

School Reuse Tips

General Reuse

- Set school printers to default to double-sided printing. Promote double-sided photocopying and printing with signage near copiers and printers. Provide instructions and training to staff and teachers.
- Place a “reuse box” next to printers and copiers for paper printed on one side (mistakes, etc.). This paper can be used in fax machines or as scratch paper.
- Encourage email use instead of paper copies for newsletters, bulletins, or memos.
- Establish a page on the school’s Website for information exchange and file sharing.
- When doing large print jobs, “right size” the paper used, such as half sheets, when possible. Evaluate print runs based on the number of leftover copies and reduce accordingly.
- Monitor paper purchasing reductions and promote the savings.

Cafeteria and Staff Break Room Reuse

- Place a “reuse crate” in the school cafeteria for uneaten and unopened food.
- Replace disposable service ware and utensils with durable, reusable items.
- Eliminate use of lunchroom trays or replace disposable trays with durable, reusable trays.
- Use bulk dispensers instead of individually packaged products (ketchup, mustard, milk, etc.).
- If the school does not have dishwashing capabilities, prepare a cost benefit analysis of waste reduction options, disposable versus reusable, and composting food scraps and soiled paper.

Classroom Reuse

- Foster use of 3-ring binders instead of spiral notebooks. Binders are reusable and paper can be easily added and removed for recycling.
- Designate “scrap material” boxes for paper, fabric, and other reusable objects. Have students label and decorate the boxes with samples of what goes inside.
 - Brainstorm with students on ways to reuse the materials.
 - Keep track of how much the class saves through reuse.
- Designate an area for scrap art supplies. Encourage students to bring in items such as egg cartons, film canisters, magazines, cartons, paper grocery bags, and plastic lids for reuse in art and other projects. Host an “inventors fair” or junk art show using scrap materials.
- Start a materials exchange where students can leave supplies they do not need and select ones they may need.
- At the end of the school year collect unwanted supplies for use in the upcoming school year.
- Start a classroom, grade-level, or school-wide book exchange.
- Hold a swap day. Encourage students to bring items from home to exchange with other students. Have different themes, such as “toy swap” or “game swap.” Include a history lesson on trade and monetary systems. (Obtain parental permission.)
- Conduct a classroom project using [Craig’s List \(www.craigslist.org\)](http://www.craigslist.org) or NERC’s Material Exchange Listing (http://nerc.org/documents/material_exchanges_in_the_northeast.html) to research how individuals, businesses, and organizations utilize materials exchanges.

Student Exchanges

- Designate an area in the school for a “student supply exchange.” Students can be encouraged to leave (or take) items, such as pens, notebooks, etc.
- Start a prom dress (and tuxedo) exchange for students. Many students struggle to financially afford gowns and suits for the prom and similar events. Encourage students to donate gowns and tuxedos or exchange for ones that fit better, look different, etc. Students can make a

confidential appointment to look at apparel.

- Keep a free listing service of used musical instruments and sporting equipment in the school newsletter or on the school Website. Promote donation of working instruments and equipment for students who otherwise might not be able to participate in music or sports.

Desk and Locker Cleanout

A great waste reduction activity for the end of the year is a “Desk & Locker Day Cleanout.” It is easy to organize, reduces waste, and helps save usable items for others who may need them.

Step One: Get permission from administration and review the plan with custodial staff. Make sure there are enough student and teacher volunteers to provide staffing.

Step Two: Decide on the logistics of the event. Schedule it to capture the most stuff and involve the most students, but not be too disruptive to normal class activities. Get approval from teachers to have student organizers participate in the event.

Step Three: Start a promotional campaign. Tell students when, how, and why the clean out will occur. Send an announcement home with students to inform parents.

Step Four: Encourage students to take everything home that they should (back packs, calculators, lunch bags, etc.)

Step Five: Designate an area for students to leave items, such as binders, spiral notebooks, pens, crayons, pencils, etc. Have student and teacher monitors ensure that no trash is left and that students do not mistakenly leave valuable items. Keep the area organized by placing bins or boxes with labels or signage for larger items.

Step Six: Decide on what to do with the collected items

- Set up a student and office reuse or resupply area.
- Donate used clothing to charity.
- Send old shoes to Nike Reuse-A-Shoe (www.nikereuseashoe.com).
- Set out recycling bins for paper and beverage container recycling.
- Usable physical education clothing can be washed and provided to the P.E. department for use by students who are without uniforms or forget their P.E. clothing.
- Identify local outlets for other reusable items: charities such as Goodwill and Salvation Army; Lions Clubs for eyeglasses; and used bookstores for books.

School Supply Exchanges or “ReSupply Station”

Reuse of office and classroom supplies reduces purchases, saves money, and creates less waste. File folders, hanging folders, envelopes, binders, paperclips, pens, pencils, and more can be used many times.

Step One: Set aside an area, preferably near the stocking room for new supplies, in order to make it accessible when people come in search of supplies.

Step Two: Assign someone to oversee, monitor, and promote the “resupply station.”

Step Three: Organize storage and bins. Empty clear tennis ball containers are perfect for paper clips, pens, pencils, erasers, etc. These containers can be stored in a cabinet, on a shelf, or stacked in a plastic bin. Sanitizing wipes containers work well for crayons, markers, and other larger items. Label the outside clearly and tape a sample of the item or a picture on the outside of the container for identification of the contents.

- Keep an inventory of items collected and redistributed to promote the benefits of the program.

Step Four: Make signs and labels. Keeping the station organized and easy to use will encourage more participation. Group like items together (e.g., all paper clips, etc.) and label shelves and containers. Post a sign about the importance of reuse to the school and the environment.

- Provide labels for re-labeling folders and binders; have pens and sticky labels handy.

Step Five: Promote. Choose a creative name for the station, such as Office Supply Collection and Reuse (OSCAR) or Reusable Office Supply Exchange (ROSE). Send an email or memo to staff

and teachers about the resupply station, explaining the benefits of reuse to the school and how supplies can be donated and taken. Have a station “grand opening” by walking around with a box to collect items and promote the new exchange. Establish an ongoing outreach and promotion campaign to keep the resupply station stocked with needed items and to promote the availability of items. Send a letter to parents encouraging parents and students to bring usable, but unwanted school supplies from home.

- Place bins or boxes in central locations to collect reusable office and school supplies.
- If the resupply station becomes too full with certain items, consider donating these to organizations in the area or international charities that redistribute school and office supplies.

Some Reuse Links

Reuse Links and Resources

(www.calrecycle.ca.gov/ReUse/Links/Default.htm)

US Environmental Protection Agency Reduce & Reuse

(www.epa.gov/osw/conservation/rrr/reduce.htm)

Material Exchanges in the Northeast

(www.nerc.org/documents/material_exchanges_in_the_northeast.html)

Reuse Marketplace

(www.reusemarketplace.org)

This Green Life

www.nrdc.org/thisgreenlife/0802.asp

For more information on the Northeast Recycling Council's school project and other School Waste Reduction Tip Sheets, check NERC's Website at www.nerc.org or contact Athena Lee Bradley by email at athena@nerc.org or by phone at 802.254.3636.