

# Reporting Progress

eco-cycle

## Snapshot

This assessment is a quick and effective way to determine how successful a newly implemented recycling or composting collection program is and where improvement is needed.



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

**Objective:** The analyzed results will show a significant decrease in trash production and a significant increase in the collection of recyclables and/or compostables.

**Age Group:** K-12<sup>th</sup> grade and adults

**Setting:** School dumpsters and classroom (or other meeting area in the school building)

### Project Duration:

- Data collection: 2-4 weeks
- Feedback to community: 45-90 minutes

### Materials:

- Paper and pen for recording trash, recycling, and/or compost levels
- Spreadsheet software and printer, or chart paper and markers

## Why This Project Matters:

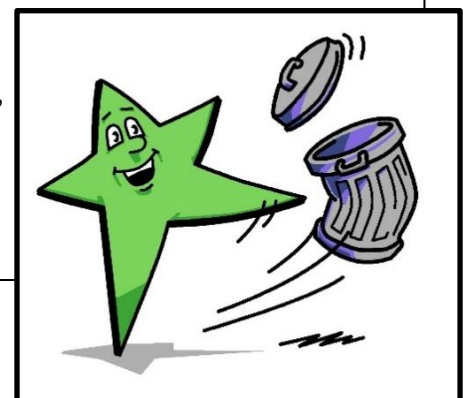
Recycling and composting collection programs can significantly reduce the amount of trash a school or community sends to the landfill. Schools in the US have reached 20-60% diversion rates by making recycling and/or composting easy and accessible.

### Project Summary:

Tracking the success of a new recycling or composting collection system requires that waste levels be recorded before and after the program has been launched. The efficacy of the program's operational and educational components is determined by calculating the degree of change in trash, recycling, and/or compost volumes. Sharing the data with the school community encourages continued participation and improvement on their diversion efforts.

### Implementation:

1. Record waste levels in the school's dumpster(s) for two to four weeks prior to the new compost and/or recycling collection program's launch. (See sample data recording form below.) For accurate volumes, record the levels just prior to each pickup date and time. Students in a class or sponsor group may assist with the monitoring of the dumpster(s), but the same designated adult should accompany them each time for consistency of results. Calculate the weekly average to determine a baseline.
2. Once the collection program is well established, repeat step 1 to obtain accurate data on how volumes have changed with the program's implementation.
3. If the composting happens onsite and the compostables do not end up in a dumpster, arrange to collect volume data using the internal compost collection bin(s) before they are emptied.



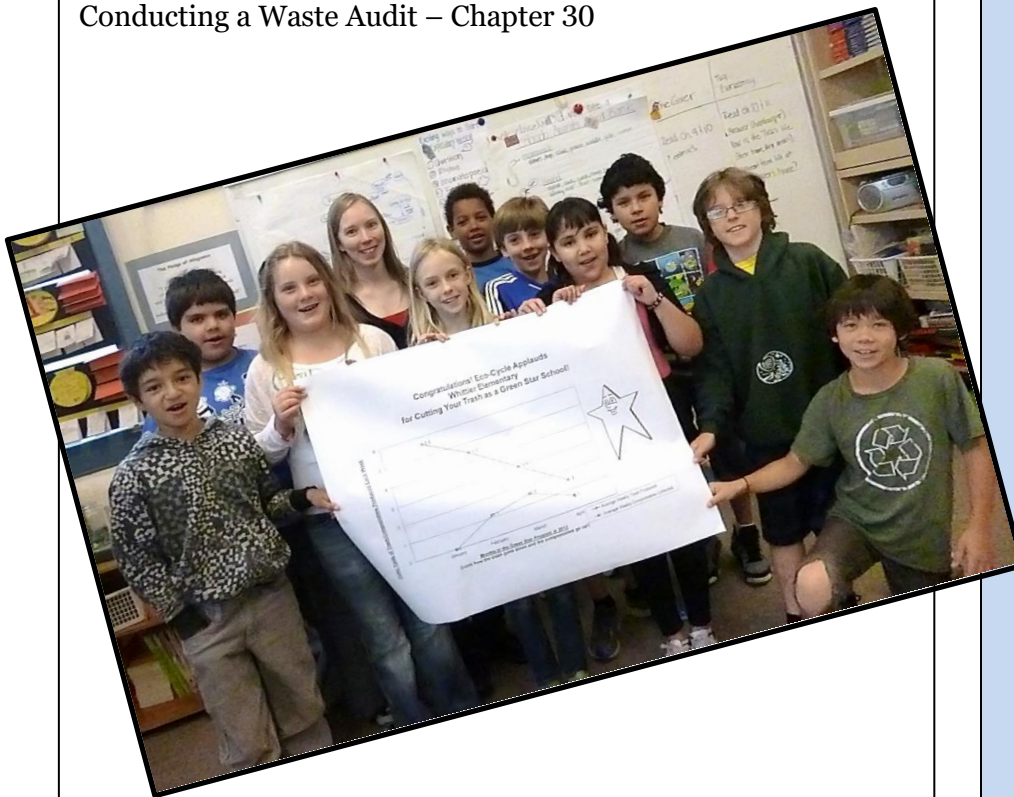
4. Create a chart showing the changes in trash, recycling, and/or composting volume levels over time. Ideally, the trash levels will drop, and the recycling/composting levels will rise. Print or draw the chart in poster-size and display prominently for students, staff, and families to see. Include the chart in the school newsletter and social media. (See sample chart below.)
5. Continue to monitor the school's trash volume until it appears to be permanently reduced. Contact the school's trash hauler to request a smaller-sized trash dumpster and/or reduce the number of pickups per week. The money saved on trash service can fund the hauling of the recycling and/or compost.

