

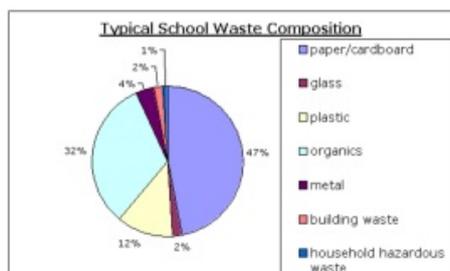


SCHOOLS AND WASTE

Any place where people live or work will produce waste, including schools. School waste mainly consists of food, paper and packaging, most of which can be easily recycled. For example, the vast amount of waste paper and cardboard in schools can be collected, recycled and remanufactured to become cardboard packaging and newsprint. An estimated 30% of school waste is food which is easy to deal with by composting, providing a useful resource for students and a fertiliser for the school grounds (Ecoschools). While individual schools create varying amounts of waste, the pie graph shown below provides averages of different types of waste collected from schools (CIWMB).

The best way to approach waste and litter education and action within schools is to integrate curriculum and waste conscious operations. An example would be setting up a recycling system with the students as they learn about the importance of recycling in order to conserve resources.

Implementing waste conscious systems in schools has a



range of benefits. These include reducing waste to landfill, potentially saving money on waste disposal costs; reducing litter and consumption (for example excessive photocopying); raising awareness amongst students, staff and parents; meeting education and curriculum requirements (for example, the Environmental Education Policy for Schools in NSW); building student teamwork and pride and enhancing the school's image of environmental concern and activism.

There are a number of programs available that aim to assist schools in achieving waste minimisation. For example, NSW's Sustainable Schools Program, Victoria's Waste Wise Schools Program and SCRAP (School Communities Recycling All Paper) - other programs are listed in More Information. Ultimately, individual schools are obliged to model responsible waste management and minimisation for students and ensure its practice is in place. Merely teaching students what waste minimisation is does not suffice: development and implementation of a whole-school waste management program will give students personal empowerment and practical knowledge of successful measures that reduce waste.

References:

Ecoschools, online at <http://www.eco-schools.org.uk/>
 CIWMB, online at <http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Schools/WasteReduce/Composition.htm>

WHAT CAN I DO?

To work out how best to minimise the waste your school produces, each category of waste (for example, food, plastics, paper) should be considered to determine the best approach for managing it. A waste audit is the best way to do this and requires looking at a sample of waste where the overall composition can be estimated. Waste audits provide information on types and quantities of waste generation and will give an idea of the school's current waste patterns. By participating in a waste audit, students can learn about waste generation and its impacts, ideally brainstorming ways to reduce school waste where necessary and improve on its management.

A whole-school approach to waste reduction must include waste from the office, canteen, classroom and playground. By recycling and composting alone, typical schools have been able to reduce their waste by up to 80 per cent! Info on how to conduct a school waste audit is available at <http://www.southernwaste.com.au/schools/wasteAudit.html> as well as through other school waste minimisation programs available in your area (see More Information for ideas).

MORE INFORMATION

- <http://www.gould.edu.au/wastewise/> - info on the Victorian Waste Wise Schools Program
- <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/> - info on NSW's Sustainable Schools Program
- <http://www.scrapltd.com.au/> - School Communities Recycling All Paper (SCRAP) provides a positive, detailed and action oriented approach toward waste reduction in schools encompassing a lot more than just paper!
- <http://www.southernwaste.com.au/schools/> - Tasmanian site featuring how to develop your own effective school program
- <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/ecotude/> - how to measure your schools environmental impact and great case studies on schools active in becoming more sustainable.
- <http://www.wastewatch.org.uk> - comprehensive UK site showcasing a range of ideas and actions for teachers and students alike including the Schools Waste Action Club project.
- <http://compost.css.cornell.edu/schools.html> - great website on composting in schools