

SUSTAINABLE SANDHILLS

Recycling Competition Activity



To celebrate America Recycles Day on November 15, Sustainable Sandhills invites your class to participate in our Recycling Competition, in order to educate students about what is and isn't recyclable. This activity correlates with high school standard EEN 2.8.4. Because many students help put out their family's recycling on the curb, this activity could have a broader impact and help decrease contamination and improve waste diversion rates for the City of Fayetteville and Cumberland County. The winning class will also be treated to ice cream, generously donated by The Sweet Palette!

Please complete this waste audit once per week for each of the first three weeks in November. The class who ends the challenge with the least number of contaminants in their trash/recycling will win (in the case of a tie, a winner will be selected in a random drawing). Classes must complete the audit once a week for all three weeks to be eligible to win the prize. **Teachers must submit their final contamination numbers by Wednesday, December 1 in the Google form at <https://forms.gle/kjDAM3EQZPFzws5y8>. Please contact Anna Chott with any questions, at anna@sustainablesandhills.org or 910-484-9098). The winner will be announced on Friday, December 3.**

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- Students should wear rubber gloves while completing this activity and wash their hands once the activity is completed.
- This activity was created assuming that your classroom has separate bins for trash, paper recycling, and plastic/metal recycling. If your classroom has a different combination of bins, please use the rules in this activity to analyze the contamination in those bins accordingly.

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REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Trash and recycling bins from classroom
- Rubber gloves
- Large tarpaulin or plastic sheeting
- Garbage/trash bags
- Hand soap

STEP ONE: Analyze the paper recycling for contamination

- Student(s) sorting the waste should put on rubber gloves and tie back hair (if required).
- Gather every paper recycling bin in the classroom.
- Spread out tarpaulin/plastic sheeting on the floor/table.
- Pour the contents of the paper recycling bin onto the tarpaulin/plastic.
- If any items do not follow the recycling rules, put these items into a separate pile on the tarp.
- **PAPER RECYCLING RULES**
 - **Cardboard should be collapsed and placed behind the bins (cardboard goes in a separate recycling dumpster to prevent it from getting wet/contaminated).**
 - **Paper receipts are not recyclable, as they contain plastic.**
 - **For now, milk cartons are not recommended in the recycling bin, as they may have contamination.**
 - **Loose shredded paper is not recommended in recycling bins in schools, as all the recyclables will eventually get mixed together in a “single-stream” recycling dumpster, and the shredded paper is difficult to sort out at the recycling plant. Shredded paper should only be recycled at locations that keep paper separate.**
 - **Nothing except paper should be in the paper recycling bin.**
- Note the number of contaminants/misplaced materials on the Recycling Audit Record Sheet.
- Return the items to the recycling bin/their proper receptacles.

STEP TWO: Analyze the plastic/metal recycling for contamination

- Gather every plastic/metal recycling bin in the classroom.
- Pour the contents of the recycling bin onto the tarpaulin/plastic.
- If any items do not follow the recycling rules, put these items into a separate pile on the tarp.
- **PLASTIC/METAL RECYCLING RULES**
 - **All containers must be clean. Water bottles must be empty!**
 - **Plastic bags and plastic wrap are not recyclable, except when separated out and brought to an appropriate bin at grocery stores, etc.**
 - **It is best practice to recycle only plastic bottles, tubs, jugs, and jars. Other shapes like plastic cups and clamshells may not make it through the**

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sorting machines to get recycled, and they may also be contaminated with food.

- ***Nothing except plastic and metal cans should be in the plastic/metal recycling bin.***
- Note the number of contaminants/misplaced or incorrectly recycled materials on the Recycling Audit Record Sheet.
- Return the items to the recycling bin/their proper receptacles.

STEP THREE: Analyze the trash for recyclables

- Gather every trash can in the classroom.
- Pour the contents of the bin onto the tarpaulin/plastic.
- If there is any recyclable cardboard, paper, metal, or plastic in the trash, put these items into a separate pile on the tarp.
- Note the number of recyclable materials that were in the trash on the Recycling Audit Record Sheet.
- Return the items to the bin and have all students who handled the items wash their hands.

STEP FOUR: Complete the Summary/Reflection activity as a class.

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Recycling Audit Record Sheet WEEK 1

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

TEACHER: _____ CLASSROOM: _____

BIN	NUMBER OF CONTAMINANTS/MISPLACED, OR INCORRECTLY RECYCLED MATERIALS
Paper recycling	
Plastic/metal recycling	
Trash	

SUMMARY/REFLECTION

<i>How many items found in the trash do you think could have been recycled had more options been available? (E.g. implementing a soft plastic recycling option, starting a school compost)</i>	
<i>How many items did you find that could have been re-used, upcycled, or donated? What were they?</i>	
<i>Based on your findings with this activity, how do you think waste management could be improved in your school?</i>	
<i>Are there ways waste management could be improved in your homes?</i>	

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Recycling Audit Record Sheet WEEK 2

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

TEACHER: _____ CLASSROOM: _____

BIN	NUMBER OF CONTAMINANTS/MISPLACED, OR INCORRECTLY RECYCLED MATERIALS
Paper recycling	
Plastic/metal recycling	
Trash	

SUMMARY/REFLECTION

<i>How many items found in the trash do you think could have been recycled had more options been available? (E.g. implementing a soft plastic recycling option, starting a school compost)</i>	
<i>How many items did you find that could have been re-used, upcycled, or donated? What were they?</i>	
<i>Based on your findings with this activity, how do you think waste management could be improved in your school?</i>	
<i>Are there ways waste management could be improved in your homes?</i>	

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Recycling Audit Record Sheet WEEK 3

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

TEACHER: _____ CLASSROOM: _____

BIN	NUMBER OF CONTAMINANTS/MISPLACED, OR INCORRECTLY RECYCLED MATERIALS
Paper recycling	
Plastic/metal recycling	
Trash	

SUMMARY/REFLECTION

<p><i>How many items found in the trash do you think could have been recycled had more options been available? (E.g. implementing a soft plastic recycling option, starting a school compost)</i></p>	
<p><i>How many items did you find that could have been re-used, upcycled, or donated? What were they?</i></p>	
<p><i>Based on your findings with this activity, how do you think waste management could be improved in your school?</i></p>	
<p><i>Are there ways waste management could be improved in your homes?</i></p>	