**Assessment:**

The activity itself is an assessment of the new collection system(s).

**Related Activities:**

- Schoolwide Recycling Collection – Chapter 18
- Backyard Composting at School – Chapter 24
- Schoolwide Compost Collection – Chapter 25
- Conducting a Waste Audit – Chapter 30



**Extensions:**

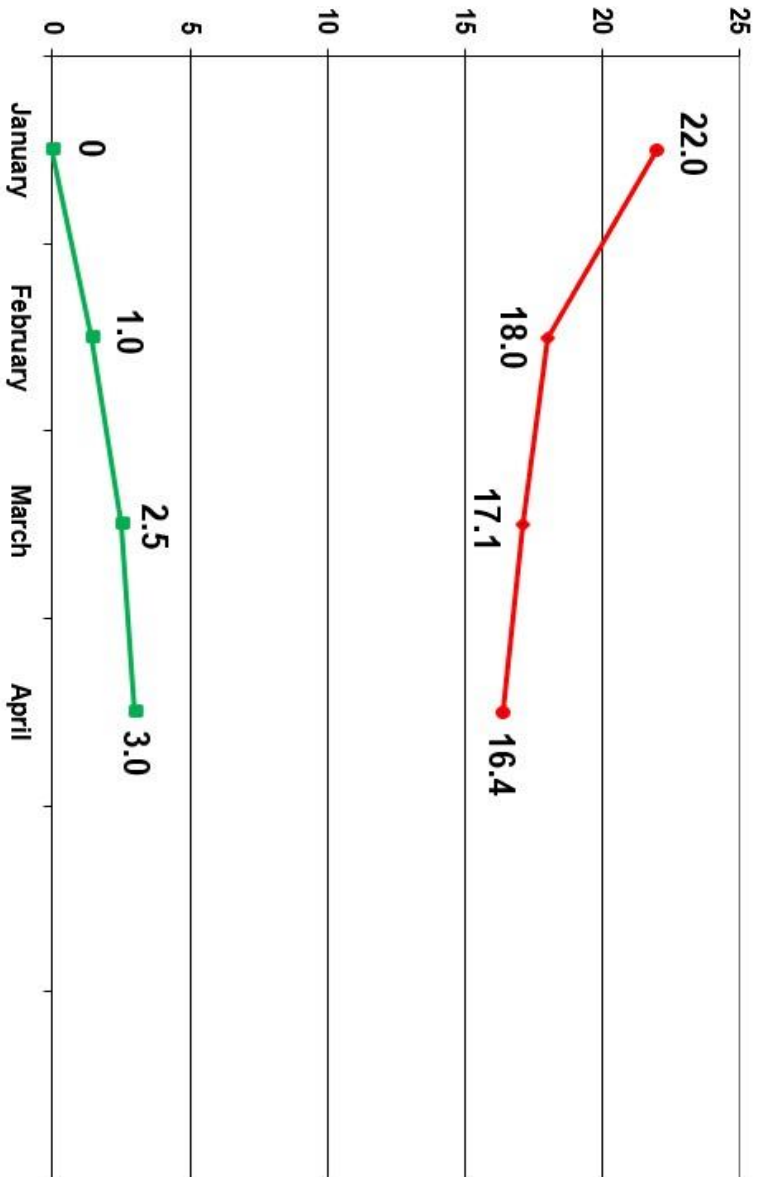
- Review the following with the student group, finding ways to share the information with the school community.
  - Discuss which parts of the program were successful and which parts could be improved upon next semester or school year.
  - Discuss how to reduce contamination by further educating the school community about proper sorting of recyclables and compostables.
  - Share information on the benefits of the collection program to the environment.
  - Utilize posters, announcements, waste station signage, skits, songs, and/or video commercials to spread the word.



## Sample Dumpster Volume Chart

Congratulations on cutting your trash by 25%!

Cubic Yards of **Trash**/**Compostables** Produced Each Week



Months in the Waste Reduction Program

