

EXEMPLAR: WASTE AND RECYCLING

Your Report Card is your opportunity to share out all the effort your school put into your certification project. Please respond to each question with as much detail as possible.

STEP ONE: BUILD YOUR GREEN TEAM

1. Please describe your Green Team. Please include the number of members, their roles in the school community, and any other details.

Our Green Team includes 12 members. Myself, a 7th grade science teacher, our 8th grade math teacher, and 10 students in 7th grade.

2. How often does your Green Team meet?

We meet every Wednesday after school from 2:45 to 3:45 pm.

3. What general goal does your Green Team have in making your school greener and healthier this year?

This year we want to reduce the amount of contamination in our waste sort.

4. Give us a brief description of your school.

Our school is the largest elementary school in the county. We are very diverse and 40% of our students speak another language besides English. We are an open concept school and we are dedicated to incorporating literacy in everything we do. Additionally, we value family engagement and have a very active PTA.

5. If you have already certified as a Washington Green School, please share how you are maintaining your Lasting Change from previous environmental categories.

Last year we certified in energy and we are still continuing our efforts. Our Green Team students have asked every teacher in our school to sign a contract at the start of the year pledging to always turn the lights off when they leave the room and close the blinds when the air conditioning units are on. We also have made new signs that we put around the building to educate people in the school community about their energy usage.



Two school years ago we certified in healthy school buildings. Members from our Green Team still take turns wiping down desks during lunch. We also continued our proper handwashing campaign by making new signs that hang above all bathroom sinks.

STEP TWO: ASSESS

Please complete the audit found within the [Waste & Recycling Classroom Supplement](#) and then answer the questions below.

6. Are waste reduction and recycling part of your school's culture?

Yes No

7. If yes, please check those that apply:

- Recycling**
- Composting**
- Signage
- Regular monitoring
- Recycling bins in the classroom

8. Who picks up your garbage, recycling, and/or compost from the outdoor containers?

Waste Connections picks up our garbage, recycling, and compost from the dumpsters behind our school.

9. Where is the landfill where your garbage ultimately ends up? *Contact your local hauler to determine where the trash goes once it leaves your school.*

Our garbage ultimately ends up at the Republic Services Roosevelt Regional Municipal Solid Waste Landfill in Klickitat County.

10. As far as you know, are there any local restrictions to waste disposal that you would like to mention? For example, does your school lack an arrangement for recycling pickups?

Our school has an arrangement for Waste Connections to pick up our garbage, recycling, and compost.

11. How much waste does your school throw away in one month in **ft³/month**?
You can contact the facilities manager at your school or your resource conservation manager at your district to determine the amount of waste generated. The volume of waste will depend on the size of your dumpsters and



how often they are emptied. If your district uses gallons, please convert to cubic feet (ft³) for volume. The conversion is 1 gallon = 0.134 ft³.

**6 yard dumpster that is filled and picked up every Friday. 6 cubic yards * 27 = 162 ft³
162 ft³ * 4 (for 4 weeks in a month) = 648 ft³**

12. What does your school pay for waste removal in one month in **\$/month**?
Contact your school's administration or trash disposal service to learn what fees are involved with trash disposal. These fees can include service, tipping fees and taxes

\$525

13. What does your school pay for its recycling services **\$/month**?

\$200

14. Does your school or district purchase items made with recycled content (paper, toner cartridges, envelopes, etc.)?

No

Yes. Please describe:

Our school uses recycled paper in our copiers.

15. Do your cafeteria practices include:

Serving food on reusable trays

Using a share table for uneaten food

Using condiment dispensers instead of packets

Other. Please describe:

16. Waste Container Audit:

Please answer the following questions about your waste. You can do this by contacting someone in your school's main office or by going out to your school's waste containers and doing a visual check. Use the Classroom Supplement to help guide this exercise.

- A. On pickup day, how full are the following waste containers? If you have more than one container for each category, average the results.

Dumpster(s): **100% Full**

Recycling Container: **70% Full**
Composting Container: **40% Full**

B. Based on these observations, do you think that you could reduce the size of your dumpster(s)? Please explain.

Yes, considering how full our dumpsters are before pickup, we believe that we could better sort our waste so as to reduce the amount of trash going to landfills and increase our recycling and composting.

C. How often are your waste containers picked up?

Dumpster(s): **Every two weeks**
Recycling Container: **Every two weeks**
Composting Container: **Every two weeks**

D. Based on your observations, do you think that you could decrease your school's garbage pickup frequency? Please explain.

Maybe if we can better sort our waste, we could ask for our garbage to be picked up once a month.

17. Visual Audit

Please answer the following questions by conducting a visual audit of your school's waste practices. Make sure to select a representative sample of the school. (e.g. main areas such as cafeteria, classrooms, gymnasium, teacher's lounge). Please use the Classroom Supplement to guide this exercise.

A. What is the estimated contamination percentage for the following waste containers? (please average all of the results of your sample)

Garbage **50%** contaminated
Recycling **75%** contaminated
Composting **30%** contaminated

B. What are the top 3 contaminants you observed most frequently in each waste container?

Garbage: **Water bottles, fruit waste (ex. Banana peels), paper**
Recycling: **Napkins, soiled paper, food scraps**
Composting: **Cardboard, milk cartons**

C. Based on your observations, do you think that your school could benefit by tackling a contamination issue? Please explain.

Absolutely, we believe that educating our school community on waste sorting will greatly reduce the amount of contamination in each of our bins.

