

## **Go Green with Waste Diversion Initiatives at Your School**

### **Locker Clean-Up Day**

At the end of the school year, students often throw the contents of their lockers straight into the garbage, without consideration for what could be reused or recycled. The following year, parents are given a list of school supplies to buy new, unaware that some of these items could have been saved from the year before. Recruit volunteers for support on locker clean-out day at your school. By stationing someone at each garbage can, a large amount of useful items can be diverted from the waste stream. Sort items and make a 'free' table for parents to avoid buying these items new.

### **Waste Audit**

Does all of the waste at your school get to where it should go? Your school can save money and reduce its waste footprint by conducting classroom or school-wide waste audits, first weighing the garbage, then sorting it before weighing it again. This process is very eye-opening to students! Tipping fees for recycling are lower than those for garbage, so not only does this teach students about how to appropriately manage their own waste, it could save your school money! Contact the Comox Strathcona Waste Management educator to support your audit. [www.cswm.ca/resources](http://www.cswm.ca/resources)

### **Recycling Challenge**

Have your school create a recycling challenge, where the class that recycles the most in a set period of time receives recognition.

### **School Free Store**

Design an exchange program for students - include a swap box for items that are no longer wanted but still in good condition.

### **Share Food**

Similar to the free store – have a box or bowl in a shared space in the classroom where students can put non-perishable items that they don't want to eat from their lunch. That way, items can be shared and eaten rather than tossed into the trash.

### **School Lunch Policies**

Home curbside pickup for waste is often more comprehensive than it is for institutions like schools. Create a 'Pack-in, Pack-out' lunch policy at your school where students are required to bring their lunch waste home with them in their lunch kits. Be sure to provide families with information about how to properly sort waste at home. Host a 'Waste-Free' lunch week at your school, providing information for families to make changes to reduce waste. Develop a compost program at your school to accommodate food waste.

### **Start a Plogging Group**

Plogging is an eco-friendly fitness mashup of jogging and picking up trash. Rather than racing past the rubbish strewn along their route, ploggers pick it up for proper disposal, and if they're feeling ambitious, try to squeeze in a few exercises in between pieces of trash as they fill up their bags. This could easily be started with keen runners in your school by providing garbage bags and rubber gloves.

**Raise Awareness by Creating Labels**

Label bins clearly as Landfill, Recycling, etc. Create an awareness for staff and students about where items are going. If something is placed in a garbage can, it goes to the landfill – does it need to?

**Organize an Annual Repair Café**

A repair café is an event where people come together to repair household electrical and mechanical devices, computers, bicycles, clothing, and more. People show up with their items in need of repair, and volunteers with skills and tools are there to help fix them - diverting repairable items from ending up in the landfill. For more info visit <https://repaircafe.org/en/>

**Yard Sale**

Arrange a community yard sale day and invite students and parents to sell or trade items they no longer use. This can be used as a school fundraiser, or students can gain business skills and make money. Either way, used items are shared and diverted from the landfill.

**Classroom Green Teams**

Assign a rotating 'green team' for each class to make sure that recycling and/or compost efforts are on track. Conduct periodic waste audits to see how the schools diversion rates compare to other classrooms/schools. Students can learn how to calculate what % of their waste is going to the garbage vs. recycled/composted. Is this rate going up or down over time?

**Create a 'Share Shed'**

A Share Shed is a Library of Things, where people can borrow all sorts of useful items ranging from tools, household appliances, camping and gardening equipment, sewing machines, and much more!

**Create a Waste Reduction Action Plan**

Create a committee to examine your school's purchasing policy re: cleaning supplies, recycled paper products, etc. Your school's purchasing policy could be updated to include greener guidelines, such as a general preference for recycled products, a goal where a certain percentage of all purchases must have recycled content, etc.

**Promote Your Green Actions**

Use your school newsletter and other internal communications to let people know what great things your school is doing to protect the environment. Have a school-wide assembly to discuss the importance of waste reduction. You can even challenge other schools, and quantify and report on your successes and results. Post prominent reminders on screens and bulletin boards in high traffic areas.

**Participate in Waste Reduction Events**

Province- or Canada-wide events like the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup and Canada's Waste Reduction Week are great ways to be a part of a bigger waste reduction challenge, and often have resources available to support your school's participation. Your community might already have locally organized events that your school could participate in, or you can organize your own, and go broader than just the school ground.

**Get Creative!**

This isn't an exhaustive list, so encourage students to get creative in their waste reduction and diversion efforts. From upcycled art projects to fundraising or public events, your school can become a leader in green initiatives in your community by sharing ideas and passions more broadly, so get brainstorming!