



# Waste Reduction and Recycling Best Practices Guide for Schools

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# Overview of King County Green Schools Program

King County Green Schools Program serves K-12 public and private schools and school districts throughout King County (except in the City of Seattle). The program's vision is that schools and districts will engage their students and staff in learning about sustainability and practicing resource conservation in their schools, homes, and communities.

## Benefits for participating schools

- **Assistance.** A King County Green Schools Program representative is assigned to your school to provide hands-on [assistance and guidance](#).
- **Resources.** The program provides information, tools, indoor recycling bins, and signs.
- **Student learning and leadership.** The program offers guidance to student teams engaged in sustainability education and action. Students learn about resource conservation and develop leadership skills as they take action in their schools, homes, and communities. Action-oriented environmental education engages students, offers meaningful community service experience, and can improve learning and test scores.
- **Cost savings.** Conservation practices can save money in addition to protecting the environment and engaging your school community in learning and action.
- **Recognition.** Strengthen student, staff, and community ownership and pride. See school and district [recognition](#), and recognition for student teams at [Elementary school Green Team recognition](#) and [Secondary school Green Team recognition](#).

## Use this guide to:

- Learn about best practices for waste reduction and recycling.
- Find resources and tools, including ready-to-go templates for education and action.
- Improve or expand your school's waste reduction and recycling practices at any time.
- Learn how to receive Level One Green School recognition for your waste reduction and recycling education and actions.

## Your King County Green Schools Program representative can help *with*:

- Student and staff education.
- Project planning, including guidance for student teams.
- Waste assessments and recycling rate calculations.
- Hands-on assistance to set up or improve waste reduction and recycling practices.
- Resources and tools, including indoor recycling bins, stickers, and signs.
- Achieving recognition.

**Participating schools:** Email [GreenSchools@triangleassociates.com](mailto:GreenSchools@triangleassociates.com) to ask for your school's program representative. To start participating in the program, fill out the School Application form on [this page](#).

## Recognition

Your school can achieve Level One recognition for waste reduction and recycling actions. Those actions can happen in one school year or over multiple school years. Actions your school has taken before participating in the program count toward Level One recognition.

Level One recognition must be achieved before recognition for other program levels. However, to receive program assistance, your school does not need to work toward recognition, and your school may focus on any resource conservation area offered by the program.

To be recognized as a Level One Green School, fill out the Level One recognition form linked on [this page](#). Level One Green Schools receive: a “**We are King County Green School**” banner; an electronic icon for websites and newsletters; and a summary of the school's successes on the program website.

**Level One recognition requires your school to:**

- Start a Green Team. Include at least two staff members. Student members or student teams are strongly encouraged, but not required for recognition.
- Tell your school community that your school is participating in the Green Schools Program.
- Educate students and staff about waste reduction and recycling.
- Prevent waste by taking at least one action to reduce food waste, at least one action to reduce single-use products, and at least one action to reduce paper use.
- Follow best practices for recycling.
- Reach a recycling rate of 40% or more, or increase your recycling rate by 15% or more.
- Review the Healthy Schools guide and complete at least one educational strategy or action.
- Share your successes with your school community.

## Green Teams

A Green Team is a group of school community members who work together on sustainability education and action. Green Team members may include students, teachers, custodians, administrators, or family/guardian or community volunteers. The team can be a stand-alone group or class, or a formal part of another club or organization such as the Associated Student Body (ASB).

If your school is participating in the Green Schools Program, student Green Teams or clubs are eligible to receive assistance with project brainstorming, action planning, trainings, and materials and resources. Student teams also can earn recognition. See [Elementary school Green Team recognition](#) and [Secondary school Green Team recognition](#).

Key tools and resources	
<a href="#">Green Team Guide: Strategies for Success</a>	Strategies and tips on how to start and maintain student teams.
<a href="#">Elementary school Green Teams</a>	Elementary schools: Assistance, workshops, resources, project ideas and guides, and recognition offered by the program.
<a href="#">Secondary school Green Teams</a>	Middle and high schools: Assistance, workshops, resources, project ideas and guides, and recognition offered by the program.
<a href="#">Communication template asking for volunteers</a>	Use this announcement (in emails, newsletters, at lunch, over the PA system, etc.) to let your school community know your school is participating in the program and ask for volunteers to join your efforts.

