Reducing Waste & Buying Recycled in Schools

Reduce waste at lunch

On average, a half a pound of food waste is generated per person every day at school!

Pack a lunch that leaves no waste behind:

- Use a lunch box or reusable lunch bag.
- Pack your food in a reusable container.
- Pour your drink into a reusable thermos.
- Avoid pre-assembled lunch kits with excess packaging you just throw away.
- Bring your own reusable utensils and a cloth napkin that can be washed and used again.
- Try to pack only as much food as you will eat.

If you buy lunch in the school cafeteria:

- Take only what you need so you don't end up throwing away food or extra condiments.
- Encourage your friends to reduce lunchroom waste as well.
- Don't forget to recycle.

To learn more about creating less waste at lunch, visit Waste-Free Lunches at

www.wastefreelunches.org

Reduce paper waste

In one school, the paper discarded during the school year added up to 28 pounds for each student, teacher, and staff member.

- Create a paper reuse center in your classroom. Ask everyone to put paper that has only been used on one side into a container. Reuse this paper for calculations or drafts, or use it to make pads for taking notes.
- Encourage other classes and the school office to start a paper reuse center, as well.
- Ask your teachers to allow you to hand in homework on the back-side of used paper.
- If you work on a computer, double-check your work on the screen before printing it out, and print double-sided.
- If this service is available at your school, ask your teacher if you can e-mail your homework.
- Talk to your teacher and office staff about making double-sided copies for handouts.
- Don't forget to recycle used paper and paper products, like cardboard boxes.

Schedule A rummage sale

Start a worm compost bin

Talk with your science teacher about setting up a worm compost bin. You can watch the worms recycle food scraps from school lunches and other organic material, like leaves or plant clippings, into nutrient-rich compost. Then you can use the compost to improve the soil on your school grounds or to grow plants in the classroom. You can request copies of a "Backyard Composting Made Easy" from the NM Environment Dept. at 505-827-2780 or find it online at www.recyclenewmexico.com/nmoro.htm.

Conduct a waste audit

Wonder how much waste your classroom, grade, or school actually produces in a week?

Work with your teachers and custodians to plan a school waste audit. At the end of each school day, weigh the waste in each classroom and office. How much of the waste is composed of reusable paper or recyclable items? Use the results to plan a waste reduction campaign for your school.

Reducing Waste in Schools

Why Should You Buy Recycled?

Recycling begins when materials are collected for recycling. The collected materials are then manufactured into new products. When your school purchases those recycled-content products, you are closing the loop by bringing materials full circle from old product to new product! By buying recycled-content products you help to ***preserve natural resources, reduce energy use & pollution, create markets for recyclables and minimize the impact of your school's activities on the environment.***

What Is a Recycled Product?

A recycled-content product is one that has been manufactured from recycled material. Since the amount of recycled content in a product can vary, look on product labels for the highest post-consumer content (rather than pre-consumer content) available. Post-consumer waste is waste from products that were previously used and then collected from the consumer. Pre-consumer waste, while still a valuable use of resources, includes only waste that has not gone to the consumer (e.g. manufacturing scraps).

Start with Buying Recycled Paper!

Since schools tend to use large amounts of paper products, your school can make the most difference by choosing paper products with recycled content. Many products that you may use on a regular basis, including copy paper and notepads, are available with recycled content.

Request recycled-content paper from your supply vendors. Most stock recycled-content products. If not available, Office Depot delivers statewide at no cost with a minimum order amount, and also stocks many other recycled-content products.

For every 20 cases of recycled paper substituted for non-recycled paper, you save 17 trees, 390 gallons of oil, 7,000 gallons of water, and 4,100 kWh of energy.

You eliminate 60 pounds of air-polluting emissions and save 8 cubic feet of landfill space. That's a BIG benefit using a product that is as good as the product you use now.

Other Recycled Content Products

- Janitorial Products: tissue & toilet paper, paper towels, trash bags, toilet seat covers....
- Promotional Items: pens, rulers, pencils, water bottles, t-shirts, award frames....
- Building & Landscaping Materials: mulch, playground equipment, playing surfaces, tiles....
- Office Supplies: paper, binders, office furniture (refurbished and recycled-content), toner cartridges, computer disks….

Find more resources for recycled-content product retailers online at www.recyclenewmexico.com/NMRAM_2008.htm

A project of the New Mexico Recycling Coalition and
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as part of New Mexico Recycling Awareness Month
www.recyclenewmexico.com
www.nmenv.state.nm.us

Closing the Loop
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle