



Recycling

As one of the fundamental aspects of “going green,” recycling is likely something students know of and have participated in. However, there is more to recycling than many people realize. For December, we recommend bringing out lesser-known elements of recycling, such as electronics and textiles recycling, that can help shed light on the possibilities out there for diverting waste from landfills.

Electronic waste, or e-waste, represents 2% of America’s trash in landfills, but it equals over 70% of overall toxic waste. It’s an important type of recycling because the decomposition of electronics in landfills produces dangerous gases and is an immense waste of resources. Cell phones and other electronics contain precious metals, like gold and silver, that are thrown away in large amounts; this is unnecessary and can be avoided by increasing awareness and education.

The December activities focus not only on these specific kinds of recycling, but on the basics too. It’s important for students to know what can and can’t be recycled, how to avoid contaminating recyclables with garbage, what kinds of new products can be made with recycled materials, and the big picture of why recycling is important in the first place. These activities provide a fun, interactive way of learning about recycling—just in time for the large amounts of waste produced during the holiday season. Remember that you can also come up with your own recycling activities (or expand on these ideas) to find an activity that works for your group!

Activity Ideas

Pre-School + Kindergarten

1. **Read books about recycling.** Story time is one of the simplest ways to jumpstart students’ thinking and understanding of recycling. Here are some [examples of books](#) you can read to your students.
2. **Listen to the Recycling Song.** Join Busta and Pong in singing the [Recycling Song](#) to encourage students to choose the option that will make garbage into something new!

Grades 1-3

1. **Reuse holiday gift wrap.** Encourage students to collect the used gift wrap after their holiday celebrations, and use it for [these fun crafts](#)! Discuss what would have happened to the gift wrap if it had been thrown away and why it’s important to reuse or recycle.
2. **Play a sorting game.** Bring in various clean materials, some recyclable and some not. Place them on a table, along with a recycling bin (preferably blue) and a garbage bin (preferably black). Invite students designate each item for either recycling or garbage as you hold them up one by one. Teach them that some materials are tough to figure out, and if they’re not sure, they should put the object in the trash in order to avoid contaminating recyclables. Teach them “when in doubt, throw it out.” You may want to refer to the [list of recyclable materials in Kearney](#) to ensure you are correct.
3. **Watch a video.** [This 4-minute video](#) explains the basics of recycling, including what happens to different materials and what happens if we don’t recycle.

Grades 4-6

1. **Compete in a recycling relay.** Similarly to the sorting game for Pre-School + Kindergarten, students can [compete in a relay](#) (see #5) to sort materials as quickly as they can. Gather a mix of recyclable and non-recyclable materials, along with a bin for recycling (preferably blue), landfill (preferably black), and reuse (can be any other color). Place the bins so that reuse is closest, recycling is next closest, and landfill is farthest away—this helps establish the idea that reusing is the most beneficial and landfill is the least. During the relay, have students work together to decide where the item should go, have one student from the team take it to the bin, and so on.
2. **Create a recycling fact-card.** Students can use [this interactive website](#) to create a recycling fact-card in the style of a baseball card. You could also look into the possibility of students sharing some of their facts during the morning announcements for the rest of the school to learn from!
3. **Watch a video.** This [TED-Ed video](#) shows three different paths of water bottles that have been thrown away, explaining what happens to plastic in landfills, the danger of plastic in ecosystems, and the benefits of recycling the bottle instead.

Grades 7-12

1. **Create a public service announcement to educate others on e-waste.** Allow students to do some research of their own before [designing and creating a PSA](#) that informs the public of e-waste and the hazards involved.
2. **Write a letter to local businesses.** Students can write [persuasive letters](#) to local businesses encouraging them to buy and use recycled content products.
3. **Watch a video.** [This video](#) explains textiles recycling, how to have a greener closet, and the process of recycling jeans!

Everyone

1. **Start an electronics recycling drive at your school.** Have students research potential e-recycling companies, advertise to the student body, organize the collection of devices, and schedule pick-up. This is a form of recycling many students know little about, and a drive can be a great way to get the word out!

Let Us Know What You Did!

Report your progress and earn recognition for your school. Fill out your school's row in the [GSC Tracking Document](#) to let us know which activity you did for this month!

Questions?

We're here to answer any questions you may have, talk through ideas or provide further resources. Just email gooreen@kearnevcats.com.

RECOGNITION LEVELS

All KPS schools have the opportunity to earn recognition for their participation in the Green Schools Initiative each year. The more activities you complete, the more recognition you receive! For 2019-2020, the following three levels of recognition are available:

- **Level 1 (Green Performance)** - Participation in 5 activities during the year. Schools receive a framed certificate of recognition, \$50 for Green Team Activities next year, and \$100 for the Principal's budget.
- **Level 2 (Green Achievement)** - Participation in 6 - 9 activities during the year. Schools receive \$150 for Green Team activities next year, an award banner, and \$200 for the Principal's budget
- **Level 3 (Green Excellence)** - Participation in 10 or more activities during the year. Schools receive \$300 for Green Team activities next year, a large award banner, and \$400 for the Principal's budget. In addition, all schools that achieve Level 3 participation are placed into a raffle; the selected school receives \$450 to spend on district-approved items. Approved items could entail smart power strips, vending machine energy misers, native landscaping/trees, rain barrels, native plants for classrooms, and indoor/outdoor recycling containers. All items must be approved by the district office prior to purchase.