## Education, outreach, and systems change

Education and outreach are keys to improving waste reduction and recycling practices. Students at every grade level can learn about sustainability and conservation of natural resources, gain volunteer and leadership experience, and take action in their schools, districts, homes, and communities.

Secondary students have opportunities to earn community service credit and explore ways to:

(1) influence systems change (focused on the whole and not only the parts) by partnering with others to understand and address the causes of a problem and by changing policies, laws, institutions, and social norms; and

(2) help build the transition to a more equitable and low-carbon circular economy where materials and resources are conserved, greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, and green jobs are created.

Key tools and resources	
<a href="#">Climate change and solid waste</a>	Help students and other members of your school community make connections between solid waste and climate change.
<a href="#">Educational programs offered by King County</a>	Educational resources, including free classroom workshops at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and a conservation themed assembly for elementary schools.
<a href="#">Fact vs. Fiction about reducing waste and recycling</a>	Use this PowerPoint presentation to educate students and staff about why waste reduction and recycling are important and what materials can be recycled.
<a href="#">Frequently asked questions about school recycling</a>	Answers to frequently asked questions about school recycling
<a href="#">Sample announcements</a>	Use or modify these announcements to either kick-off or maintain recycling practices.
<a href="#">Staff meeting presentations</a>	Use to help prepare a presentation to school staff about waste reduction and recycling.
<a href="#">Waste Reduction and Recycling fast facts</a>	Share these in classrooms, lunch, assemblies, emails, newsletters, school website, and social media to educate students and staff about reducing waste and recycling.

## Activities and resources for students and staff

Learning, outreach, and advocacy can be carried out in student teams, classrooms, school-wide, district-wide, and beyond your school or district.

- Announcements about school waste reduction and recycling practices.** Introduce all students and staff to these practices at the start of each school year and whenever your school makes changes. Throughout the year, regularly remind students and staff in classrooms, staff meetings, PA announcements, assemblies, newsletters, emails, and social media. **Resources:** [Sample announcements](#) and [Waste Reduction and Recycling fast facts](#)
- Waste audit.** Assess what materials in your school are thrown out instead of reused, recycled, or composted. Share results and recommendations with your school community. **Resource:** Ask your King County Green Schools Program representative for guidance on conducting an audit.

- **Climate change connections.** Educate students and staff about the connections between waste reduction and climate change. When we reduce waste and recycle, fewer greenhouse gas emissions are produced. **Resources:** [Climate Change and Solid Waste](#); [Climate Change: Green Team and Classroom learning and activities](#); and [Project Drawdown](#) which lists reducing food waste as one of the most effective strategies to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions
- **Waste reduction, recycling, and composting lessons.** Include lessons in science, math, art, reading, writing, history, social studies, and other subjects. **Resources:** [Resources and activities for learning and action](#); [Elementary school activity guides](#); [Secondary school Green Teams](#) (workshops, project guides); videos (secondary school) [The Compost Story](#) and [The Story of Stuff](#)
- **Guest educators, speakers, and tours.** Schedule guest educators or speakers, or plan a tour or field trip related to waste reduction and recycling. **Resources:** [Educational programs offered by King County](#) and [Tours at regional recycling, composting, reuse, and garbage facilities](#)
- **Staff training.** Present a short training about reducing waste and recycling at a staff meeting. Students can lead the presentation or help. **Resource:** [Staff meeting presentations](#)
- **Contests or quiz shows.** Hold a contest to see which classroom, grade level, or lunch period generates the least garbage per day or week, or which has the least amount of contamination in its recycling bins. In classrooms, at lunch, or at an assembly, run a quiz show about reducing waste and recycling. **Resources:** [Recycling quiz show questions](#); [Quiz Show Guide](#); and [Incentives to encourage correct sorting](#) with competition and reward strategies.
- **Skits or videos.** Students can create and present a skit or video on reducing waste and recycling to share in classrooms, assemblies, cafeterias, staff meetings, or social media. **Resources:** Tips on making videos about [reducing food waste](#), [refillable bottles](#), [recycling and waste reduction](#)
- **Posters or displays.** Students can make posters or 3-dimensional signs to post in the cafeteria and hallways to show materials which should be placed in recycling and garbage bins. **Resource:** Ask your King County Green Schools Program representative for examples and guidance.
- **Student advocacy.** Students can identify changes needed for a circular economy (where materials are reduced, reused, and recycled, and greenhouse gas emissions are reduced), and advocate for those changes at the school, district, city, county, state, or national level. For school or district advocacy: After researching school or district waste reduction and recycling practices or policies, students can present recommendations to the school board. **Resources:** [Berkeley Public School Sustainability Plan](#) (this model plan includes student education, waste reduction, recycling, composting, energy, water, transportation, health, etc.); [Environmental Justice: learning and activities](#); and [Earth Day, Earth Month, or any day or month](#)
- **Art projects.** Upcycled art creations, murals, and other art projects can raise awareness about rethinking, reducing, reusing, and recycling materials. **Resources:** Elementary school students - [Upcycle lesson plans](#); secondary school students - [8 ways to upcycle your trash](#)
- **Cafeteria monitors.** Student or other volunteer monitors encourage waste prevention practices and remind students what items can and can't be recycled. After training monitors, create a monitoring schedule. **Resource:** Ask your King County Green Schools Program representative for guidance. If your school is starting a new recycling program or working toward Level One recognition, the program can provide a virtual or in-person training.

