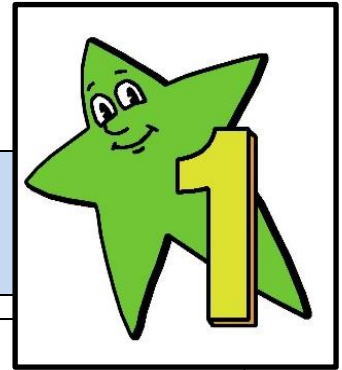


Eco-Wise School Supplies



eco-cycle

Snapshot

This project provides an easy way for busy parents to support ecological principles in the rush of back-to-school buying.

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

Objective: Students, families, and staff will research, promote, and purchase recycled, reusable, non-toxic, and sustainable school supplies.

Age Groups: K-12th grade

Setting: Schools, homes, retail stores

Project Duration:

- Research and promotion: 5-10 hours in spring semester
- Activity: 1 week in subsequent fall semester

Materials:

- Internet access
- Phone access
- Printer access
- Box for collecting participation slips
- Prizes
- Chart paper
- Markers

Why This Project Matters:

Increasing the purchase and use of sustainable school supplies lessens the negative impact of resource extraction on the planet. It will also contribute to the success of the recycling industry and increase landfill diversion. When consumers buy recycled, reusable, non-toxic, and sustainable products, they send a message to manufacturers in support of sustainable industries.

Project Summary:

Students and staff will work together and learn about the impacts of waste on the environment and the importance of purchasing sustainable products. Parents will receive a list of stores and websites where sustainable school supplies are available. Student and classroom incentives will encourage the purchase and use of sustainable products.

Implementation:

The research and promotion for this activity is conducted during the spring semester of a school year in preparation for the prize drawing in the fall of the following school year.

Awareness activities to do with a student group:

- Discuss the difference between the terms *recyclable*, *recycled*, and *reusable*. (See glossary for definitions.)
- Review other relevant vocabulary like *non-toxic*, *sustainable*, *upcycled*, *eco-friendly*, etc.
- Discuss what the phrase “closing the loop” means. For the recycling industry to thrive, we must collect recyclables and purchase recycled products. If recycled products are not purchased, the companies that manufacture these products will not survive, our collected recyclables will be overabundant, and some will be discarded into landfills. Discuss how consumer demand affects other sustainable products. (If we don’t purchase them, companies won’t make them!)

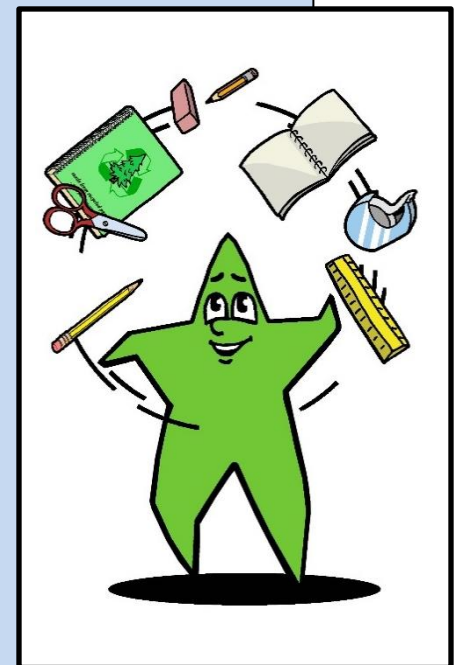
- Consult a globe or world map to track down where items in a classroom come from (look for “*Made in _____*” labels on common items). Talk about the environmental impacts of importing goods from other countries (such as the energy used to transport items to the U.S.).

Promote (spring) and purchase or use (summer and fall) eco-wise school supplies:

- In the spring, create a checklist of typical school supplies (see below for suggested list). By phone or site-visit, have students survey local stores to locate available recycled, reusable, non-toxic, or sustainable options (e.g., art supply stores, department stores, discount stores, office supply stores, grocery stores, hardware stores, etc.). When surveying, look for these key phrases: *Made in USA, Sustainably Harvested, ___% Post-Consumer Recycled Materials, Alternative fibers* (banana stalks, hemp, sugar cane stalks, mango, coffee), *Reusable, BPI Certified Compostable, Repurposed, Non-Toxic, Made from Recycled Materials*, etc.
- Conduct internet searches for companies that manufacture/sell eco-friendly school supplies and other products. In addition to using the phrase *school supplies* in the search engine, include the key phrases mentioned above, as well as these: *Recycled, Green, Sustainable, Eco-Friendly*.
- From this research, create a chart featuring retail stores and websites with the eco-friendly products they offer. Include the mention of other eco-friendly options, such as reusing school supplies from last school year and repurposing parents’ unused office supplies from home.
- Incentivize local stores to stock more sustainable products by informing them that a list of retail stores providing eco-friendly school supplies will be posted on the school website and/or shared via school newsletter.
- Create the page on the school’s website (and/or newsletter) that includes the chart of participating stores and websites and the items they carry, as well as some eco-facts about resource consumption and sustainability.
- On each classroom school supply list (that is shared with families at the end of spring semester for summer purchasing), include a link to the school’s website page of eco-friendly school supplies and where to find them.

Extensions:

- Write letters to local businesses about why it is important to offer eco-friendly products.
- Find funding (grants, PTA, local businesses, local government, etc.) to provide a savings bond or gift certificate to one student randomly drawn from participating student entries.
- Expand the project beyond the school to include other schools in your district or community.



- During the first week of the fall semester, have teachers send home a form for students to fill out which includes their name, teacher's name, and three eco-friendly products they are using or have purchased for back-to-school. They can return their slip and receive a small prize (consider credits in school reward system or recycled pencils, which can be purchased in bulk).
- At the end of the first week of school, the classroom that is using the most eco-friendly school supplies (by tally of collected slips) gets a classroom reward (e.g., treat, party, extra recess, etc.). Announce the winning class to the school community.

Below is a list of typical school supplies. Check each teacher's supply list for unique requests and try to locate an eco-friendly alternative for each item:

- Loose-leaf lined paper
- Spiral notebooks
- Composition notebooks
- Binders
- Dividers
- Book covers
- Folders
- Post-it notes
- Bookmarks
- Pens
- Pencils
- Markers
- Highlighters
- Colored pencils
- Paint brushes
- Glue
- Tape
- Labels
- Tissues
- Pencil/art boxes
- Construction paper
- Locker accessories
- Journals
- Notepads
- Copy paper (reams)
- Calculator
- Protractor



- Compass
- Drawing paper
- Sketch books
- Backpacks/School bags
- Lunch boxes/bags
- Food/snack containers
- Batteries
- School Planner (customized and ordered by school)

Assessment:

- Tally the number of students who acquired at least three eco-friendly school supplies and calculate its percentage of the student population.
- Create a graph of the number of students per grade that are using eco-friendly school supplies and graph the types of supplies as well.
- Use these graphs to make announcements and create posters to educate and encourage students to continue their participation when new supplies are needed.
- Each school year, compare new graphs to the previous year's graphs and note any differences.

Related Activities:

Purchasing Policy 1: Classroom Policy – Chapter 17

Purchasing Policy 2: School/District Policy – Chapter 17

