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This Year's Three "R's" For Kids Going Back to School Are Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

(Irvine, Calif.) Students are returning to school, which is one of the most potentially productive, yet often overlooked, sources of recycling and conservation in any community. This is an ideal time for educators, teachers, parents and students to start planning "green school" programs built around the concepts of reducing, reusing, and recycling waste.

"Parents can help schools achieve their recycling goals by reducing the amount of consumables that children carry in and by buying environmentally friendly school supplies," said David Ross, director of community and municipal relations. "Just a few simple steps can make a big difference."

Every year, schools produce hundreds of tons of waste that can either be recycled or reused. Students, parents and teachers can all make a difference in reducing waste at school. By practicing the three "Rs" of waste reduction – reduce, reuse, and recycle – we can all do our part:

1. Sort through last year's materials, many of them can probably be reused.
2. Recycle unwanted paper and reuse old folders and binders. Paper that had only one side written on it can be used again.
3. Make a list before you shop for school supplies, it will help you remember what you wanted to purchase and limit impulse buying.
4. Buy smart! Purchase supplies made from recycled products, such as pencils made from old blue jeans, binders made from recycled boxes and notebooks with post-consumer paper content. You can also buy reusable items like refillable pens and rechargeable batteries.
5. Buy used goods from resale shops. It's an inexpensive way to get assorted merchandise, and retro fashions are always coming back into style.
6. Cover your textbooks with recycled grocery bags to help reduce waste and keep your books in good condition. Be creative and give your covers unique and fun designs.

7. Pack a no-waste lunch. Bring a reusable lunch box or bag and use reusable containers instead of food storage bags. Use a thermos or water bottle, instead of disposable juice boxes.
8. If you purchase lunch, take only what you need: one napkin, one ketchup packet, etc.
9. Remember to recycle your cans, bottles and papers at school and at home.
10. Pass it on! Share the "buy smart" message with your family, friends and schoolmates. Volunteer for, or start, an environmental club or recycling project at your school.

Every school needs recycling programs for paper and cafeteria waste. Paper recycling can be as easy as equipping every classroom with a receptacle for used paper that's collected separately from other garbage. Recycling cafeteria waste requires only a small effort. For example, pack a lunch with reusable gear. By utilizing reusable gear, like a cooler lunch box or even just reusing a brown paper bag, you can save on waste. Be sure to recycle any packaging, such as bottles or cans, when you're finished. Also, purchase food and beverages that come in recyclable containers.

Schools interested in starting recycling programs can call their local Waste Management facility for information or collect the materials to take to a drop-off location in the community. Waste Management has recycling buyback centers in Irvine and the City of Orange.

"We have an opportunity to create a generation that sees conservation and recycling as a routine part of every day, which is just what it should be. Once the kids get into the spirit it takes on a life of its own," Ross added.

About Waste Management

As North America's largest provider of waste and environmental services, Waste Management is on a quest for environmental performance, to maximize resource value and minimize environmental impact. Waste is a valuable resource. Waste Management takes innovative steps to maximize and recover the resource that is in waste. To learn more visit www.wmorangecounty.com and www.thinkgreen.com.

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