

Now that you have completed **Step 1: Build a Green Team**, you are ready to proceed in your process of becoming a Washington Green School.

Objective

Step 2: Assess. This Recycling & Waste Reduction Assessment Guide provides tips on how to complete the Recycling & Waste Reduction Assessment and some recommended resources. The goal of completing the Assessment is for your Green Team and other school members to explore the current recycling and waste reduction practices and options available at your school, and to see how your school operations impact waste volume.

Once your Assessment is complete, you will be able to use the answers and information to identify a Lasting Change (for Step 3) that you can implement for an ongoing significant impact in the reduction of waste and/or improved recycling or composting.

Things to Consider for a Successful Process

1. Careful planning is the key to successfully completing the Assessment.

First, meet with your Green Team and decide who will complete the Assessment:

- The whole Green Team?
- Or a combination of Green Team members, classrooms, staff or grade levels?

2. Who do you need to call or meet with to answer the Assessment Questions related to Recycling & Waste Reduction?

You may wish to include:

- Teachers who specialize in this topic
- School district staff
- Facilities staff
- Groundskeeper
- Disposal Service
- Recycling Hauler or Facilities representative
- Purchasing Manager
- Local Recycling and Waste Management agency staff

3. How will you save the information you've collected for future reference?

- To certify as a Washington Green School, you must enter 10 key findings from your Assessment in the Online Form for Step 2. You may also want to save the information you gather on site at your school, so that students who repeat this Assessment in the future can learn from what you did, and compare results. This could show how the actions you completed helped reduce waste volume and increase recycling rates over time. Find a central location that's easily accessible to store all your Assessment findings and other Washington Green Schools materials. Make sure to inform future key school staff and future Green Team members where to find it.
- Remember, in order to certify, you must also scan, (or take a picture of) your hand-written assessment findings, and upload them with your other Washington Green School records in your school account at www.wagreenschools.org.

Support Information for Assessment Questions

Assessment Question	Hint	Why It's Important	Related Action Items
Trash Disposal			
1. What percent of your school's waste is thrown away (not recycled or composted) each day?	Use the Waste Audit Worksheet from each room to get your estimate.	Establishing the baseline of waste generated will help determine potential improvements through recycling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use data from the waste audit to start or improve the recycling program at your school. Set a specific goal and implement a plan to make improvements. • Identify barriers to making improvements in recycling, waste reduction or composting based on your Recycling & Waste Reduction Assessment, and propose solutions to the school or school district. • Give a presentation to your school board, PTA, or other appropriate group and propose a new district policy or procedures that address waste reduction and recycling.
2. How many dumpsters and outdoor waste containers does your school have?			
3. What are the capacities or sizes (i.e. 3-yd or 96-gallon) of each dumpster and container?	Contact your school district or hauler to verify the size.		
4. How often are dumpsters and waste containers emptied?	Contact the facilities manager/staff to get the schedule for waste bin emptying.	If the dumpsters are not full when serviced, you may be able to adjust the pick-up frequency or size of container, to save your school/district money.	
5. On average, how full is each dumpster or outdoor container when it is emptied?	Find out the day of trash pickup and look before the trash is emptied.		
6. Who picks up your trash from the outdoor containers?	Contact your facilities manager/staff to find out who your local hauler is.	By finding out who your waste hauler is, you can find out what other services (recycling, composting) they offer.	
7. What does your school (or district) pay for your school's trash disposal services?	Contact your school's trash disposal service to learn what fees are involved with trash disposal. These fees can include service, tipping fees and taxes.	In some locations, recycling and compost pick-up do not incur the same taxes as material destined for disposal. Knowing baseline costs helps to reduce costs!	

