

School Waste Reduction Promotion Ideas

Getting the word out about changes to your school recycling system can be done in a variety of ways such as announcements, posters, photos and videos. Effective posters and announcements do not take a lot of time to put together, but get peoples' attention and convey the most important information you're trying to get across. Here's some ideas to get you and your students going:



1. Poster Ideas

"The Massive Sign" – using a separate large piece of paper for each can in your recycling station, write and draw what goes in each bin. This could be hung in a location near the station where it could stay up for the year. The sign to the right was made on sheets of butcher paper, and hung in a high school cafeteria in Clark County, WA.



Recycling Bulletin Board – establish a bulletin board in your school devoted simply to sustainability. This way students know where to find this information around school, and it can be updated seasonally, be used to track waste diverted from the landfill, note any mistakes people are making, and share success. Locating these near the cafeteria is a good idea. The board below is from North Gresham Elementary.



Small Signs for Hallways

Student-made signs draw attention to the importance of waste reduction and recycling at school. This is a great activity for green teams, art classes and after school programs. Peer-to-peer messaging is an effective way to engage students and fosters a sense of ownership in the program. These signs are from Hogan Cedars Elementary.



2. Announcements:

Changes coming! – A little hype never hurt a program! Let folks know that changes to their recycling program are coming and hint with some fun teasers...

- Coming soon, some exciting changes to our cafeteria recycling program... your banana peels will soon be making electricity!

General Factoids and Tips - these can be great to put in once a week throughout the year to remind and motivate. Pairing the factoid with a direct action a student can take is a winning combination. Here are examples but you can find many more idea on the web!

- Did you know recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to power a laptop for 5 hours? Make sure to properly recycle each day at lunch.
- Supplying the plastic water bottles that American consumers purchase in one year requires more than 47 million gallons of oil, the equivalent of one billion pounds of carbon dioxide that is released into the atmosphere. You can help lessen this impact by drinking from a reusable water bottle or cup!
- Schools in Gresham recycle the weight of 7 African Elephants of food waste per year. Rather than rotting in a landfill and emitting methane, a harmful greenhouse gas, these materials are converted into electricity to power homes right here in Oregon. Our school is joining Gresham's Plate to Power food recycling program this year. Look out for changes in the cafeteria and help us make power from food scraps!
- Remember to use both sides of your paper!
- Pack it in, pack it out! If you bring your lunch, bring what you don't eat home for a snack. And make sure you talk to your parents if they're packing you something that you never eat!
- Sort before you stand! Before you get up to recycle at lunch, sort your garbage to one side of your plate and food to the other. This will make it easy to correctly dump your waste at the recycling station.
- Reduce means to use less, practice this first R by limiting your use of paper towels, turning off the lights when you leave a room, and turning off the water when you're washing your hands. The savings add up! "Reduce, Reuse, THEN Recycle!"



3. Video

The City of Gresham's Plate to Power program was highlighted in an Earth Day special on KATU last spring and is a great tool for spreading the word about the program in your school. The segment follows uneaten food from students' plates, through collection and processing and ultimately to the anaerobic digestion facility in Junction City, OR where it is converted into electricity. Check it out and share widely with teachers, staff, students and parents:

<https://greshamoregon.gov/Plate-at-Power>. There is a video notes worksheet students can use too!

