

EIGHT TIPS TO INVOLVE

ELEMENTARY STUDENTS IN SCHOOL RECYCLING

Here are some ways to engage your elementary students in your recycling program. Adapt them to your school and be creative in thinking of more! Remember, we'd love to hear about your innovative ideas and successes. Call *Keep Putnam Beautiful* at 386-325-9598 for environmental education resources to assist you with classroom discussions and activities.

1 Recycling is a Student Responsibility

Not only should an adult be chosen to head-up your overall recycling program, but a student coordinator in each classroom can assist with recycling and offer peer support. Rotate the recycling coordinator weekly so many students can share this role. This student can monitor what others put in the classroom container to ensure that proper materials are being recycled, and may track the amount of recyclables collected for the week. Reward the student with a special button or desk sign for use during the duty week.

2 Math and Money

Use data gathered by your school's adult recycling coordinator to reinforce concepts learned in math lessons. Your recycling coordinator should know the size of your school dumpster, how often it is emptied, and monthly and yearly charges for the service. Use this information to help older students calculate costs to the school for waste disposal, and the savings your school could realize by reducing the size of its dumpster, the frequency of the dumpster pickup, etc. Include benefits to the environment in your discussion.

3 Trash Analysis

Have students analyze their trash—either their personal trash, classroom trash, or schoolwide trash. What is being thrown away? How much of this could be recycled or reused? How could trash volume be reduced? Tell students which materials your school will collect and why those materials were selected. Discuss the concept of markets for recycled goods; conduct Internet Research.

4 Where Does the Trash Go?

Your school's adult recycling coordinator can provide you with information on the vendors for your recycled materials. Start a classroom discussion of where trash goes, including recyclables. Organize class trip to the local landfill and recycling center or invite speakers to your classroom from your city or waste collection service to educate students about the process of waste collection and disposal.

5 Design and Decorate

Involve students in planning the collection system by having them design and decorate cardboard boxes or other recycling containers for the classroom and cafeteria. Discuss with your recycling coordinator how your students can be involved in moving the recyclable materials from their classroom to central collection points. Reward students who help with this effort.

6 Publicity

Students are ideal supporters of recycling! As an art Project, let students design posters for the halls, cafeteria, and classrooms to encourage participation. During a language arts or music lesson, students can compose "cheers" or "raps" about recycling, and plan a schoolwide pep rally to drum up support. Another language arts project: have students produce a newsletter (using recycled paper!) about their school's recycling program and its progress. Promote the program all year with contest and awards for classrooms generating the least waste. Plan a school carnival with events focusing on the concept of reduce/reuse/recycle. Periodically have students write essays or conduct classroom discussion about how they think the recycling program is working. What challenges have they faced since the program began? What are some ways to overcome the obstacles? Has their behavior changed at home? Their families' behavior? What do they believe they've accomplished by recycling?

7 Buy Recycled!

Discuss how buying recycled products is an essential part of the recycling effort. Find videos and resources to teach students about closing the recycling loop. As a project, have students make recycled paper notepads, using either scrap paper or recycled paper they have made. After the paper is made, decorate it, staple it into notepads and sell at the school during lunch or after school. Use the profits for an environmental project such as planting a tree on school grounds.

8 Consider Composting

If your school decides to compost, involve your students by teaching them the scientific basics of composting. Tour your school's composting site frequently to note changes in the composition of the pile. Invite a guest speaker from your county extension service to show students the different elements of the pile.