



# REDUCE REUSE RECYCLE

Reduce, reuse and recycle more now for cleaner land, air, water, and a thriving economy.

Recycling in school teaches students good habits they can practice at home and use for a lifetime. Through recycling, students gain an understanding about their responsibility to protect the environment and learn that they can make a significant difference through their actions.

Recycling also benefits schools. Diverting recyclable materials from the waste stream can save schools money in collection costs. By combining waste reduction practices with recycling, schools can save on materials costs as well.

Generally, school waste is generated in the cafeteria, offices and classrooms. Cafeteria waste is comprised mainly of food and food packaging waste. Office waste is mostly paper. Classroom waste includes teaching materials such as mixed paper and pencil grindings, as well as food waste.

At the end of the school year, classroom waste can swell to four times its regular amount, and include materials such as used workbooks and other papers. Classroom parties also contribute significantly to the quantity of trash generated.

Plan ahead for the school year and make sure everyone, students, staff, faculty and parents are educated about your recycling program. Include information on waste reduction, reuse and recycling in classroom curriculum. Organize a recycling “green team” made up of students, staff, faculty and administrators, to ensure the continued success of your school’s recycling program.

### Involving Students

Including students in the recycling process is the hallmark of many successful programs. Besides requiring students to recycle, many programs go a step further. To develop pride and ownership in the school's recycling efforts, students often run the recycling operations.

To involve students in the promotion of the program, encourage students to create signs and posters to promote recycling and to describe what materials can and cannot be recycled.

Be sure to tell people who use the school building after school hours, such as community groups and the PTA, about the recycling program, so they can participate as well, and not contaminate the school's recycling.



## INVOLVING STUDENTS

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## ZERO WASTE LUNCH

Lunchroom waste creates a problem, because much of the packaging brought from home is difficult to recycle. Fortunately, it is possible to avoid producing this waste in the first place by following a program called the Zero Waste Lunch.

The theory behind the Zero Waste Lunch is to avoid the generation of waste from lunches by eliminating the packaging that creates waste. Zero Waste Lunches require a little extra thought when packing, but create considerably less waste and reduce cost in the long run.

Schools can incorporate the concept of a Zero Waste Lunch in economics, science and environmental curricula. Students can sponsor competitions based on which class can produce the least amount of waste from lunches per student. Students can also weigh the garbage from the cafeteria, and post and regularly update a wall graph demonstrating their success in reducing the amount of waste generated. Schools could sell Zero Waste Lunch kits, including a durable bag, thermos and durable sandwich and snack containers, as a fundraiser.

### Helpful suggestions:

- Pack lunches in lunch boxes, durable canvas or nylon bags.
- Pack items prepared at home, such as sandwiches, in reusable plastic containers.
- Buy foods in bulk, and repackage in reusable plastic containers.
- Avoid single-use prepackaged foods.
- Pack soft and liquid foods in durable reusable containers, and use thermoses or plastic bottles for drinks.



## REDUCE

- Reduce the amount of waste produced by lunches brought from home through the promotion of Zero Waste Lunch (see page 2).
- Encourage students to use both sides of writing paper.
- If more than one child attends a school, send home general information with only the oldest child, to avoid duplication.
- Encourage teachers to conduct some lessons and student drills on dry erase boards, or electronic boards instead of on paper, when feasible.
- Route or post internal staff communications. When practical, use half sheets of paper for memos. Utilize e-mail as much as possible.
- Make double-sided copies. Provide scrap paper near the copier so that people can retrieve paper and print on the other side.

## REUSE

- Encourage staff to bring coffee mugs from home and reuse them, rather than use disposable cups.
- Reuse art supplies such as construction paper.
- Use refillable pencils and refillable ink pens.
- Re-ink and reuse laser printer and copy machine toner cartridges.

## RECYCLE

- Close the recycling loop by purchasing recycled products. The easiest and most widely available recycled products that schools use are recycled copier paper, hand towels and toilet tissue.
- Purchase goods that are sold in school stores and for fundraisers, such as rulers, clipboards, stadium cups, and other items, that are made from recycled post-consumer or post-industrial materials.
- Recycle mixed paper such as manila envelopes, colored office and writing paper, paper bags, construction paper, newspaper, magazines, cardboard boxes, unwanted mail, and art paper. Place recycling bins in the library, in each classroom and office, in the teachers' lounge, and next to copier machines.
- Recycle commingled materials (aluminum cans and foil products, steel and tin cans, glass bottles and jars, plastic bottles and containers) in the teachers' lounge and cafeteria. Recycling bins need to be located next to any vending machine that dispenses products in recyclable packaging.
- Recycle food scraps. Be sure to separate compostable food scraps from the waste stream and keep it free of contaminants such as shrink wrap. Food scraps can be recycled into a valuable soil amendment for use in gardens, on lawns, or mixed with potting soil.
- Recycle all commingled containers generated by the food service and in the cafeteria.
- Grasscycle grass clippings by leaving them on the lawn. Set up a compost bin to compost leaves on-site.



### Montgomery County's Ban on Expanded Polystyrene Food Service Ware and Loose Fill Packaging Materials



The use and sale of expanded polystyrene food service ware, and expanded polystyrene loose fill packaging (packaging peanuts) is prohibited in Montgomery County, Maryland.

In addition, all food service establishments, including grocery stores and supermarkets, must use either recyclable or compostable food service ware.

Prohibiting the use and sale of expanded polystyrene food service products and loose fill packaging, will help protect our environment and reduce litter.

For more information about the law, as well as a list of vendors that offer recyclable or compostable food service ware, visit our website at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/recycling](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/recycling).

# REDUCE, REUSE & RECYCLE MORE NOW!

Take part in what Montgomery County is doing to reduce waste and recycle more now! We'd like to add your school to our list of recyclers, so let us know how you are doing! If you have a concern or issue you wish to discuss, or a success story you want to share, contact the Smart Organizations Reduce and Recycle Tons (SORRT) Program.

3-1-1 or 240-777-0311

[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/recycling](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/recycling)



Montgomery County, Maryland  
Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Solid Waste Services  
Waste Reduction and Recycling Section



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