

Prevent the single biggest waste day at your school!



Cleaning out a desk or locker is a great mid-year or end-of-the-school year activity. It is easy to do, requires little preparation, is highly visible and saves good items from being thrown into the garbage. It promotes reduce, reuse, recycle and respect.

WHAT TO DO IN ADVANCE:

1. Have multiple organizations, groups and clubs commit to the project (number of volunteers depends on the size of the school).
2. Project leaders need to discuss the process with administration:
 - Site to be used for collected items – a low traffic flow area works best
 - Hall pass for student volunteers so they can come and go as they have free time
 - Notify public relations person at school about this event
 - Arrange for several teachers to sponsor collection
3. Equipment needed for the collection event includes plastic liners (shower curtains work well), gloves for volunteers, a scale and a camera to record the success.
4. Discuss event with the custodial staff. Review systematic plan of collection and clean-up of collection location.
5. If money is available, order pizza for all of the volunteers. Consider ordering enough for the custodians and teacher sponsors.
6. Explain the project in the faculty newsletter or bulletin so that staff understands the purpose of the collection event, why the students are leaving their study, how they can help, etc.
7. Plan to have a storage area for all of the items collected to be used later, paper and other items to be recycled, and items that will be donated.

THE DAY OF THE CLEAN OUT:

◆ After morning attendance and student announcements, students are released to report to their lockers. Each teacher is assigned a certain area of lockers to monitor and to check. Lockers should be rid of loose paper, unused notebooks, library books and food/beverage items. Students are to throw all unwanted items into a large trash bag that each teacher is carrying. At the end of the clean out, teachers and custodians are to take the bags to the area chosen for the main collection. Just think, without these efforts, everything would end up in the garbage dumpster!

For students in lower grades, teachers can schedule a period of time where desks/lockers are cleaned out in a similar process.

◆ In the main collection area, place plastic liners on the floor. Have a spot for paper and notebooks to be used again and a spot for paper to be recycled. In another spot, sort art supplies, pens, pencils, protractors, books, clothing items (to be washed and given to a charity) and aluminum, glass and plastic. Create an area for as many categories as needed.

◆ Be sure to count the number of trash bags brought to the collection area before opening. Optional – weigh the bags as well.

◆ Once categories are established, assign two or three volunteers to a trash bag. Empty the contents onto the floor and begin separating the items. Wear gloves and be careful for any broken glass or sharp objects.

◆ Make sure volunteers wash their hands before eating and after they are done working.

SUCCESS STORIES:

Wilmette Junior High School, Wilmette – Students collected 36 trash bags of stuff. After sorting, redistributing or donating schools supplies, library books and clothing, only three bags were thrown away.

Twin Groves Junior High School, Buffalo Grove – Seventh grade students collected 5 trash bags or 64 pounds of unwanted stuff. After sorting through the items, 85% of things collected were either reused or recycled.

Lake Park High School, Roselle – At their last collection, 84 bags of materials were collected. At the end of the day, only three trash bags were sent to the dumpster. They collected a stack of unused white notebook paper 8 ft. tall, a stack of usable notebooks 6 ft. high and hundreds of pens and pencils. Some supplies were distributed to common areas in the school for students and faculty to use, and some supplies and clothing items were sent to Africa and Eastern Europe or given to Salvation Army. According to Ken Evans, Earth Club Advisor at Lake Park High School in Roselle, IL, on average, it takes ten students each period of the day from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. to complete this task.