Assessment Question	Hint	Why It's Important	Related Action Items
8. If figures are available from billing statements, how much waste is thrown away by your school (tons or cubic yards)?	Contact your principal /school district staff to determine the amount of waste generated.	It is important to know the starting baseline of your school's waste generation so you can measure the success of your actions that lead to reductions in waste.	
9. Where is the trash taken after it leaves your school, and where does it ultimately end up (be specific)?	Contact your local hauler to determine the location where the trash goes once it leaves your school.	You can help your school understand the importance of waste reduction by increasing awareness among students and staff that trash has a destination other than the trash bin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a display for the hall, commons, cafeteria or other public space to educate students and staff about your school's recycling, waste reduction or composting actions.
10. Does your school burn any of its waste on site?		Uncontrolled burning of trash rather than using other disposal methods produces pollutants that are harmful to the atmosphere.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research 10 facts about waste reduction/recycling/ composting and share with your school community.
11. Has your school completed a waste audit to calculate the weight and/or volume of trash that could be recycled and reused?	The Waste Audit Worksheet will walk you through this!	Establishing the baseline of amount of waste generated will help to determine where improvements can be made with recycling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research regulations. While in some countries landfills and incinerators may not be managed for environmental health, in Washington State all WTE facilities and landfills are built and managed to strict laws that protect the environment."
Recycling			
12. Does your school currently recycle?		Knowing if your school recycles and what items your school can recycle will help determine if your school can expand the current recycling program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a recycling program so your school is recycling at least two material types. Be sure to provide recycling containers and clear signage for a successful program. • Research recycling buy-back centers available in your area and present options to your administration on how your school might start a recycling program using the buy-back centers.
13. What types of opportunities does your school have to recycle?			
14. Which of these items does your school have access to recycle? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aluminum/steel cans • Paper • Cardboard • Plastic bottles • Glass 			

Assessment Question	Hint	Why It's Important	Related Action Items
15. Who collects the recycling inside your school building?	Contact your facilities manager/staff to determine who collects the recycling inside your school building.	It is useful to understand who is responsible in order to support their job. Find out what is working best and how recycling rates can improve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the current recycling bins located in your school. Share the results with your school. • Label all the recycling bins located at your school. • Design an advertising campaign to educate other students at your school about recycling, waste reduction or composting actions at your school.
16. Are there easy-to-read informational signs or stickers on or above your indoor recycling bins? If yes, do they have pictures?		Clearly identifying recycling bins with information regarding what items can and cannot be recycled makes it easier for students and staff to participate in recycling efforts.	
17. Are the recycling bins monitored or checked to make sure they are being used correctly?			
18. What percent of your school's waste is recyclable?	<p>Use the Waste Audit Worksheet from each room to get your estimate.</p> <p>Compute your recycling rate. Total waste is weight of trash plus weight of recyclables. Divide weight of recyclables by your total waste weight to get your recycling rate %.</p>	You can compare the percent of recyclable waste to the percent of actual waste recycled in order to look for strategies to increase recycling efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with the custodian regarding the recycling habits of the students and staff at your school. Ask if he/she has any recommendations for changes, and if feasible, use those recommendations to improve the program.
19. How do the recyclables collected in the building get to the outside/curbside containers?	Contact your facilities manager/staff to find out the logistics of getting collected recyclables to the containers outside, what is placed in containers and the schedule for pick-up.	Observing these processes will help to determine if there are potential adjustments for greater efficiencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure there are recycling bins located throughout the school, either in every classroom or in central collection areas. • If more bins are needed, contact your local jurisdiction or hauler to see if they can provide more bins or determine other means to have the appropriate amount of bins.
20. What is placed in each recycling cart or dumpster and what is the capacity (size) of each?			
21. How often are your recycling carts/dumpsters emptied?			

Assessment Question	Hint	Why It's Important	Related Action Items
22. Who picks up your recyclables and takes them to a recycling center?	Contact your facilities manager/staff to find out who your recycling hauler is.		
23. What does your school (or district) pay for your school's recycling services?	Contact your school's recycling hauling service to learn what fees are involved with recycling. These fees can include service fees and taxes.		
24. Does your school receive any income from recyclables?		Financial savings and earnings that result from recycling may help convince decision makers to improve recycling programs at your school.	
25. Where do your recyclables go after they are taken from the school (be specific)?	If the hauler of your recyclables doesn't know, you may need to contact the actual recycling processor or the Solid Waste Division in your county or city.	Knowledge is power! Students, staff, and faculty who increase their recycling knowledge are more likely to fully participate in recycling programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can create and perform a skit, puppet show or other type of entertainment about recycling, waste reduction or composting to the school, community or other appropriate audience. • Present information to the school community via a presentation, display board, etc.
26. What happens to recyclables after they leave the recycling center (be specific)?	Contact your school's recycling hauling service to learn what your recyclables are used for.	Increasing awareness to students that recycling has a destination other than the recycling bin can help students understand the importance of waste reduction.	
27. Does your school participate in recycling redemption programs or receive cash for returning items like printer and toner cartridges or cell phones? If yes, what items do you collect and return?		Programs that promote the recycling of electronic equipment help keep toxics out of our soil and groundwater.	
28. Is your school or district recycling your computers and other electronic equipment?		Computers and other electronic equipment contain components that are composed of harmful materials (mercury, lead or other heavy metals) should not be placed into landfills.	

