

BMP #3

Why Should My School Reduce Solid Waste?

Resource Conservation

Many of the virgin resources we use are non-renewable and by reducing, reusing and recycling we help keep these resources for as long as we can.

Trees, which are renewable, are more beneficial as carbon sinks and erosion stabilizers than as paper.



Pollution

As rain water seeps through a landfill it absorbs many of the poisons from the garbage. This leachate, collecting at the bottom of the landfill, is normally high in heavy metals, ammonia, toxic organic compounds and pathogens and if it escapes into the groundwater serious contamination results.

Carbon Emissions

When trash is broken down in landfills it produces carbon dioxide and methane, both greenhouse gases.

When you reduce, reuse and recycle you reduce the amount of energy used by industry and therefore decrease carbon emissions. It also typically uses less energy for industry to make materials from recycled materials than from virgin materials.

- It takes 95% less energy to recycle aluminum than it does to make it from raw materials. Making recycled steel saves 60%, recycled newspaper 40%, recycled plastic 70%, and recycled glass 40%.



Financial Savings

By reducing and reusing materials your school will have less materials to buy.

Landfill Overfill

We are running out of landfill space. Many areas export their trash across multiple state lines. This means at some point we will run out of places to put our trash. The act of transporting trash over such a large area also creates unnecessary carbon emissions.



BMP #3

How Can My School Reduce Solid Waste?



- Print double-sided
- Buy products with no packaging or with wrapping that can be reused or recycled.
- Recycle ink cartridges
- Set up outdoor composting
- Plan an indoor or outdoor clean-up day
- Arrange for curb-side pick-up of recyclables
- No-waste lunch days
- Form a Recycling Team
- Buy everything you can in bulk (large economy sizes) rather than small packages that use much more wasteful packaging.
- Use both sides of paper. Keep a collection of scrap paper to reuse.
- Wash plastic containers and jars and reuse.
- Use electronic mail instead of making hard copies of all communications.
- Request staff remove their name(s) from junk mail lists.
- Arrange to have a vendor collect and recharge empty laser printer toner cartridges. Such cartridges can be recharged several times, saving money and reducing waste generation.
- Have your cafeteria switch to reusable utensils and dishes instead of throwaways whenever possible
- Become a Trash-Free School with Alice Ferguson Foundation
- Incorporate the use of reusables into your art program.
- Maintain a free listing service of used musical instruments and sporting equipment in your school newsletter.
- Collect reusables such as clothing for local charities.
- Start a food-swap table for unopened/clean items (milk, chips, snacks, fruits).
- For teachers and staff that bring their own lunch, encourage them to pack with reusable materials.
- For teachers and staff, organize a mug rack' where teachers bring their own reusable mug and reuse it at school.
- Competitions between grades, classrooms on waste reduction.
- Hand out reusable water bottle to students.



Steps You Can Take At Home

Use cloth napkins instead of paper ones at dinner.

For more information: http://www.maeoe.org/resources/ee_resources.php

