

# STRIVE FOR Zero-Waste SCHOOL EVENTS

EVENTS that are FUN don't have to make WASTE by the TON

## Problem: Waste from School Events

### Did you know?

K-12 schools in the U.S. generate **10 million tons** of waste every year!

**82%** of this waste is food and paper



An average school event with **250 people** produces about **80.5 lbs of waste** from food and disposable foodware.

The U.S. has **132,000 schools**.

So... if all schools host **2 events every year**...

...that's **16.5 million pounds** of food waste every year.

enough to feed meals to **8.8 million people**

**Yikes!** and that's **66 million** plastic forks!

## What can YOU do?

### A. FOOD WASTE

**PROBLEM**  
We waste **40%** of food produced in the U.S., worth \$165 billion/yr, responsible for **25%** of methane emissions & **25%** of water use.

#### SOLUTION

- Don't over-order
- Eat what you take
- Donate leftovers
- Compost the plate waste

### B. DRINKS

**PROBLEM**  
**2.5 million plastic water bottles** thrown out/hour! 8 out of 10 end up in landfill.  
**4 billion juiceboxes** used/year. Virtually all are trash because recycling them is complicated.  
**150 billion cans** used/year; recycling all could power 4 million homes.

#### SOLUTION

- BYOB:** Bring Your Own Bottle or cup
- Provide water stations or pitchers
- Recycle plastic bottles and aluminum cans
- Avoid juices boxes and packs.

### C. CUPS & PLATES

**PROBLEM**  
**100 billion throw-away cups/year.** 58 billion are paper cups, using **20 million trees** and as much energy that could power 53,000 homes.

#### SOLUTION

- Use reusable cups & plates
- Avoid plastic, buy compostable products
- If using paper or compostable foodware, then compost it (if available)

### D. UTENSILS

**PROBLEM**  
**40 billion plastic forks** used/year. Made with petroleum, toxic plastic causes cancer, pollutes oceans & streams, and kills wildlife.

#### SOLUTION

- Serve "Finger Foods" that don't require utensils
- Hold a "fork drive" & use reusable forks
- Buy compostable utensils

In sum, every year, AMERICANS throw away ... **enough PAPER and PLASTIC CUPS, FORKS, and SPOONS TO CIRCLE THE EARTH 300 times**

## Zero-Waste Events at School: Here's How

Practice the 5Rs at your school event: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot (Compost), and Rethink

### 1 PLAN



- Get your event committee to commit to Zero Waste goals
- Plan on "Finger Foods" to avoid utensils
- Use reusables and avoid disposables if you can
- Know what your school can recycle and/or compost.
- Coordinate with your school's custodian

### 2 BUY



- Buy items that are recyclable, compostable and contain recycled content.
- Use our "Guide to Zero Waste School Events" to help find compostable products to buy. [www.greenschools.net/zero-waste-events](http://www.greenschools.net/zero-waste-events)
- Avoid buying juice boxes, plastic, or Styrofoam

### 4 CLEAN-UP



- Dispose of sorted waste in proper dumpsters
- Donate leftover food to shelter or food bank
- Thank your success. Celebrate volunteers, publicize your waste reduction.

### 3 SET-UP



- Set-up multi-sort waste stations with color-coded eye-catching signs to sort waste properly for what can be recycled and/or composted at your school.
- At the event, remind people to sort properly and "Think Before You Throw."
- Assign waste monitor volunteers to help guests sort properly.

## Zero-Waste School Events Save!

Good job! Your waste-free school event creates a culture of sustainability at your school and reduces your carbon footprint (CO2).

### EVERY STEP YOU TAKE SAVES!

Avoid using 1 pound plastic disposables

**YOU SAVE:** 2.5 pounds of CO2

Avoid using 4 paper cups

**YOU SAVE:** 1 pound of CO2

Avoid (or compost) 1 pound of food waste

**YOU SAVE:** 1 pound of CO2

For every **ALUMINUM CAN** you **RECYCLE**, YOU SAVE: enough ENERGY to POWER A LAPTOP COMPUTER for 4 hours.

## SCHOOL SUCCESS STORY: Minnetonka Middle Schools in Minnesota

### What They Did:

**1,400 students** switched to metal forks & reusable bowls for lunch and events, instead of plastic.

### What They Saved:

**6,712 lbs** of trash reduced  
reduced greenhouse gases by **77%**  
saved **\$23,000** over 3 years

Source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

1 zero-waste school event can easily save **180 pounds of CO2** = NOT driving a car **200 miles!**



If **ALL 132,000 schools** held zero-waste events 2x/year, we'd save **50 million pounds of CO2** = NOT driving a car **54 million miles!**



## Get The Guide to Zero-Waste School Events



[www.greenschools.net/zero-waste-events](http://www.greenschools.net/zero-waste-events)

Find environmentally-friendly products and plan your waste-free event.



**Wow your PTA!**  
Be a Zero-Waste Hero at your school

Prepared by:



### SOURCES

- [www.greenschools.net/Infographics](http://www.greenschools.net/Infographics)
- [www.greenschools.net/zero-waste-events](http://www.greenschools.net/zero-waste-events)
- [www.mn.gov/Fresh/ResponsibleLiving/Blogs/Infographic-Why-Reuse-a-Cup](http://www.mn.gov/Fresh/ResponsibleLiving/Blogs/Infographic-Why-Reuse-a-Cup)
- [www.peasstate.mn.us/index.php/iving-green/iving-green-green-schools/case-study-schools-move-to-reusable-utensils.html](http://www.peasstate.mn.us/index.php/iving-green/iving-green-green-schools/case-study-schools-move-to-reusable-utensils.html)
- [www.epa.gov/osw/nonhaz/municipal/](http://www.epa.gov/osw/nonhaz/municipal/)
- [www.endfoodwasternow.org/index.php/issues/issues-schools](http://www.endfoodwasternow.org/index.php/issues/issues-schools)
- [www.bicyclemn.org/2013/06/19/connection-climate-calculators/](http://www.bicyclemn.org/2013/06/19/connection-climate-calculators/)
- [www.fossilfree.net/](http://www.fossilfree.net/)
- [www.usps.com/facts-and-myths/learn-more-disposable-lunch-facts-items-came-in-work-and-school-lunches.htm](http://www.usps.com/facts-and-myths/learn-more-disposable-lunch-facts-items-came-in-work-and-school-lunches.htm)

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