## Waste reduction (also known as waste prevention)

Food waste, single-use products, and paper are major sources of waste in schools and communities. Use the resources and best practices below to reduce waste and protect natural resources. Reducing waste often results in cost savings, since less garbage or recyclable materials can reduce collection frequency or the size of outdoor garbage or recycling containers.

### Food waste: How can your school reduce food waste?

Food waste is a big contributor to climate change and is a social justice issue. About one-third of all food produced in the world is wasted. In King County, about 15% of children experience food insecurity, meaning there are times they don't have access to the food they need for a healthy, active life.

Key tools and resources	
<a href="#">Reducing food waste in schools</a> infographic	Infographic with strategies to reduce food waste
<a href="#">Reducing food waste in schools</a> web page	Educational tools, strategies, and resources to reduce school food waste
<a href="#">Food waste reduction articles for families</a>	Tips on reducing food waste at home and school
<a href="#">Myths and facts about school food share programs</a>	Facts about food share tables. Food share tables and food donation can give back to the community.
<a href="#">Fact sheet on how to set up food share tables</a> from Public Health-Seattle-King County	Review this fact sheet if your school wants to set up a food share table.
<a href="#">Food share table request form</a> – Before setting up a food share table, school districts complete this form for each public school and send the form to Public Health-Seattle-King County. Private schools also must complete this form.	All schools: Get permission from your school administrator. Public schools: Also get permission from your school district Food or Nutrition Services. Ask the Green Schools Program which districts allow schools to set up food share tables.

### Reducing food waste: *Education and best practices*

- Educate students.** Engage students in learning about food systems and food waste. Use classroom lessons, student clubs, nutrition and cooking lessons, and school produce gardens that involve students. **Resources:** [Reducing food waste in schools](#); [secondary school classroom workshops](#) - *Food for Thought* workshop; [Gardening resources for schools](#); and [Project Drawdown](#) - food waste is one of the top strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Educational campaign to encourage reduction of wasted food.** Outreach messages include: “Take or bring only what you will eat” / “Eat what you take or bring” / “If you brought lunch from home, take leftovers home.” Students can design educational logos, slogans, etc. Students can be invited to sign a food waste reduction pledge. Tips can be shared with families. **Resources:** [Pledge to reduce food waste at school](#); [Food waste reduction articles for families](#); and a guide for student teams on creating a video about [reducing food waste](#)

