



Waste Wise News

2023/2024 **SCHOOL EDITION**

A resource to empower students and educators with tools and resources to reduce waste and live more sustainably.

New website to showcase sustainability resources for local educators

Editor's note: A version of this article first appeared in Oregon Family Magazine.

By Daniel Hiestand, Waste Reduction Outreach Coordinator

Wildfires. Droughts. Soaring energy and food costs. Understanding why environmental sustainability matters is vital because real-world, climate crisis-related impacts are here and now.

Last winter, Waste Wise Lane County reached out to 2,000-plus county educators via survey and focus groups to gauge how much county students are learning about environmental sustainability topics. Nearly 500 educators responded to our survey, and 45 participated in focus groups.

The most significant takeaways:

- Eighty-one percent are unfamiliar with Lane County's (and its partners') sustainability programs.
- Fifty-three percent do not know if their district has a sustainability plan.
- Nearly 50 percent of teachers report their students engaging in sustainability topics.
- Twenty-nine percent reported rarely teaching sustainability; 26 percent taught at least once per semester, and 21 percent taught sustainability issues at least once a month.
- A lack of access to ready-made classroom materials was cited as the biggest roadblock.

To help address this feedback, Lane County hired marketing agency bell+funk to design, develop, and deploy an environmental education website for Lane County. The site, WasteWiseLane.org, is slated to launch in 2024. The platform will organize sustainability content (i.e., activities, curriculum, etc.) by grade, subject, and program focus and is geared toward teachers, parents, and district administrators. It will also highlight existing local organizations, such as BRING and Oregon Green Schools.

"The project will deliver a future-focused digital strategy that elevates local sustainability educational resources and programs," said Waste Wise Lane County Waste Reduction Supervisor Angie Marzano. "We want to make this as 'plug and play' for educators as possible. We aim to provide curriculum for educators in varying subjects—ranging from social studies to mathematics to language learning—that adhere to required benchmarks, such as Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)."

Marzano said this site will cater to users with varying degrees of sustainability knowledge. "Our goal is to make it easy to use and highly accessible because widespread education is critical to making meaningful change for the future." Stay up-to-date on the site's progress at lanecountyor.gov/wastewise-schools or by following Waste Wise Lane County's social media channels.



COMING SOON • COMING SOON • COMING SOON

WasteWiseLane.org

Your Home for Sustainability Education
Resources in Lane County



Recycling questions?
Download the app!

waste wise
LANE COUNTY



DID YOU KNOW?

Based on a Waste Wise Lane County survey administered to more than 2,000 educators across Lane County in 2022, 29 percent of the respondents said that they “rarely” teach sustainability topics.

Sustainability education continues to evolve

Integrating environmental sustainability into classroom settings and beyond is vital. Whether it’s working outside in a garden or learning to divert materials from a landfill to create art, regional programs offer educational resources for students and teachers to bring sustainability into focus.

Oregon Green Schools (OGS) certification

OGS provides free assistance and support to schools across the state in establishing and maintaining conservation and sustainability programs that shape the next generation of environmental leaders.

OGS offers several certification tracks, such as “Green Lunchrooms” and “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.” Its Green Lunchrooms track is a popular choice, as school lunchrooms are known to generate food waste and garbage, including milk cartons and endless plastic items. With OGS, students, teachers, and parent volunteers conduct information-gathering activities such as lunchroom audits and in-person interviews. This data helps form an action plan for projects such as composting and waste prevention education, complete with project deadlines and evaluation metrics.

Lane County schools that complete these activities are eligible for a \$500 incentive grant to help schools complete their action plan projects. Learn more at pssogs.org (or email greenschools@live.com). *This article was originally published in MOM Magazine.*

Grow your mind—and your garden

School Garden Project of Lane County assists local, regional, and international schools and educational institutions by providing a wealth of program-specific resources. Resources include curriculum, garden design and building recommendations, and school-specific manuals such as its “Year Round Planting and Activity Chart” and a “School Composting Manual.” The group’s Support Services Program offers Lane County Schools and educational institutions the opportunity to receive garden advice, access to its tool and book lending library, publicity, seeds from its seed bank, and vegetable “starts.” More at schoolgardenproject.org.



BRING: In the classroom

BRING provides free in-classroom presentations, Lane County waste-handling facilities tours, and additional opportunities to engage students in waste prevention for grades K-12. BRING’s robust, hands-on curriculum helps students learn about everything from worms to waste prevention. Programs are in partnership with Waste Wise Lane County. More at bringrecycling.org/learn/in-the-classroom.

Too many electronics in your home or school? Try NextStep Recycling



NextStep Recycling is the only volunteer-based nonprofit electronic recycler for residential, municipal, and commercial accounts in Lane County. The organization serves all of Oregon.

NextStep offers free e-waste pickups for schools, nonprofits, and businesses. The nonprofit is committed to keeping usable electronics out of landfills, so customers can feel good about recycling with NextStep.

“Reuse is the new recycle,” said Jessica Ahrenholtz, NextStep’s executive director. “If NextStep can reuse donated electronics, that is NextStep’s No. 1 priority. These electronics are either gifted to those in need in our community or can be purchased at NextStep’s ReUse Store. Be part of the electronics pollution solution at NextStep.”

Also, don’t worry about data or personal information remaining on the device after recycling. NextStep takes care of that for you.

And if NextStep can’t fix it, it recycles your item for you, working with eSteward and R2 Certified Recyclers.

