Zero Waste Classrooms

Quick Guide for Teachers

Making a difference...together

Why Zero Waste?

Classrooms can generate a large amount of daily waste, but by adopting the following practices we can make a difference. Reducing landfill waste supports a healthier planet while helping students build habits that prepare them to be environmental stewards in their communities and beyond.

First Steps for Teachers

- Conduct a waste audit to understand the type and amount of waste generated in your classroom. Involve students in brainstorming areas for reduction and implementing new ideas to minimize waste.
- Explain the classroom recycling expectations and rules to students at the beginning of the year, including the bins and what goes where: www.crd.ca/whatgoeswhere
- Involve students' families by sending a letter to families encouraging zero waste lunches.
- Set up a reuse station for sharing used items like binders, stationery, and classroom supplies.

Zero Waste Classroom Maintenance

- Assign students to monthly green teams responsible for visually checking classroom bins and reporting recycling mistakes.
- Make classroom goals to produce less waste and practise proper sorting. Conduct waste audits periodically throughout the year, and a final one during the last month to measure progress.
- Include waste reduction into lesson plans and classroom activities.
- Avoid activities that produce non-recyclable materials such as paper mixed with glitter, sequins or oil-based paint.
- When possible, use electronics to reduce paper use.
- Start with small classroom rules that have a high impact (example: no plastic straws) and gradually build on your success.

Recognize Progress with No-Cost, Zero Waste Rewards

- Email digital certificates signed by a teacher or principal to students' families in recognition of their child's contribution to environmental stewardship.
- Allow extra time for recess or favourite activities such as physical education, games, etc.

Celebrate progress, not perfection. Small, consistent changes add up to zero waste culture!