Assessment Question	Hint	Why It's Important	Related Action Items
29. Is your school aware of the new computer recycling law effective January 2009, which will provide free recycling of school computers (WAC 173-900)?	Go to http://www.ecyclewashington.org/ for information.	Computers and other electronic equipment contain components that are composed of harmful materials (mercury, lead or other heavy metals) should not be placed into landfills.	
30. Is your school aware of the law effective July 21, 2007, requiring public event recycling, including all sports facilities (RCW 70.93.093)?	Contact your facilities manager/special event staff to determine what the current recycling practice is at public events.	Plan ahead, be prepared, and do not break the law!	
Composting			
31. Does your school leave grass clippings on the lawn/athletic fields (grasscycling)?	Contact your groundskeeper/landscape maintenance personnel to find out if they leave grass clippings where they were cut.	Grasscycling or leaving grass clippings close to where they were cut can help landscapes by serving as mulch and allowing the clippings to break down and return nutrients to the soil.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start grasscycling lawns; leave grass clippings on the lawn/athletic fields. • Set up a program to compost yard debris from the school grounds either on-site or off-site.
32. Does your school rake up leaves? If yes, what happens to them?	Contact your groundskeeper/landscape maintenance personnel to determine what procedures are in place for yard debris.	Leaves can be composted and can serve as mulch for landscaping.	
33. Does your school compost other yard waste (leaves, flowers, grass, garden weeds)?	Contact your groundskeeper/landscape maintenance personnel to determine what procedures are in place for yard debris.	Composting yard debris can serve as mulch for landscaping and add to reducing the quantities of school waste generated.	
34. What does your school do with dead branches and tree limbs?	Contact your groundskeeper/landscape maintenance personnel to determine what procedures are in place for yard debris.	Dead branches and tree limbs can be run through a chipper. Wood chips serve as a good ground cover around landscaping.	
35. What percent of waste generated at your school in one day is food?	Use the Waste Audit Worksheet to get your estimate.		

Assessment Question	Hint	Why It's Important	Related Action Items
36. What percent of your food waste is actually still intact and edible (whole fruit or unopened packages, etc.)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research three local or international schools to find out what they are doing with food waste and look for opportunities available in your area to begin a composting program. • Develop a program to decrease the uneaten and unopened food in the garbage.
37. Does your school compost food waste on-site? If yes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who collects the food waste for composting? • What types of food do you compost? • Who manages the composting site? • How is the finished compost used? 	Contact facilities management and/or your kitchen staff to answer these composting questions.	Food waste can be composted and serve as a good mulch for landscaping.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compost food waste either on-site or off-site.
38. Does your school collect food waste to be composted off-site? If yes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who collects the food waste for composting? • What types of food do you compost? 			
Purchasing, Reduction and Reuse			
39. Does your school purchase recycled-content products? If so, what types?	Contact your school's purchasing manager to determine what types of recycled content products are being purchased.	Purchasing products that contain recycled content requires less use of virgin materials and extends the use of materials that are able to be recycled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase office paper and paper products that contain at least 30% recycled content.
40. Does your school or district buy recycled-content office paper? If yes, what is the post-consumer recycled content?			

