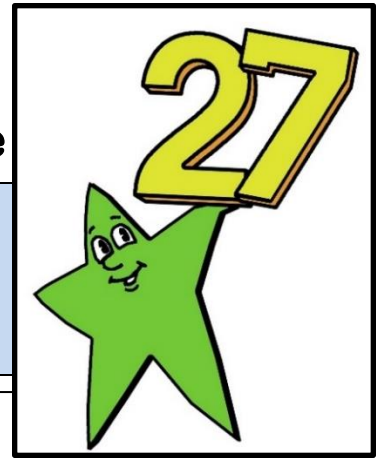


Reinforcing Collection Programs Over Time

eco-cycle

Snapshot

Compost collections, recycling collections, and other school waste-reduction programs will be successful when regular training and education are provided.



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

Objective: Students and staff will be able to accurately sort waste items into the school's recycling, composting, and trash bins. Students and staff will fully participate in sorting their waste for maximum diversion.

Age Group: K-12th

Setting: School building

Project Duration: Ongoing

Materials:

- Dependent on activity

Why This Project Matters:

On average, each North American produces 4-5 pounds of waste per day. Much of this waste has the potential to be recycled or composted if the opportunities exist locally. The environmental benefits of recycling and composting include: less waste being sent to landfills, natural habitat preservation, reduced air and water pollution, healthier soil, reduced fossil fuel consumption, and an increase in available jobs (compared to manufacturing new products from virgin materials and landfilling).

Project Summary:

Over time, recycling, composting, and waste-reduction habits can lose priority in the busy lives of students and staff. A successful school Zero Waste program must include continuous education, training, and fun, engaging special projects.

Implementation:

The following is a list of activities that can help reinforce and reinvigorate an existing Zero Waste program.

- Create and schedule 15-45-minute in-class "refresher" presentations. If possible, provide them to all classrooms in elementary schools and all science (or other subject) classes in secondary schools. During the presentation, demonstrate the use of the school's waste-collection containers by sorting samples of waste items to reinforce *how* to recycle and compost properly. Make sure to also explain *why* the program helps the environment.
- Enlist an art teacher, parent with artistic skills, or a graphic designer to create coloring sheets for primary-grade students. Design the images to illustrate how to sort waste for recycling and/or composting.
- For upper elementary and middle-level students, create word searches or crossword puzzles that integrate recycling and composting concepts. An internet search will provide websites with free puzzle-making tools.



- During lunchtime in the cafeteria, help students sort their lunch waste by having specially-trained students or adults volunteer to be waste goalies at the waste station(s) (to monitor sorting and answer questions).
- Make copies of a school map and instruct students to mark the locations of recycling and/or composting bins. Students can then submit this “scavenger hunt” to be entered into a prize drawing.
- Organize waste-sort relay races. Teams of students can compete as grade-levels or classrooms. The relay-sort race can feature lunch trays with typical lunchroom materials (utensils, imitation food, napkins, milk cartons) or a cloth bag full of items that need to be sorted as recyclable, compostable, or trash. Teams that make the fewest mistakes and complete the relay in the shortest amount of time may win a prize or other reward.
- Whenever possible, have a presence at after-school events like Back-to-School Night. Set up and staff a table with information for students and families about the Zero Waste efforts at the school. Create fun interactive displays, such as: games that require participants to match recyclable items to the natural resources from which they are made (paper to trees, plastic to oil, etc.); an example of a home-packed waste-free lunch verses a wasteful lunch; a container of finished compost for participants to see, smell, and touch; a vermicomposting worm bin to examine; other simple waste-sorting activities such as a “fishing pond” full of waste items and mechanical grabbers to sort items into the proper containers.
- Meet with the school’s student council or environmental club to create a waste-reduction campaign. Students may choose to focus on many issues such as: increasing participation in their school’s recycling and/or composting collections, reducing the use of disposable plastic in the cafeteria, helping to save the world’s rainforests through improving paper and aluminum recycling, or other environmental ideas. Assist with the fact-finding research on their chosen topic to create skits, signage, announcements, videos and/or contests that will draw attention to the issue and provide action ideas.

Extensions:

- Have a student group monitor classroom waste containers and leave each class a friendly report card indicating what was recycled or composted properly, and what was found in the trash that should not have been there. Ask the classroom teacher to share the results with the class. Repeat monthly and publicly acknowledge each class that achieves fewer than five mistakes per audit.



- Many other activities in this guide can also be used to reinforce an existing composting, recycling, or other waste-reduction program. Consider the following:
 - Waste-Free Lunch, Part 1:
 - Classroom Challenge – Chapter 2
 - Waste-Free Lunch, Part 2:
 - School Contest – Chapter 2
 - Waste-Free Lunch, Part 3:
 - Durables in the Cafeteria – Chapter 2
 - Paper Reduction Campaign – Chapter 6
 - Locker Leftovers/Classroom Cleanout – Chapter 9
 - Zero Waste School Parties and Events – Chapter 11
 - Repurposing in the Classroom – Chapter 12
 - Purchasing Policy, Part 1:
 - Classroom Policy – Chapter 17
 - Reporting Progress – Chapter 28
 - Student Sponsor Group Celebration – Chapter 29
 - Conducting a Waste Audit – Chapter 30
 - Compost Delivery – Chapter 32
 - Five and Ten-Year Celebrations – Chapter 33



Assessment:

After completing the chosen reinforcement activities, quiz students in the cafeteria or classroom with pertinent questions to assess their knowledge gain. For example:

- Name one item that can be recycled at school.
- Name one item that can be composted at school.
- Where does food waste belong when you're done with it?
- Name one way our school is helping the environment.
- How does recycling help the earth?
- How does composting help the earth?
- What natural resource are you saving when you recycle an aluminum can?

Related Activities:

See final bullet of the Implementation section.

