



Next Generation Green Schools Program

Green School Operations Guide

Waste Reduction and Resource Recovery



California schools dispose of large amounts of waste (approximately 763,817 tons per year!). These wastes represent lost natural resources and school district funds as well as a potential threat to student/staff health and the environment. This guide outlines how to incorporate waste reduction and resource recovery as part of the school's overall operating procedures.

Using the principles Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot, schools can reduce purchasing and disposal costs, create a healthier learning environment, reduce their operating footprint on our environment, and serve as a model of sustainability for young people and the greater community.

Reduce

Usage reduction actually prevents the generation of waste in the first place, making it the most preferred method of waste management. Reducing waste happens by purchasing, consuming, and throwing away fewer physical resources. Methods to reduce waste include:

- Conduct a facility-wide waste audit to provide information on the individual components of the solid waste stream. Get students involved as a learning project.
- Print and copy using both sides of the page.
- Use the Internet for research assignments.
- Make memo pads out of scrap paper.
- View information electronically instead of printing hard copies.
- Reduce handouts distributed by making information available online.
- Reduce junk mail by taking your school name off unwanted mailing lists.
- Share periodicals with associates instead of receiving multiple copies.
- Save on paper by using whiteboards and overhead projectors for student worksheets, quizzes, etc.
- Use rechargeable batteries and solar calculators.
- Establish environmentally friendly guidelines for all purchases, including: products made from recycled materials, with minimal packaging; that can be recharged, refilled, or reused; have longer lifetimes; or can be easily repaired.

Reuse

Reuse items by finding a new use for them, repairing, donating, or selling them. Reuse is preferable to recycling because items do not have to be reprocessed before they can be used again. Ways to reuse include:

- Reuse school supplies, such as folders and binders.
- Collect unclaimed items from lockers at the end of the year to donate or reuse.
- Use old magazines for art projects.
- Donate old or outdated equipment, books or furniture to local community organizations.
- Save and reuse boxes for shipping and other uses.
- Encourage students to bring their lunch in reusable containers.
- Consider leasing equipment from manufacturers that will take back and properly recycle their goods at the "end of their useful life."
- Have students answer questions on scrap paper.
- Work with janitorial staff to practice resource efficiency, such as reusing plastic garbage can liners in rooms that generate only dry waste, buying bulk cleaning supplies and using plastic refillable spray bottles.
- Set up "swap" areas in classrooms to share reusable materials.

Recycle:

Recycling prevents the need to harvest new raw materials by processing “waste” materials into new products. A productive school recycling program not only prevents tons of valuable materials from entering landfills but can generate income as well. Tips for improving recycling at your school include:

- Form a ‘green team’ of students and staff who take leadership of recycling operations and encourage recycling among peers.
- Identify items such as paper, aluminum cans, cardboard and plastic bottles that can be recycled in your area. Start with the items the school’s current waste hauler collects.
- Set goals to strive for either in percentage increase in recycling, decrease in waste, or dollar revenue for qualifying recyclables.
- Note areas of heaviest waste disposal – target those areas to implement recycling activities.
- Make a map of trash and recycling containers already on site. Obtain more bins to meet anticipated usage.
- Coordinate the flow of recyclables offsite with your waste hauler or parent volunteers if needed. Sometimes it’s necessary to take certain materials to a recycling center in order to receive money for them.
- Hold a recycling competition among classes.

Rot

Recycling the nutrient resources of biodegradable materials can take place on school grounds through composting. When done correctly, rotting waste is odor free and produces a product that can be used to fertilize school gardens or sell to gardeners in the community.

- Form a “Compost Club” of students and staff who together design, build, and run a school compost system.
- Coordinate with kitchen staff to separate compostable food prep scraps and have receptacles for students to put their compostables.
- Use worm bins for indoor composting as a class project.
- Purchase and use compostable trays, utensils, and dishware in the cafeteria.
- Integrate the hands-on decomposition lessons and experiments into science classes.

Local Partners

Marin Sanitary www.marinsanitary.com

Marin Conservation Corps www.marincc.org

