

**CHOOSING**

HOW TO SURVEY  
WASTE ON YOUR  
CAMPUS

**HOW**

**REDUCE**





# WASTE AUDIT



Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

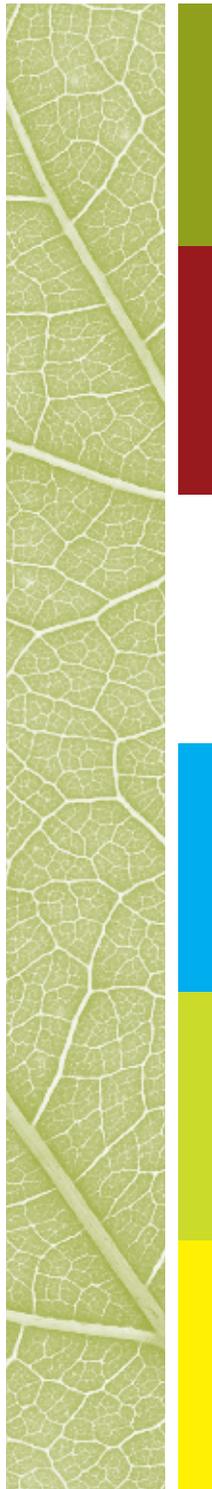
- 1) Put on gloves before checking trash cans.
- 2) Under the two columns labeled “trash” and “recyclables” keep a tally of how many of each item are found (e.g., “candy wrappers or chip bags” under trash, and “bottles or cans” under recyclables). Place additional items under “other.”
- 3) After the survey is complete, answer the questions.

## TRASH

ITEMS FOUND	TALLY
CANDY WRAPPERS	
FOOD PACKAGING	
STYROFOAM PRODUCTS	
FOOD	
OTHER:	

## RECYCLABLES

ITEMS FOUND	TALLY
GLASS BOTTLES/JARS	
METAL/ALUMINUM CANS	
PLASTIC BOTTLES	
PAPER PRODUCTS	
OTHER:	



# WASTE IN LOS ANGELES

There is no such thing as throwing an item “away.” It all must go somewhere. Waste is a vital issue in Los Angeles County. Every day, each person makes approximately 4.5 pounds of trash. Together, the 14 million residents, businesses and manufacturers in L. A. County produce 50,000 tons of trash each day. What does this mean to you? It costs money to dispose of all this waste, valuable open space is used to create landfills to store the waste, and waste pollutes the environment.



## WHAT IS WASTE REDUCTION?

Waste reduction is more than just recycling. It also involves stopping waste where it starts by using less material in the first place.

Being thrown away with our massive amounts of trash are recyclable materials and other reusable resources. These resources are generally dumped into one of 13 landfills around Los Angeles County. Instead of dumping “trash” we could be recycling and reusing materials as much as possible. In addition, we can reduce the amount of waste that is generated at the source, including items with a lot of packaging, or that aren’t reusable or recyclable. The end result is money saved, resources conserved, pollution reduced, and landfill space saved.

## WASTE AT SCHOOL

California school districts dispose of large amounts of waste. These wastes represent a significant loss of natural resources and school district funds as well as a potential threat to student/staff health and the environment. The cafeteria is one of the largest areas on campus where waste is produced. Food, trays, cups, cans, and straws are just a few of the items that can be found after nutrition and lunch. Classrooms and offices use tons of paper products each year. These materials, in the form of paper, cardboard, envelopes and file folders are expensive and costly.



## WHAT IS HAPPENING ON YOUR CAMPUS?

- 1 Conduct a waste audit on your campus.
- 2 Check the trash cans at your school during or immediately after nutrition or lunch. And/or, audit the trashcans in classrooms and school offices.
- 3 Use the attached audit to record what you find.
- 4 Continue your investigation by seeking answers to the questions on the back of the audit.

## TAKE ACTION

**BASED ON YOUR FINDINGS, CREATE A PLAN TO REDUCE WASTE IN THE CAFETERIA AND/OR IN CLASSROOMS AND OFFICES. IDEAS INCLUDE:**

- 1 Design reminders to be hung near copy machines on the importance of copying on both sides of the paper.
- 2 Create an awareness campaign on the benefits of waste reduction: it helps the environment, saves money, and makes the campus look better.
- 3 Place recycling bins in classrooms, the lunch area, and throughout the campus.
- 4 Talk to the purchasing department about buying items made of recycled materials and items with reduced packaging, and eliminating the use of disposable items (e.g., Styrofoam cups).
- 5 Keep track of how many tons of paper are recycled and post the results in the most visible place on campus.
- 6 Write articles in the school newspaper on how your campus has been able to reduce waste based on people making different choices.
- 7 Give prizes to the class that has the least amount of trash in their “landfill” can.

**DETERMINE YOUR WASTE REDUCTION GOALS AND CHALLENGE STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION TO MEET THEM.**



Generation Earth Student Action Guides are available to students working on a project. These guides are designed to help you plan a project, create and prioritize tasks, keep track of progress, and evaluate the results.

**CHECK WITH YOUR TEACHER OR ADVISOR FOR HOW TO GET THESE FREE GUIDES, OR CALL 818.623.4870.**

# MORE TO DO AND QUESTIONS TO ASK



1

From the items found, what percentage can be recycled ( $(\text{recyclables} \div \text{total amount}) \times 100 = \%$ )?

2

What percentage can be composted (fruit and vegetables)?

3

What percentage is actually “trash?”

4

Which items were trashed the most?

5

Create a list of alternatives for the “highly trashed” items. For example, canvas bags instead of plastic shopping bags.

6

Set up an interview with the cafeteria manager and/or staff to discuss purchasing options and health laws.

7

In order to provide food for the entire student population, the cafeteria orders a lot of food in cans and boxes. Are these cans and boxes being recycled? If no, why not?

8

If the cafeteria used reusable trays, dishes and cups, what would the pros and cons be? Consider costs and waste generated such as water, energy use and additional labor to wash dishes versus the cost of labor and disposable items.

9

Of the paper found in trash cans, what percentage was used on both sides of the paper?

10

Interview students and teachers to find out if they use both sides of the paper when copying or taking notes. If not, why not?

11

Is there a recycling program on campus? Is it being used? If not, find out why.

## TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE WASTE IN THE CAFETERIA

- 1 Use reusable trays, dishes, cups and utensils.
- 2 Use refillable condiment bottles and purchase refills in bulk quantities.
- 3 Serve sandwiches in plastic wrap instead of packaged plastic containers.
- 4 Recycle cans, plastic, bottles and paper.
- 5 Compost food waste in bins on the school grounds.
- 6 Purchase cloth towels instead of paper towels.
- 7 Buy food supplies in bulk.
- 8 Buy supplies packaged in recyclable materials.
- 9 Encourage students to bring snacks and meals in reusable containers.
- 10 Use a sports bottle that can be refilled.

## TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE WASTE IN CLASSROOM/OFFICES

- 1 Use paper on both sides for copies and turning in assignments. Most copiers have options for double-sided copies.
- 2 Avoid printing extra handouts.
- 3 Keep a box of scratch paper to be used by others.
- 4 Maximize use of overhead projectors, blackboards or dry-erase boards to minimize handouts.
- 5 Recycle paper and cardboard.
- 6 Arrange extra credit for students who monitor the trash cans.
- 7 Reuse manila envelopes and file folders.
- 8 Purchase office supplies from manufacturers that use less packaging and recycled materials.
- 9 Buy recycled paper products.
- 10 Use refillable pens and pencils. Arrange with your teachers to turn in assignments electronically.



**AN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM  
OF THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