- **Track your school’s food waste.** Share the results with your school. Work with your school or district food services staff to revise menus to reduce wasted food. **Resources:** [Food waste inventory project - daily tracking sheet](#) and [Food waste inventory project - summary sheet](#)
- **Hold recess before lunch and extend seated lunch time.** Studies show food waste decreases in elementary schools when recess is scheduled before lunch. In K-12 schools, longer seated lunch time results in less food waste. **Resources:** [Longer seated lunch period](#) and [Recess before lunch](#)
- **Milk dispensers.** When students choose how much milk to take in cups, less milk is wasted. Students report milk tastes better from dispensers (compared to milk cartons) and this leads them to drink what they take. **Resource:** [Reducing food waste in schools](#) – milk dispensers.
- **Food Share Table.** Students may place or take unopened, unwanted school-provided foods. Typical items placed on Food Share Tables include unopened milk cartons, yogurts, cheese sticks, packaged crackers, apple sauce or fruit cups, and unpeeled oranges and bananas. Invite students who want more food to help themselves to food share table items. Public schools must obtain approval from their school district Food or Nutrition Services. **Resources:** [Fact sheet on how to set up food share tables](#); [Food share table request form](#); [Food Share and Donation Pilot – Lake Washington School District](#) and help from King County Green Schools Program
- **Donate foods and drinks.** Some schools and districts donate weekly, others before long school breaks and at the end of each school year. **Resources:** [How it Works](#); [Myths and Facts about School Food Share Programs](#); [Food donation tracking form](#); [School districts donate edible foods](#); and help from King County Green Schools Program

## Single-use products: How can your school reuse materials and replace single-use products with durable products?

Single-use products are products or materials used only once and then either recycled, composted, or disposed in garbage. Common examples in schools include plastic water bottles and milk cartons. Schools can run educational campaigns about reusable products, reduce single-use products, and replace single-use products with reusable options such as milk dispensers and durable cups.

Key tools and resources	
<a href="#">How to pack a waste free lunch</a>	How to avoid single-use materials in packed lunches. Share this with students and their families.
<a href="#">Guide to plastic bottle reduction and recycling campaign</a>	Facts about plastic bottle waste. Step-by-step guide to run a campaign to reduce plastic bottles.
<a href="#">Zero Waste</a>	Information and links to zero waste resources.
<a href="#">Zero waste cleanout and School swap day</a> Items no longer needed by one teacher or student can be used by others.	How to set up a swap day at the end of the school year when large amounts of materials are disposed.
<a href="#">Ditching Disposables: A toolkit for healthier food ware in K-12 schools</a> and <a href="#">Food ware</a>	Resources from the Center for Environmental Health
<a href="#">Reusable Food Serviceware Guide</a>	<a href="#">Rethink Disposable</a> resources and case studies

## Reducing single-use products: *Education and best practices*

- **Zero waste educational campaign.** Learn about Zero Waste of Resources, and share information with your school community. **Resource:** [Zero Waste](#)
- **Waste free lunches.** Encourage students and their families to pack lunches from home in reusable containers and lunch sacks. **Resources:** [How to pack a waste free lunch](#) and [Cafeteria Culture](#) which promotes a plastic free, zero waste future
- **Reusable bottles.** Run an educational campaign about single-use plastic bottles compared to durable, reusable bottles. Ask your school or district to install water stations to make it easy to refill durable water bottles. **Resource:** [Guide to plastic bottle reduction and recycling campaign](#); and a guide for student teams on [planning a video about reusable bottles](#)
- **Milk dispensers and reusable cups.** Instead of single-use milk cartons, offer milk in dispensers. Less milk is wasted when students choose how much milk to take in their cups. Students report milk tastes better from dispensers and this leads them to drink what they take. Dispensers also can be used for cafeteria condiments. **Resources:** [Analysis of milk dispensers and milk cartons for Auburn School District](#); and [Milk dispensers in Canby School District, Oregon](#)
- **Reusable food ware, including trays and utensils.** At meal times and in staff break-rooms, replace disposable or compostable trays, plates, bowls, cups, utensils, etc. with reusable, washable products.
  - **Eliminate or reduce use of meal trays.** **Resource:** [Trayless Tuesdays - Cafeteria Culture](#)
  - **Replace single-use disposable or compostable food ware with reusable, washable trays.** **Resources:** [Polystyrene Facts](#); [Expanded Polystyrene Ban](#) starting June 2024 for polystyrene plates, bowls, clam shells, trays, and cups; [Zero Waste & Better Health: Two Schools on a Journey to More Sustainable, Reusable Food-service Ware](#) webinar; Compostables vs. Reusables at [Franklin Elementary School](#); [Palo Alto Unified School District](#) saved \$25,000; [Bishop O'Dowd High School](#) saved \$6,459 per year; and [We pay schools to stop using petroleum-based plastic](#) (email [contact@plasticfreerestaurants.org](mailto:contact@plasticfreerestaurants.org) about cash assistance from this nonprofit organization for schools to switch from plastic to reusable products
- **Unwrapped utensils, straws, napkins – and offer only upon request.** Replace plastic-wrapped utensils, straws, and napkins with unwrapped items. Beginning in 2022, food services such as schools and restaurants may only provide single-use (non-reusable) items such as plastic utensils, straws, and condiment packages if the customer, such as a student at school, wants them. Utensils also may not be packaged in plastic in such a way that a student is unable to take only the single-use utensil or item desired. **Resource:** [Single-use service-ware only on request](#)
- **Reuse durable supplies.** Maintain a storage closet, shelf, or bin for reusable party/holiday decorations, classroom displays, hall passes, visitor badges, and other reusable materials.
- **Zero Waste locker or cubby clean out and School Supplies Swap.** At the end of the school year, these activities will reduce waste. Unwanted supplies and materials can be used by others. **Resource:** [Zero waste cleanout and School swap day](#)

