Reusable Kit!

Reusable plates, cups, utensils, napkins and serving ware.



Ask volunteers to wash and return reusable kit materials.

MORE ZERO WASTE TIPS

- Choose or make reusable decorations.
- Prevent food waste. Bring containers to send leftovers home.
- Recycle clean, balled-up aluminum foil and aluminum trays.
- Compost non-metallic cupcake wrappers.
- Avoid plastic wrap and plastic bags.
- Reduce packaging waste. Buy in bulk!