



## Earth Day Activities

Earth Day, April 22, is an opportunity to focus on protecting the Earth's resources. Celebrate Earth Day by learning about natural resources and taking action in your community.

- The first Earth Day in April 1970 was the beginning of the modern environmental movement that has mobilized more than 1 billion people in over 190 countries. See <http://www.epa.gov/earthday/> to learn more.

And, since **every day is Earth Day**, you can use these activities throughout the school year to educate and inspire students and staff.

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### Educational and promotional campaigns

- Make daily announcements during Earth Week.
  - Use [waste reduction and recycling announcements](#) from the Green Schools Program
  - Use energy conservation facts and announcements on the [Green Schools Energy Conservation Resources](#) page
  - Use water conservation facts and announcements on the [Green Schools Water Conservation Resources](#) page
- Conduct a campaign to encourage durable water bottles, waste free lunches, paper use reduction, or no-idling in the school parking lot. For project ideas and guides, see [Elementary School Green Teams](#) and [Secondary School Green Teams](#).
- Take a pledge. Student green teams, classrooms, or the entire school could sign a pledge to take an action to reduce waste or recycle, conserve energy, or conserve water. Visit [Green Schools Energy Conservation Pledge](#) and <https://www.earthday.org/take-action-now/>.
- Create posters or other visuals to educate others about how much water we use. See [Green Schools Level Three – Water Conservation and Pollution Prevention](#) and National Geographic's [The Hidden Water We Use](#).

- Elementary school teachers can use these activity guides in their classrooms:  
<http://your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/elementaryschool/guides.asp>
- See [Keeping King County Green](#) to learn about sustainability efforts in King County.
- Show a video. Then lead a follow up discussion in class or during a student Green Team meeting to inspire students to take action. Suggestions:
  - [Be a Better Recycler](#)
  - [Chasing Ice](#)
  - [Disneynature Earth](#)
  - [Disneynature Oceans](#)
  - [Featured Video - Waste Management Northwest \(wmnorthwest.com\)](#)  
about the Cascade Recycling Center in Woodinville, Washington
  - [Food waste is the world's dumbest problem](#)
  - [Garbage Island](#)
  - [Going Green shouldn't be this hard](#)
  - [Life on the Edge: Saltwater Shorelines video](#)
  - [The Lorax](#)
  - [The Story of Stuff](#)
  - [Additional Story of Stuff films](#)
  - [WALL-E](#)
  - [Waste Land](#)
  - [What Happens to my Recyclables?](#)
  - [What is climate change?](#) - 5 minute video from Schoolsunder2c.org
- Celebrate Earth Week – or any week! -- with different themes each day, including
  - [Black Out Day](#) – Use daylight instead of turning on lights and turn off electronic equipment when possible to conserve energy.
  - [Carbon Footprint Reduction Day](#) – Use an online tool to calculate carbon footprints and take at least one action to minimize your footprint. For footprint calculators, see the Green Schools Level Two resources page - [Energy Conservation Resources](#) - or visit <https://www.footprintcalculator.org/home/en>
  - [No Paper Day](#) – To reduce paper use, select a day to avoid making copies or using paper.
  - [Walk, Bike, or Carpool Day](#) – Reduce vehicle carbon emissions by encouraging staff, students, and parents to use alternative transportation options.
  - [Waste Free Lunch Day](#) – Encourage students and staff to bring lunch in reusable containers and to minimize packaging waste.
  - [Water Appreciation Day](#) – Save water by turning off faucets when not in use. Students can write one thing they appreciate about water on paper cut in the shape of a water drop. Place the “water drops” in a display in the lunchroom or common area. See [King County Wastewater Treatment Division](#) K-12 educational resources.

- Use [Google Earth](#) to explore climate change topics.
- Place small plants potted with Cedar Grove compost on each lunch table and a sign reading “This plant is growing in your recycled food scraps!” Give students raffle tickets when they bring waste-free lunches, and use the plants as prizes. This project helps students make connections between cafeteria sorting efforts and what happens to food scraps and food-soiled paper.
- King County Cedar Hills Regional Landfill Tour (Maple Valley): To ask about tours, call 206-296-4466 or fill out an online form at <http://your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/about/tours.asp>

## **Community and stewardship activities**

- **Create a No Idling policy and encourage alternative transportation options.** Help school staff, students, and parents reduce or eliminate modes of transportation that pollute the air, negatively affect human health, and increase carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. Reduce impact on climate change by encouraging and facilitating alternative transportation such as walking, bicycling, using the school bus and public transportation, and carpooling. Visit the [King County Green Schools Program Transportation Resources](#) web page.
- **Hold a Swap Day to reduce waste.** One person’s trash can be another person’s treasure! Use the Green Schools Program [Locker/Cubby clean-out and Swap Day guide](#). Collect books, school supplies, clothing, and athletic equipment that students and staff no longer need or want. Donate leftover items to a donation center such as Good Will, or ask your school’s PTSA to host a family garage sale day.
- **Host a litter clean up.** Increase awareness that littering harms the environment and that each person can make a difference in reducing littering. Visit the [King County Green Schools Program Litter Resources](#) web page. Take before and after photos, track the quantity of litter collected, and note what items students picked up, including cans, plastic bags, wrappers, etc. Share this data with the school community, and ask students how the school could reduce waste and litter.
- **Install a rain barrel or rain garden on school grounds to conserve water.** Check to see if your school is part of the [Cascade Water Alliance](#).
- **Participate in a habitat restoration project.** Remove invasive species and plant native plants on school grounds or volunteer with a local organization to help restore a community habitat site. See <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/stewardship/volunteer.aspx> and <https://kingcd.org/get-involved/volunteer/> for volunteer opportunities for older students.
- **Set up a worm bin and learn more about composting food scraps.** See [Composting Worm Recycling - Activity Guides - Elementary School Programs - King County Solid Waste Division](#); [Worm Works - A year of activities to do with your classroom worm bin - Elementary Schools - King County Solid Waste Division](#); and [Worm Bins - Composting - Natural Yard Care - King County](#)
- **Stencil storm drains.** To protect our surface water from pollutants, ask about volunteering at <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/watersheds/central-puget-sound.aspx>.

## **Competitions**

- **Hold a [waste-free lunch day](#).** Before Earth Day (or another selected day), weigh the waste from each lunch period or determine which lunch period has the least contamination in recycling bins. Then promote Waste Free Lunches. On or after Earth Day (or another selected day), weigh the waste or measure contamination and then compare results from the two days. Your school can continue a waste-free day each week for the remainder of the school year, and you can track your progress.
- **Hold a competition for the least amount of garbage per student.** Schools in one school district can compete, or grade levels or two or more lunch periods in one school can compete. The winning group could earn a waste-free prize such as listening to music during lunch, watching a video, a teacher wearing a silly outfit, lunch outside, or another waste free prize.
- **Hold an art exhibition or competition using repurposed or recycled materials.** For example, collect bottle caps to create murals for hallways or garden spaces.
- **Host a recycling [quiz show](#)** during lunch, in a classroom, or at an assembly to test students' recycling knowledge. Here's a King County [quiz show](#) guide that includes energy and water conservation questions.
- **Host a trash fashion show.** Students at one high school made some incredible clothing from recycled or disposable materials and awarded prizes.
- **Post a few trivia questions about sustainable practices.** Invite students to write down their answers and place them in a box. The entry with correct answer(s) wins a prize such as a recycled notepad or reusable water bottle.

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