## Paper waste: How can your school reduce paper use?

Paper is a major source of waste in schools, where 25% of garbage often is made up of paper.

Key tools and resources	
<a href="#">Reduce junk mail</a>	Strategies to reduce unwanted mail
<a href="#">Options for reducing office paper consumption</a>	Tips on paper reduction strategies
<a href="#">Paper Calculator Tool</a>	Calculate the impact of your school's paper use
<a href="#">Good On One Side (GOOS) image</a>	Copy and attach this GOOS image to a paper reuse box in each classroom and office.

### Reducing paper waste: *Education and best practices*

- **Calculate the environmental impact of your school's paper use and run an informational campaign.** *Tip:* Ask office staff about your school's paper use. **Resource:** [Paper Calculator Tool](#)
- **Limit paper use.** Use blackboards, whiteboards, document cameras, or smart boards. Refer students to books and web sites. Post assignments on teacher web pages instead of printing them. Use email for newsletters, bulletins, and memos.
- **Write on both sides.** Use the backsides of paper printed on one side for drafts or scratch paper. Place labeled paper reuse trays in classrooms and offices, then regularly promote this practice. **Resource:** [Good On One Side \(GOOS\) image](#) to copy for each paper reuse tray
- **Make double-sided copies.** Adopt a double-sided photocopying and printing policy. Provide double-sided copying instructions. Use signs and reminders to encourage this practice.
- **Eliminate unwanted mail.** Ask to be removed from mailing lists. **Resource:** [Reduce junk mail](#)
- **Print only what you need.** Reduce print runs based on number of leftover copies. "Right size" the paper used (e.g., use half sheets). Change the margin default to reduce the amount of paper needed for each print job. Promote "paper free," "no print," or "print only what you need" days.
- **Create a paper budget for each employee.** Assign each employee a copy machine code, track paper use, and share with each employee their monthly paper use. Recognize that different positions need different amounts of paper.
- **Hold a staff contest for reducing paper use.** Reward staff who reduce their paper use. Ask staff to share their strategies at a staff meeting.
- **Set up and promote a reuse station.** Use a shelf or other space for paper supplies such as used file folders and envelopes that can be reused. Office staff can monitor the reuse space.

## Recycling and composting

The program provides hands-on assistance, signs, and indoor recycling bins. Your King County Green Schools Program representative can help you educate students and staff about: (1) the benefits of recycling and composting; and (2) what materials can be collected for recycling and composting.

### Indoor bins, stickers, and other materials

To request the materials listed below, contact your King County Green Schools Program representative or email [GreenSchools@triangleassociates.com](mailto:GreenSchools@triangleassociates.com).