Assessment Question	Hint	Why It's Important	Related Action Items
41. Does your school have a purchasing policy regarding recycled content products?	Contact your school's purchasing manager to determine what purchasing policies are in place for the school.	Purchasing products that contain recycled content requires less use of virgin materials and extends the use of materials that are able to be recycled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase office paper and paper products that contain at least 30% recycled content.
42. Does your school or district buy other items made with recycled content (toner cartridges, envelopes, other paper products, benches, etc.)?	Contact your school's purchasing manager to determine what types of recycled content products are being purchased.	It is important to close the loop. Buying recycled-content materials creates more demand for recyclables.	
43. Does your school buy items in quantity to reduce the amount of packaging and save money?	Contact your school's purchasing manager to determine what types of bulk items are purchased.	Refilling durable dispensers from bulk size containers reduces the amount of waste generated from individually packaged containers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use bulk dispensers instead of packaged products in the lunchroom/ cafeteria.
44. Does your school serve bottled water to students?		The production, transportation, and disposal of plastic bottles consume energy, require non-renewable resources, and produce pollution.	Establish and promote the use of tap water.
45. Does your school save paper by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storing records electronically? • Corresponding with staff by e-mail? • Corresponding with students by e-mail? • Managing finances electronically? • Giving tests on-line? • Printing on both sides of the paper? • Reusing scrap or paper written on one side? 		Using electronic systems for data storage, correspondence, the managing of finances, and test taking reduces the amount of paper purchased and the volume of waste generated by day to day activities of a school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use email for one or more regularly issued newsletters, bulletins, or memos • Create and promote policy of double-sided photocopying and printing. • Reuse single sided printed paper as scrap paper.

Assessment Question	Hint	Why It's Important	Related Action Items
<p>46. Does your school extend the life of items by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reusing large kitchen food storage containers? • Serving food on reusable trays? • Using silverware instead of disposable utensils? • Donating unclaimed "lost" items to a charity? • Collecting clothing, food, etc. for charities? • Sponsoring swap days? • Salvaging items for reuse when lockers/desks are cleaned out? 		<p>Several items used in the school's cafeteria can be made from durable materials that can be washed and re-used several times. Other opportunities for re-using items can be from collecting donations of used items for charities or from salvaging items from locker clean outs. Reusing these items keeps them from entering the waste stream and extends their usable life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace disposable items such as silverware, and food-trays with items that are durable and can be reused many times.
<p>47. When classes go on field trips, do they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycle cans and bottles they take with them? • Use lunch boxes, cloth bags or reusable containers? 		<p>Although not directly contributing to the school's waste stream, students and teachers should consider and minimize their impact away from the school by recycling cans and bottles they take or purchase on the trip and consider using reusable bags rather than disposable bags for transporting lunches.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start a bag reuse campaign for lunch sacks.
Curriculum and Community			
<p>48. Are waste reduction and recycling part of your school's curriculum? If yes, in what grades are they taught?</p>		<p>Proper education of the benefits and different roles students and teachers may play in recycling creates awareness about the importance of recycling and can lead to more successful recycling programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have older students teach younger students about recycling, waste reduction, composting, etc.
<p>49. Have any of your school staff participated in staff development programs for waste reduction and recycling within the past year?</p>	<p>Work with your principal/school staff to answer these questions.</p>	<p>Your school can play a role in reducing the amount of items destined going for disposal by hosting events such as used item exchanges or garage sales where participants may buy and sell used items rather than disposing of them in the trash.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor another school in your school district or county to improve its recycling, waste reduction or composting practices.
<p>50. Does your school participate in any problem solving waste reduction and recycling projects that benefit the community? If yes, what are they?</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a student-run reuse exchange event/fair/garage sale.

Assessment Question	Hint	Why It's Important	Related Action Items
<p>51. Some waste management facilities can be used as educational resources (field trips). Which can be used in your community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disposal Site • Composting Site • Material Recycling Facility • Local solid waste or recycling office 	<p>Contact waste management facilities to see what the process is for touring facilities.</p>	<p>Increasing awareness to students by touring facilities used for recycling and waste management can help students understand the importance of why the reductions in waste generated by participation in a recycling program are important.</p>	
<p>52. Does your school donate excess food (during vacations, power outages, etc.) to a food bank or shelter?</p>		<p>Donating excess food or composting reduces waste and helps less fortunate individuals and families within the local community.</p>	
<p>53. Do you have waste and recycling educators in your community? If yes, list the name(s) of the agencies they work for and contact info.</p>	<p>Work with your principal/school staff to answer these questions.</p>	<p>Look to the experts in your community! They can assist you with new programs and provide valuable experience and from-the-field knowledge to support your efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an Environmental Club, Recycling Club, or other club that focuses on environmental issues in your school and community.
<p>54. Do you have technical assistance in your community for waste and recycling issues at your school? If yes, list the name(s) of the agencies they work for and contact info.</p>			