

Waste Not Washington School Awards

Examples of Waste Reduction Programs



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The term “waste reduction” describes a set of actions that result in less waste. It includes making purchases and following procedures that bring you what you need rather than leave you with excess that you might have to throw away or recycle. Waste reduction also means using less toxic materials and choosing products produced with less pollution. Reusing products, prolonging a product’s life, repairing goods, purchasing durables, or providing an alternative use for a product are all ways to reduce waste.

Below are a few examples of projects/programs/curriculum that promote waste reduction and sustainability in schools. Keep in mind that these are just examples and should not be seen as parameters or limitations for applications. Ecology encourages applicants to think outside the box and utilize creativity in reducing waste in schools.

Examples of Programs and Curriculum

Waste Reduction

- Conducting waste audits and adjusting school purchases/ material used to reduce waste.
- Replacing single-use items in schools with durables, i.e. lunchroom silverware, hot lunch trays, etc.
- Practicing environmentally preferable purchasing and purchasing items in bulk to reduce packaging.
- Reusable bag promotion.
 - Art contests for reusable bag promotion, the winner’s image is printed on reusable bags and given to students for families to use.
- Curriculum on “What is Waste?” with lessons on various types of disposal, what happens in your community to garbage, recycling, etc. and how that affects the long term goals of the community.

Food Waste Reduction

- Installing bulk food/beverage dispensers.
- Conducting food waste audits to identify what waste items should be targeted and how.
- Education campaign via signage of “take only what you’ll eat” accompanied by assemblies/lessons on food waste.
- Utilizing a “shared food” program where students can place ‘naturally packaged’ items that will not be consumed onto a “shared” table/tray for other students to eat.

Recycling

- Installing recycling programs in your school if you don’t already have one. Be sure to discuss implementing a recycling program in your school with our local hauler and Ecology Waste Reduction and Recycling Specialist (see page 2 of the guidelines).
- Conducting recycling waste audits to identify contamination in the recycling stream.
- Curriculum on what it means to recycle, what recycling does, how it works, “from the bin to a new product,” etc.

Composting and Gardening

- Implementing a compost program, identifying where the end compost product will go.
- Implement a school garden with a cycle of composting and “farm to table” approach.

Waste Reduction Resources

In addition to the examples seen above, Ecology recommends connecting with local resources to ensure program success. Some examples of methods and local resources include:

Network with other local schools.

Solicit waste reduction ideas from other schools. Establish a school district exchange of information. Find out what methods of waste reduction are effective in schools of similar size.

Utilize existing specialists.

- The solid waste division of your local city or county public works department may have waste reduction information and education materials for staff, students, and parents.
- If pursuing recycling programs, research market availability for the materials you plan to collect and recycle. Conversations with your local recycling haulers and your Ecology Waste Reduction and Recycling Specialists will be paramount.
- Washington Green Schools is a local non-profit organization that provides resources and support for sustainable school programs that parallel the vision and purpose of the Sustainable School Awards program.
- Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Educational Service District Regional Science Coordinators are available to assist schools with curriculum development and provide that bridge between schools and OSPI requirements.