

Recycling and Composting Education



A solid plan, support from administration/teachers/staff/parents, and on-going, hands-on, creative education of *EVERYONE* is essential to make this program successful. This document contains suggestions on ways to create a successful waste management program for your school.

To Do First:

- Create a list of key stakeholders: administration, facilities manager, staff, principal, **custodians**, parents, Green Team members. Custodians are crucial to the success of program. Another key to success is to have a multi-stakeholder committee.
- Recruit volunteers and form a team. Ideally, the district will have a team comprised of key district staff and members from each school team.
- Know the waste stream—arrange for formal waste audit and assessment from Marin Sanitary Service (MSS).
- Find out the collection dates, times, schedule; the dumpster/cart/bin sizes and quantity; where waste/recycling bins are located; if there are clear signs showing what goes where; and how waste is collected on the campus (and district offices).
- MSS can help with all phases of the waste reduction process.

Prior to implementation (This could take months):

- Gather data provided by Marin Sanitary Service to use to formulate a plan for waste reduction efforts and education.
- Formulate a plan. Decide who is doing what, divide tasks, and set due dates (See appendix A).
- Develop a snack/lunch monitoring program. Bin monitoring during snack/lunchtime is absolutely necessary. Properly trained older students (4th & 5th graders) should be able to do this with minimal adult supervision. In the beginning of the program and after long breaks, it is helpful to have an adult at each station to remind the student monitors of their duties. One idea for a monitoring program is having students take turns being experts, standing by the bins and reminding their peers what goes where. They can wear a special button or vest to identify themselves. Please note that the Green Team should help facilitate the creation of this program, but not be the sole participants. Ideally the monitoring program will be something the school integrates into its processes. In the case of the student experts, the job could rotate through each student in each class, but you could also look for help from leadership class/club, student council, etc.

- Make a map of the campus showing where sorting stations will be located. (See appendix B).
- Develop key messages to introduce program to your school; start writing announcements, newsletter articles, etc.
- Develop education materials for staff, parents, and students.
- Have Green Team students make 3-D posters and signs to hang around campus.
- Start spreading the word of the coming program via informal conversations/ discussions.
- Formally announce the program to school at school board meetings, staff meetings, HSC/PTA meetings, over school P.A. system; in newsletters, memos, website, flyers, and email several times before implementation.
- Train all custodians, staff, teachers and parent volunteers. Education must include: what is recyclable, what is compostable, why sorting is important, and how to sort properly.
- Make sure everyone understands what is expected of them in terms of relaying info to students and the school community. It is important that the stakeholders see the importance and are behind making this a school expectation. Administrative support is critical. If the committee is multi-stakeholder, this process will be much easier.
- Announce to greater community: families and parents. State that volunteers will be needed and give contact info if they are interested in volunteering.

The week prior to implementation:

- Have a School-wide assembly to explain new program, get students excited, let them know this is very important, they need to take personal responsibility, are required to participate. Be creative! PowerPoint, game, song? Students can present, or principal, or outside guest.
- Peer education – students come up with ways to educate each other. Examples: write and perform a skit, show and tell to other classes, or other creative and interactive class presentations. (See Appendix X).
- Interactive games at lunch or events: recycle relays, scavenger hunts, matching, sorting
- Schedule bin monitors and remind monitors what is expected of them. Decide how long each person will monitor (half of lunch period, 10 minutes?), but make sure each station in lunch area has continual coverage during lunch period.
- Remind parents of new program through newsletter or separate letter, encourage them to discuss with their child, and pack waste-free lunches.
- If appropriate, have further discussions and Q&A in classrooms after assembly.

Implementation:

- Create sorting stations around campus. There should always be a bin for general recycling, compost (if there is a program at the school), and waste. Make sure
- Make sure there are clear signs on and around all collection bins.
- Display posters around campus that show what goes in each bin.
- Station bin monitors by sorting stations at snack and lunch.

To Do Continuously After Implementation:

- Keep bin monitoring! It is not just the first couple weeks where this is important. These behaviors should be integrated into normal school expectations/duties: for example, for elementary and middle it could be a class chore that everyone shares, for high school it could be necessary as participation grade in science classes or maybe counted as extra credit if enough monitoring days are completed. Work with the school to integrate into the system – someone should be the “lead” for the monitor program.
- Give daily or weekly announcements with progress and reinforcement in the beginning and after long breaks. After this, announcements can be monthly or quarterly.
- Update and remind staff, train any new staff.
- Check-in with custodians – how do they think it is working, do they have issues or suggestions
- Interactive games for reinforcement

Additional Suggestions:

- Schedule a tour of Marin Sanitary Service with the Education Coordinator.
- 4 Rs lessons: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot to introduce concepts or waste-free lunch. Curriculum and lessons are available that meet State Standards.
- Do a class waste audit. Make predictions, collect all waste generated in classroom and from lunch, sort on a big tarp, make observations, take notes, discuss how much garbage you will have after new program starts.
- Have students make 3-D posters with materials from their lunches.
- In elementary schools, have a buddy day where older students are paired with younger and sit with them at lunch, helping to analyze the waste in each other’s lunches.

- Have students sign a contract pledging to reduce their waste.
- Have students pick a favorite song and change the words to educate peers on recycling and composting.
- Have students come up with recycling/composting logos, slogans, or themes.
- If you have events at your school, inform all involved of program and expectations.
- Schedule “Green” day or Environmental Spirit day and include recycling and composting related activities
- Organize Zero-Waste Lunch days where everyone brings food in reusable containers, a cloth napkin, water bottle, etc.
- Create a Zero-Waste Lunch Club that one teacher or staff member would lead, giving students points on days they bring waste-free lunches and show them.
- Have a contest between grade levels. Whoever can reduce their classroom waste by the highest percentage can earn a prize.

For more information, contact an Outreach Coordinator
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