10 GREEN IDEAS for the Classroom

Set up a paper bin
Create a special bin for scratch paper to collect papers that have only been used on one side. Students can reuse paper for taking notes, sketching ideas, doodling, or they can recycle when the bin gets full.

Power down
Turn computers off during breaks or at the end of the day instead of putting them in sleep mode to conserve energy.

Lace up those walking shoes
Students might consider biking, walking, carpooling, or taking public transportation to school as a one-day of the week or multiple day solution depending on what works best for safety and for family schedules.

Compost
Create a classroom or school compost bin for coffee grounds and lunch or snack leftovers. Compost material is sometimes collected to enrich the soil in community gardens or school gardens.

Learn about local wildlife
Studying animals that live in your area is a great way to learn how to protect the environment where these animals live. If you want to see animals from your school window you can build a bird feeder.

Schedule a schoolwide clean-up day
Working to improve the school grounds creates a collective activity and encourages students to be mindful of safeguarding their schoolyard.

Monitor air quality
Display an air quality flag at school. Using color flags aligned with the EPA’s Air Quality Index, schools can proactively adjust physical activities to help reduce exposure to air pollution.

Create green teams
Assign students for 5-minute tasks at the end of the day to power down electronics, pick up and sort trash for recycling, and to turn the lights out.

Create a zero-waste challenge
Monitor trash and recycling bins and challenge students to recycle more than they throw away.

Turn trash into a treasure
Create a sculpture, art, or jewelry using recycled or waste materials like boxes, buttons, toilet paper rolls, plastic bottles, lids, or aluminum foil.

6 GREEN PROJECT IDEAS

Planting the seeds of tomorrow

Gardening offers opportunities for hands-on learning that connect them with nature and lessons in inquiry, observation, and experimentation. Planting a vegetable garden promotes healthy eating habits; Planting rain gardens offers an opportunity to study how roots and soil act as a natural water filter to reduce water pollution and prevent flooding.

Learn about native plants

Study the plants and trees native to your area which are naturally adapted to your area’s environment. These plants often require less fertilizer, pesticides, irrigation, or other amendments. Native plants also support local wildlife including insects, birds, and animals.

Start a sustainability campaign

Have students work in groups to create energy slogans for their school. Younger students can create posters for hallways to educate their peers and build enthusiasm. Older students can write short essays about why their slogan was chosen and how it is connected to their school community.

Conduct a lunchbox audit

Students can collect data on the items in their school-provided meal or lunchbox. How many items generate trash or can be recycled or composted?

Have students think about ideas for how to pack a greener lunch or make use of recyclable or reusable packaging.

Conduct a second audit and compare results of audit 1 and 2 to track if students can reduce waste.

Calculate your carbon footprint

Calculate the carbon footprint for each student’s household and set a goal to reduce it by the end of the school year.

Grow kids’ advocacy skills

Have students learn about an environmental issue of their choice. Students can host informational tables before or after school or at a planned event to share what they learned and help educate others on things they can do in their daily lives that make a difference.

EducationWeek