



Recycling Roundup!

Overview: In this project, students will roundup all the recyclables they possibly can! Students will learn all about what items are recyclable in their area, and will be in charge of creating and monitoring a simple recycling system in their own classrooms and school common spaces (e.g. hallways, cafeterias, athletic areas).

Grades Applied: All

Time Requirement: While this activity can take place solely for the duration of National Green Week, we strongly encourage students to keep it going through the creation of a permanent recycling system at their school.

Costs: None.

Background (Basics): Every year, the United States generates approximately 230 million tons of trash – that's about 4.6 pounds per person, per day! Less than one-quarter of that trash is recycled; the remainder is burned (which causes a great deal of air pollution) or buried in landfills (which can cause groundwater contamination). By taking just a few seconds out of our daily routine, we could reuse or recycle more than 70% of that waste, including valuable materials such as glass, metal, and paper! This would significantly reduce the demand for Earth's resources, while having the added benefit of protecting public health and preventing economic problems.

Learning Goals: The goal of this project is to get students in the habit of holding themselves, their schools, and others accountable to Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. Students should start to think about recycling as a way to save not only resources, but *energy* too. Since it takes far less energy to make products from recycled materials than it does to produce them from scratch, recycling is a great way to save energy (see Resources)!

Materials Suggested: Multiple recycling bins for each classroom/common space. If recycling bins are unavailable or cost prohibitive, old boxes may be substituted. There should be at least four boxes/bins: one for paper, one for cans, one for glass, and one for miscellaneous plastics. More boxes may be needed depending on what is recyclable in your area.

Project Steps:

1. Learn all about what items are recyclable in your community (including non-traditional items like televisions, computers, electronics, motor oil, etc.) and where you can bring these items to be recycled. Get started by going to www.earth911.com or by consulting one of the other resources listed at the end of this document.

2. Decide on your strategy: How are you going to share your newfound knowledge of what items are recyclable (e.g., items with triangles numbered 1-5) with classmates, teachers, parents/guardians and your greater community?

- Possible Strategies for the Campaign
 - Run a school-wide campaign to educate/mobilize your peers
 - Educate your school administrators or officials
 - Run a communitywide campaign
 - Educate younger students
 - Run a contest:
- **Establish a “green point” system or competition to encourage participation of the student body.** Students can give recognition to classmates and/or classrooms that do their part to reduce



waste by giving them “green points” when they achieve a particular goal such as increase the amount of their recycling or reduce the most trash of any classroom.

- Educate parents/guardians and other family
- Draft a “Recycling Roundup” pledge list and gather signatures
- Combine several of these strategies and run a Green Day at your school or come up with your own strategy.

- **Examples**

- ***In their classrooms***, students can give a simple, yet engaging presentation that informs teachers and classmates what items they can recycle, where recycling bins are located in the school, and where recycling centers are located in their community. Students are encouraged to find items that fellow classmates have thrown out that are recyclable. Try mounting these items on a big piece of cardboard and incorporating them into the presentation for maximum effect!
- ***At home***, students should have a similar conversation with their parents/guardians to ensure they know which items are recyclable in their area and which are not. You'd be surprised how few people know this simple information!
- ***To reach a larger audience***, students can set up an informational table in a public space (school cafeteria, athletic event), or consider using electronic means to spread the word. They can create a “Recycle Roundup Pledge” list, where individuals that approach the table (or receive an email) can sign a pledge to recycle all the items that they are informed are recyclable (again, for example, #'s 1-7).

3. Set a goal and determine how you will **measure** its success.

- Example goal: the Smith School will decrease the amount of waste generated by (%) through the creation of a recycling program for the months of February and March. Example measurement: we will measure the weight of our daily classroom trash bags on a bathroom scale and chart our progress.

4. Plan your Green Team Project: Following are some logistical questions to consider.

- Build a list of tasks and assign Green Team members to each one. The planning document should have various jobs listed: publicity, tabling, enforcers, etc.
- Determine how you will communicate your plan to a target audience or audiences (i.e., email, cable announcements, school posters, flyers, e-flyers, etc.)
- Do you want to contact your local newspaper or other news media to place a story about your efforts?
- How will you effectively document and measure your success? (e.g., tallies of results of parking lot rounds)
- If you are running a contest, what will be your prize and who will be responsible for making the arrangements?
- Who will communicate with school administrators, custodians (if necessary), or other collaborators?

5. Implement your plan and take photos or videos of your program.

6. Report on your success by going to www.nationalgreenweek.com! Use this link to report your results and upload photos, videos, and art created for your Recycling Roundup campaign.



Assessment Questions:

What items are recyclable in your area?

Are most people aware of the items that are recyclable in your area, or are they surprised?

Did you recycle at home prior to this project (Y/N)? _____

How about now, do you recycle more, less, or the same amount? _____

What simple changes to your daily routine can you/did you in order to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle?

Why is this important to do?

What was one surprising thing that you learned from this Green Team project?

How green was your project (i.e. recycled papers for documentation, recyclable materials for presentation)? How could you have made it greener?

Resources:

EPA's Website – Resource Conservation: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

<http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserve/rrr/recycle.htm>

EPA's Website – Fun Education Materials (includes the "Make a Difference Campaign" for middle schools, Creating Less Trash at School activity with handouts, and much more!)

<http://www.epa.gov/osw/education/students.htm>



Find Recycling Centers *Near You* and Learn How to Recycle (includes how-to-guides on uncommon items like motor oil, electronics, etc.)

<http://earth911.com/>

EPA's Website – What You Can Do to Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle! (at home, in school, and elsewhere)

<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/wycd/index.htm>

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – Three great ways YOU can eliminate waste and protect the environment!

<http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/recycle.htm>

How to Save Energy By Recycling (includes great stats on exactly how much energy is saved by recycling certain items)

<http://www.earth911.org/master.asp?s=lib&a=energy/EnergyFacts.html>