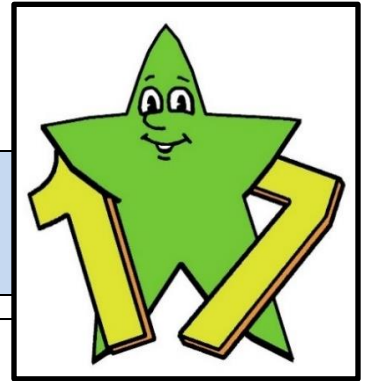


# Purchasing Policy 1: Classroom Policy

eco-cycle

## Snapshot

With a teacher's guidance, students will draft an Environmental Purchasing Policy for their classroom.



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

**Objective:** Students will be able to identify three ways in which the class's Environmental Purchasing Policy helps the environment.

**Age Groups:** 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade (can be applied to secondary classes as well)

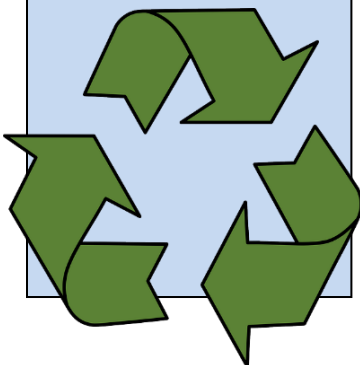
**Setting:** Classroom

### Project Duration:

- Ongoing
- In-class time: 1 hour

### Materials:

- Examples of recycled classroom supplies (tissues, notebooks, etc.)
- Chart paper and markers for data tracking
- Paper and pencils for writing letters



## Why This Project Matters:

Real recycling involves three steps: collecting the recyclable material, manufacturing it into something new, *and* purchasing those new, recycled products. Without consumer demand for recycled products, the collected recyclables have no use, and the process cannot be sustained. The same is true for non-toxic and sustainably-made products. The availability of these products will only grow if consumers create a demand for them.

## Project Summary:

When a teacher or student is purchasing supplies to be used in the classroom, some products will be more environmentally-friendly than others. Explaining the differences between them makes for authentic teaching moments. To make it official, have students write an Environmental Purchasing Policy for the green purchasing of shared classroom supplies such as writing paper, tissues, and pencils.

## Implementation:

1. Have students track the use of several classroom supplies over a 2–4-week period (such as making a note when a new tissue box or package of pencils is opened, or otherwise noting the quantities used). Then, project the use of these supplies throughout the school year. Discuss which natural resources are used to make the supplies and where the supplies will end up when discarded.
2. Show students what the recycling symbol looks like and how to identify a product that is made from recycled materials (it will usually be written on the package: “made from recycled materials” or something similar). Discuss the difference between “recycled” and “recyclable”. Have students create a list of classroom materials that could be purchased as recycled products.



3. Discuss other green purchasing ideas for the classroom. For instance: purchasing large boxes of tissues (recycled, if possible) instead of small packets, buying snacks in bulk containers, using dry-erase boards instead of paper, and choosing sponges instead of paper towels for cleaning. For each shared idea, discuss how this action would benefit the environment (e.g., buying snacks in bulk reduces packaging so fewer natural resources are needed and less trash is created).
4. With students' help, draft a classroom Environmental Purchasing Policy. This policy can apply to supplies for classroom parties, replenishing shared supplies, and even buying individual supplies. (Note: recycled products often cost slightly more than non-recycled. Allow students to choose from several different purchases to fulfill the policy and include purchases that are cost-neutral [such as buying in bulk] so that students from lower-income families are not expected to purchase beyond their means.)
5. Have students draft letters to their families explaining the Environmental Purchasing Policy. The teacher may supplement these letters with a short note explaining the goal of the policy and that it is optional.
6. Revisit the policy throughout the school year to add new ideas, especially those generated by students.

**Assessment:**

The student letters to their families can serve as the assessment. Instruct students to include at least three examples of how the class's Environmental Purchasing Policy helps the environment.

**Related Activities:**

- “One or None” Paper Towel Campaign – Chapter 5
- Paper Reduction Campaign – Chapter 6
- Zero Waste School Parties and Events – Chapter 11
- Repurposing in the Classroom – Chapter 12
- Purchasing Policy 2: School/District Policy – Chapter 17

**Extensions:**

- Establish other environmental classroom policies, such as requiring reusable water bottles in the classroom, limiting paper towel use to one per hand-drying, and/or creating a sponge use system for cleaning classroom spills (instead of paper towels).
- Hold a “Surplus Supply Exchange Day” (see Purchasing Policy 2, Chapter 17) and solicit/ include donations from families.
- To minimize the purchase of paper:
  - 3-hole punch used paper with 1 blank side for use in binders.
  - Have teaching teams coordinate assignments before making copies to reduce duplication.
  - Ask students to use scrap paper for first drafts of writing assignments.