STEP THREE: MAKE A LASTING CHANGE

18. Describe *in detail* what actions your Green Team took to address your Lasting Change goals. What did students do? **How many students, Green Team members and beyond, were actively involved in this project?** For assistance, please see exemplar report cards [here](#).

Our Green Team assigned themselves to one day of the week where two Green Team Members would be in charge of monitoring waste sorting at lunch. Since we have ten Green Team members this worked out nicely for the five days in a week. Green Team Members wear an apron, gloves and carry tongs. They stand by the garbage, recycling and compost bins and as students approach to dispose of their lunch waste they are guided by the Green Team members on where to put each part of their lunch. Our Green Team has also recorded several instructional videos that have been broadcasted during our daily morning video announcements. Additionally, Green Team members have created signs over each of the waste bins that depict commonly disposed waste items at our school. This includes items like banana peels for the compost bin sign since bananas are often served for breakfast. Our Green Team members have recruited others to help with the cafeteria monitoring so there has been 32 total students involved.

19. What challenge(s) did you face while implementing your Lasting Change? What kind of solutions were you able to develop to address the challenge(s)?

It has been difficult to get other students on board with waste sorting at the end of lunch. Students are eager to get to recess and aren't the most patient when waiting to dispose of their trash. We have addressed this by asking one table to dispose of their waste at a time, instead of all at once at the end of lunch. We also, have incentivized lunch tables, by saying the best sorting lunch table gets extra recess time on Fridays. As our students are becoming more educated and invested we are noticing far less contamination in the bins.

STEP FOUR: VERIFY YOUR IMPACT

The purpose of the verification step is to determine to what extent your Lasting Change is having an impact on your waste situation at school.

20. Did your Green Team reach the goal set in Step 1?

Yes, our goal was to reduce our waste contamination by 80% and we have observed that our dumpsters include 20% or less contaminated materials.

21. Please elaborate on key factors in achieving this goal or reasons that you did not achieve the goal.

Our success required constant reinforcement by our Green Team members. It was essential that a Green Team member was present at every single lunch period or else we would have slipped back to contaminated bins. Now that we've been practicing sorting for months, it seems like the habit of sorting lunch waste is becoming ingrained in our students.

22. After implementing your Lasting Change, how much waste does your school throw away in one month in ft³/month?

500 cubic ft³/month

23. After implementing your Lasting Change, what does your school now pay for waste removal in \$/month?

\$450

24. Based on your observations, could your school reduce the size of its garbage dumpsters? Please explain.

We still think we need some more practice, but perhaps next school year we could switch to a smaller dumpster.

25. Based on your observations, could your school decrease its garbage pickup frequency? Please explain.

Due to our decreased amount of garbage, we think we could reduce our garbage pickup frequency to every three weeks instead of every two.

26. After implementing your Lasting Change, what is the estimated contamination percentage for the following in-school waste containers?

Garbage	20 % contaminated
Recycling	10 % contaminated

Composting 5 % contaminated

27. What circumstances may have influenced your Lasting Change results?

We noticed that after breaks, students need reminders of how to sort their waste properly. This may have influenced our audit, since our verification audit happened after long weekend

28. How do you plan to maintain your Lasting Change?

We plan to continue our education awareness campaign and we'll start the very first week of school in the fall so students get in the rhythm of sorting their waste properly.

29. What changes could your school make in the future to maintain your Lasting Change?

We are asking our administration if we can switch to a food provider that has food with less packaging. We think this this would further our Lasting Change if there is less extra food material from the start.

30. What are some takeaways or lessons learned from this process that you have yet to discuss in the questions above?

Our Green Team has learned a lot about persistence. When we first started sorting, our students were quite frustrated and not willing to change their behaviors. After education materials through signs, morning video announcements and talking peer to peer, we were able to break through and engage our classmates.

STEP FIVE: SHARE YOUR STORY

31. In order for your sustainability efforts to become a part of your school's identity, the entire community has to be aware and involved. How did you share your certification project within your school AND within the greater community?

Our morning video announcements were essential in making our entire school aware. We also demonstrated food sorting at our Back to School Nights in the fall and spring.

32. What do you consider to be the greatest success that you've seen as a result of your action project?

Our biggest success has been involving the entire student body in a new behavior. We are confident that sorting waste is a skill that our students are bringing with them outside of the cafeteria.

33. What do you consider to be the greatest challenge you faced when completing the certification process?

The greatest challenge was acquiring the bill and then calculating the amount of waste per cubic foot and per month.

34. Your community should know about the exceptional work you've done to become a Washington Green School! For example, we may help you get the word out by sharing a press release of your certification story with a local news outlet. We'll need a few things to make that happen:

The name of your local paper where we can send the press release:
The Columbian

A brief synthesis of how your Green Team has made a positive impact on your school:

Students on the Green Middle School Green Team implemented a waste awareness campaign through morning video announcements, education signs, and lunch waste monitoring. Due to their persistence and hard work, Green Middle School reduced their waste contamination to 20% or less in their garbage, recycling and compost bins.

A quote from a member of the school community or Green Team about why this certification project was important:

"Even though it can be gross sometimes using the tongs to sort waste, it's really fun and satisfying to see all the recyclables, trash, and compost in their correct bins. I also like telling my classmates where everything should go."

STEP SIX: CERTIFY AND CELEBRATE

35. Please give your Report Card a careful final review to make sure that all of your information is complete and correct. We will follow up with you in about two weeks with a review of your Report Card and information about celebrating your success!