

MINIMIZING WASTE - SUPPORT PACKAGE

WasteLess Assessment



Schools can generate a lot of waste, and they are also the perfect place for youth to learn about the importance of waste reduction. It's key for students to participate in some simple strategies to learn "waste less" behaviours. The goal of a WasteLess Assessment is for students and staff to find out how much garbage is produced at their school in one day so they can make helpful and appropriate plans to reduce, reuse, recycle, and waste less at school everyday.

Action Plan

Step 1- Set the Goal. Make a clear goal for your WasteLess Assessment. To get there, explore the many possible goals. Investigate if there are certain waste items that you can reduce. For example: paper towels in bathrooms; styrofoam or plastic in the cafeteria; juice boxes; ziplock bags; food waste; paper. Are there are waste items that can be reused before disposal? For example: one sided paper; pudding cups; milk cartons. Find out if your school is sorting and recycling properly. Start an assessment with a question you would like to ask. What waste can you reduce and how?



Step 2- Planning and Promotion. Figure out the best day to collect the school waste and recycling. Talk with the school custodian to coordinate with them. Ensure they do not collect and discard waste that day. If it happens that the custodian collects the waste, you will want them to keep it for this assessment. Pick a day you and a group of volunteers can stay after school, or make time during the school day to sort and evaluate the collected waste. At the end, everyone at the school can tour the waste display and you can present findings. You'll find some interesting and actionable results when you add up all the trash!

Step 3- Be Safe & Use the Right Tools. Always use the proper safety equipment when sorting waste. Essential items: safety goggles; reusable kitchen gloves; smock; reusable tarps or plastic sheets on which to sort and display the waste. To weigh the bags you can use a hanging scale or you could use a household bathroom scale. Consider using skipping ropes for boundaries when you sort the waste.



Step 4- Sort and Display Waste. Pick a location to sort and display the waste. The school gym is a great location because of its size, central location, and air exchange unit. You will want to plan the event when Physical Education classes could be held outside while the waste is sorted and displayed. While sorting, brainstorm some questions for your fellow students to consider when they eventually walk through and see the waste. Are we sorting properly? What do



we produce a lot of? How can we reduce certain things? What are the easiest things to change? For example: fewer paper towels; one-sided paper bins; reusable drink containers; and snack containers. You may also want to count or sort certain items that may stand out: juice boxes, plastic bags, yogurt tubes, etc. There are many ways to sort waste, depending on the goal of your assessment. For example, you could sort by categories: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Compost, and Waste.

Reduce: These are items that could be eliminated. We can adjust our behaviour and choose something reusable instead, for example: juice boxes, plastic baggies, plastic utensils, commercially packaged snacks, etc.

Reuse: These items could be used again, for example: one sided paper, pudding cups, milk cartons, etc.

Recycle: These are items that can not be reduced or reused and now must be made into something else, for example: old ink cartridges, paper, batteries, etc.

Compost includes the organic items that will decay over time. You could take note of the amount, and find out if there is any good food discarded.

Waste is anything that does not fit in the other four categories and goes to the landfill.



Step 5- Conduct the Assessment. Track the quantity of bags and if possible, their weight. You will want to count the bags before you start sorting, or weigh each type of waste as you finish sorting. Make a graph, and display these numbers for all to see. Remember to take lots of pictures, for fun and for research purposes!

Step 6- Waste Tour & Waste Less Campaign Kick-Off! Host a waste education event as students tour the waste and share ways to waste less everyday at school. Invite your Green Schools NS Engagement Officer in to give a virtual presentation to get your school started on the path to wasting less. You could also invite your local [Divert Nova Scotia Waste Educator](#) to review best waste management practices in your school and introduce great ideas. There is also [Eddie the Cat](#) from the [Clean Foundation](#) who can visit and talk to Grade P-3 about waste. You could also do peer education! Check out the resources listed below.



Step 7- Keep it Up! Display any pictures and graphs you created in your school newsletter, and display them in your school foyer for all to see. Decide what behaviour you would like to see change. How are you going to get the students involved in this change? What are some barriers you see with getting people to change their behaviour? How can you help them with the change? How are you going to evaluate if the change was successful? Some time after you have made the changes and the new behaviors have been set up you may want to do a quick follow-up assessment to see the school has successfully reduced waste, or to check on a target item. **Tips for success:** Start with one thing, talk about it a lot, keep it fun, keep it important, keep the goal clear, and celebrate!

Resources

[Green School West Northfield Elementary School Story: WasteLess Assessment](#)

[Green Schools NS Pinterest Minimizing Waste](#)

[Green Schools NS Wasteless Wednesday Support Package](#)

[Green Schools NS Recycling Support Package](#)

[Green Schools NS Schoolyard and Roadside Cleanup Support Package](#)

[Waste Reduction Week Canada - School Waste Reduction Resource Kit](#)

[EcoSchools - Visual School Waste Audit](#)

[Saskatchewan Environmental Society - School Waste Audit](#)

[Canada - Waste Reduction Week](#)

[Canada - Earth Day](#)

[Environment Canada - Environment Week](#)

Videos

[Esmeralda Planet Protector & the Litterless Lunch](#)

[EcoSchools - How to do a Waste Audit](#)

[Green Schools Elementary School - Students Teach Others how to Sort Waste Properly](#)

Books

[Sandy's Incredible Shrinking Footprint - by Femida Handy](#)

[Michael Recycle Meets Litterbug Doug - by Ellie Bethel](#)

[How Did That Get in My Lunchbox?: The Story of Food - by Chris Butterworth](#)

[I Can Save the Earth!: One Little Monster Learns to Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle - by Alison Inches](#)

[Why Should I Recycle? - by Jen Green](#)

[Frankenstink: Garbage Gone Bad - by Ron Lightburn](#)