- **[Recycling containers](#)**. The program provides indoor recycling bins, as needed, up to \$250 for schools serving 40% or more free and reduced meals and up to \$150 for other schools. Indoor bins also are available for collection of food scraps and other compostable materials.
- **[Recycling stickers and signs](#)**. Stickers can be adhered to indoor bins, and signs can be posted above recycling bins. Stickers also are available for indoor composting bins.
- **Green Team aprons**. Your school can initially receive up to 10 aprons for student monitors at cafeteria waste stations. In subsequent years, up to 6 replacement aprons can be requested.

Key tools and resources	
<a href="#">Frequently asked questions about school recycling</a>	Answers to frequently-asked recycling questions.
<a href="#">Milk carton recycling</a>	Use this guide to plan and set up milk carton recycling and leftover liquids collection.
<a href="#">Options for securing a container liner</a>	See different ways to secure a container liner in a bin.
<a href="#">Recycling toolkit</a>	This Green Schools Program web page offers resources and tools for school recycling programs.
<a href="#">Sign holder options for cafeteria recycling and waste stations</a>	Use this visual how-to guide to cafeteria waste station sign holders.
<a href="#">Shredded paper recycling options</a>	Shredded paper is <b>not</b> accepted in commingled recycling bins. Find information on recycling shredded paper.

## Recycling: *Best practices*

Use the best practices below to:

(1) conserve natural resources; (2) reduce contamination in recycling bins; and (3) help your school or district save money, since garbage collection services cost more than recycling collection services.

- **Indoor bins.** Place indoor recycling bins: (a) next to garbage bins; (b) where they are easy to see; (c) in each classroom and office, next to each photocopy machine, and in the staff break room. If your school has a kitchen, place a recycling bin(s) there for cardboard boxes, glass bottles and jars, plastic jugs, steel/tin cans, and other recyclable materials. **Resource:** [Recycling containers](#)
- **Stickers and signs.** Place a sign on or above each recycling bin to show what can be recycled. **Resource:** [Recycling stickers and signs](#) – See signs for classrooms, cafeterias, kitchens, offices
- **Empty bins regularly.** Empty indoor recycling bins regularly so they do not overflow. When recycling bins are full, recyclable materials are more likely to end up in the garbage.
- **At a minimum, collect the following materials for recycling.**
  - Paper, cardboard, aluminum cans, and plastic bottles
  - Electronics and fluorescent light bulbs/tubes. Schools are required by law to collect these materials to be recycled. Separate collection is required: Do not place these materials in your school's regular or commingled recycling bin. **Resources:** [Take it Back Network - King County](#) and [E-Cycle Washington](#) (or call 866-779-6632). E-Cycle Washington provides Washington K-12 schools with free recycling for monitors, laptops, and more.
- **Collect additional materials, depending on your school's recycling collection service.**
  - Glass bottles and jars, milk cartons, plastic jugs (kitchen), steel/tin cans, and scrap metal
  - Batteries, cell phones, keyboards, mice, and printer cartridges. Separate collection is required: Do not place these materials in your school's regular or commingled recycling bin. **Resources:** [Take it Back Network - King County](#) and [Printer Cartridges – Recycling Options](#)  
*Tip: Cell phone and printer cartridge recycling can raise money for your school.*
- **Recycle Right: Keep contamination low.** Contaminants in recycling bins include liquids, food, plastic utensils, straws, and bottle caps. If there are too many contaminants, your recycling hauler may need to dispose of entire loads.
- **Adjust your collection service as needed.** As garbage and recycling volumes change, adjust your collection service (i.e., less or more frequent collection, larger or smaller outdoor containers). This can save your school or district money. **Resource:** To ask haulers to make adjustments, public schools typically work with district staff and private schools typically work with an administrator, custodian, office manager, or business manager.
- **Purchase recycled content products.** Buying products made from recycled materials supports recycling. Many schools purchase paper with 30% or more recycled content. Ask your office staff what recycled content products the school purchases. **Resource:** [Paper Calculator 4.0 | Environmental Paper Network](#)

## Composting: *Best practices*

Use the best practices and resources below to:

(1) conserve natural resources; and (2) reduce contamination in compost bins.

Before starting to collect compostable materials:

- Make sure recyclable materials are being sorted correctly.
- Educate your school community about [food waste reduction](#). Reducing wasted food is more important than composting, and means your school will have fewer food scraps to be composted. See pages 6 – 7 of this guide for guidance on reducing food waste.

Key tools and resources	
<a href="#">Food Scrap Collection Steps to Success</a>	Learn the steps to setting up food scrap collection.
<a href="#">Food scrap assessment</a>	Use this form to measure its food scrap volume and/or weight before setting up food scrap collection.
<a href="#">Sample announcements about composting</a>	Use or modify these announcements to educate your school community about collection of food scraps and other compostable materials.
<a href="#">Tips to prevent or reduce fruit flies</a>	Find strategies to prevent and reduce fruit flies .
<a href="#">Call for adult volunteers to help with collection of compostable materials</a>	Template asking for parent/family/guardian volunteers to help train students.

- **Reduce lawn and garden waste** that needs to be transported to a regional composting facility. (1) Leave grass clippings on lawns and fields; and (2) Compost leaves and other organic waste on school grounds if your school or district is able to do this.
- **Collect food scraps and food soiled paper to be composted at a regional composting facility.**  
**Resource:** [Food Scrap Collection Steps to Success](#)
  - If a collection service is not possible, consider collecting food scraps to be composted on your school campus in worm bins, Earth tubs, etc. **Resource:** [On-site food composting](#)
- **Keep contamination low.** Contaminants in composting bins include garbage and recyclable materials such as plastic, metal, and glass. If there are too many contaminants, your composting hauler may need to dispose of entire loads.
- **Paper towel composting.** *If* Cedar Grove Composting picks up compostable materials from your school, set up a system to include paper towels. Cedar Grove requires: (a) separate bins with clear signs for paper towels only; (b) daily monitoring of paper towel bins; and (c) an agreement signed by the school custodian who will monitor the paper towel bins. **Resource:** Ask your King County Green Schools Program representative for more information.

# Recycling rate

To receive recognition as a Level One Green School:

- Reach a recycling rate of 40% or more, or increase your recycling rate by 15% or more.
- Calculate your school's recycling rate *twice*: (1) when you begin to participate in the program or soon after; and (2) before requesting recognition. **Resources:** See resources below. Ask your King County Green Schools Program representative to help.

Key tools and resources	
<a href="#">Recycling rate calculation worksheet</a> (Link to the Recycling Toolkit web page)	Find the recycling rate worksheet in the "Monitoring recycling and garbage" section of the Recycling Toolkit web page. Use the worksheet to figure out your school's recycling rate. Questions about how to calculate your school's recycling rate? Ask the Green Schools Program.
<a href="#">Garbage and recycling tracking form</a>	This form will help you assess fullness of outdoor garbage, recycling, and composting containers. Use that information to fill out the recycling rate worksheet.

Tips:

- Involve a math class or math club in helping to calculate the school's recycling rate.
- Gather information about fullness of outdoor containers on the day before the hauler(s) pick up.
- Avoid calculating the recycling rate at the start of the school year, near holidays, or at the end of the school year when volumes of garbage, recyclable materials, and compostable materials are not typical.

## Healthy Schools and Hazardous Wastes

To receive recognition as a Level One Green School, complete at least one action item from the Healthy Schools Best Practices Guide.

Buying and using products with no or fewer toxic materials is an example of waste prevention. See [Healthy Schools](#) for information and best practices about pesticide-free school gardens, green cleaning supplies, and more. **Resources:** [Healthy School Resources](#) and [Chemical Hazards in Ceramics](#) video for art teachers. Contact the Hazardous Waste Management program in King County at 206-296-4692 or [haz.waste@kingcounty.gov](mailto:haz.waste@kingcounty.gov) if you have questions about hazardous wastes.

## Grant and funding resources

- [Fundraising ideas related to recycling](#)
- [Gardening resources for schools](#) - See grants section
- [Grant and award opportunities](#)
- [We pay schools to stop using petroleum-based plastic](#). Email the nonprofit organization Plastic Free Restaurants at [contact@plasticfreerestaurants.org](mailto:contact@plasticfreerestaurants.org) to ask about cash subsidies for schools to switch from plastic to reusable products.