Visit the Eugene Recycling Center near the corner of Jackson St. and W. 2nd Ave. For more information, visit nextsteprecycling.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

NextStep Recycling recycles more than 2 million pounds of electronic waste each year.

23 schools participate in 2023 Electronics Recycling Competition

Maybe it’s 3,000-plus cats, three elephants, or three tyrannosaurus rex dinosaurs.

Choose one, and that’s approximately how much weight in electronics Lane County schools collected during the 2023 Electronics Recycling Competition, an annual campaign—sponsored by NextStep Recycling, Partners for Sustainable Schools, Oregon Green Schools, and Waste Wise Lane County—that helps divert toxic electronics from the waste stream.

This year, schools recycled more than 33,078 pounds (16.5 tons) of e-waste—or 18,973 more pounds than the 2022 competition.

Prizes for winning schools included gift certificates to NextStep Reuse Store. Waste Wise Lane County and the community thank all the students, parents, teachers, and administrators for participating.

For information on the upcoming 2024 Electronics Recycling Competition and how to get involved, contact Program Coordinator Joshua Frankel with Partners for Sustainable Schools at (541) 636-0096 or at greenschools@live.com.

SCHOOL COMPETITION WINNERS BY STUDENT POPULATION

Students	School Name	Electronics Recycled (lbs.)
0–300	McKenzie River Community School	1,576
301–500	Creswell High School	3,244
501–700	Meadow View Elementary School	3,564
700+	North Eugene High School	4,700

DID YOU KNOW?

PGE, which provides electricity to 50-plus cities in Oregon, has deployed 26 ‘Pano AI’ cameras. These cameras are mounted on cell towers and scan for smoke. They alert customers, including fire departments, utility companies, and ski resorts.

Climate resilience starts with you

The climate continues to change. It can be a lot to process, so caring for ourselves physically and emotionally is vital to ensure we are best prepared.

Eco-anxious stories: Storytelling to ease climate anxiety

Eco-Anxious Stories “is a creative collaborative space that aims to normalize eco-anxiety and build capacity for change through the lens of story. We embrace the overlap of mental health, climate change, and storytelling,” says its website.

The group creates original content (i.e., videos and podcasts), tools, and learning materials and manages mental health and climate change projects. More at ecoanxious.ca.

Climate Awakening: Conversations to empower

Climate Awakening is a nonprofit that “Unleash(es) the power of climate emotions through small group conversations,” says its website. A clinical psychologist founded the organization to convene thousands of small group conversations about climate crisis fears, grief, and rage. More at climateawakening.org.

Used clothing an inexpensive, sustainable way to be stylish

School shopping? Consider used clothing! Save money and help preserve natural resources. Places to check first include Goodwill, St. Vincent de Paul, and Facebook Marketplace.



Fix-It Lane County

Fix-It Lane County is dedicated to helping people fix, mend and repair more consumer products—including clothing. The site makes repair tools, knowledge, and resources easier to find. More at fixitlanecounty.com.

Take the Jump

Take care of what you own. Limit gas-powered travel. Eat a more plant-based diet. Limit how often you fly. And—of course—minimize your new clothing purchases. TakeTheJump.org spells out small shifts we can all make to realize significant, scientifically-backed differences. The charity offers tips, encouragement, and people you can speak to help along the way. More at TakeTheJump.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

It takes almost 800 gallons of water to make one cotton t-shirt!



Stand up and be heard—it’s your future!

Are you a young person who wants to get more involved in shaping your future? You have opportunities.

Sunrise Eugene

Sunrise Eugene “is a grassroots collective consisting of youth organizers from Eugene/Springfield who aim to push for radical climate action legislation nationally and locally, seeking to make global impacts to help alleviate the threat of climate change.” More at actionnetwork.org/groups/sunrise-eug.

Our Future

Our Future is a statewide network of high school student leaders facilitated by Partners for Sustainable Schools (PSS), a Eugene-based nonprofit. Currently in Portland, Salem, Corvallis, Eugene/Lane County, Ashland, and Bend, the network provides educational and leadership opportunities related to climate and climate justice issues. More at ourfutureoregon.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2020, 16 Montana youth filed a lawsuit against the state for supporting a fossil fuel-driven energy system—the first youth climate trial in U.S. history. On Aug. 14, 2023, a judge said state agencies violated their constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment and sided with the students.

Putting your money where your values are

The most sustainable thing you can do when you purchase goods is to buy used as much as possible. Community resources such as thrift stores, Facebook Marketplace, and garage sales are great places to start. Plus, you’ll save money and have fun hunting. Or, if you can, buy less!

Buy Nothing Project

According to its website, the Buy Nothing Project “is an international network of local gift economies. Buy Nothing offers people a way to give and receive, share, lend, and express gratitude through a worldwide network of gift economies...” In a nutshell: “Everything shared on Buy Nothing is given freely. No strings. Free.” Find the Lane County Buy Nothing groups at buynothingproject.org.

Mighty Deposits

Are you thinking about starting a savings account? Or perhaps you already have one and want to move your money to a more sustainable bank? Mightydeposits.com can help you learn more about your bank’s values.

DID YOU KNOW?

A rare Chinese bowl bought for about \$3 from a yard sale in the U.S. in 2007 sold for \$2.2 million at an auction in 2013.

DID YOU KNOW?

Americans could save \$49.6 billion annually by repairing rather than replacing some common household products.

Reduce, reuse, recycle, repair, re-imagine

While “recycling” seems to get all the glory, the most impactful things you can do in reality involve the other ‘Rs.’ While it may take more effort and creativity, reducing, repairing, and reusing the things you have can pose a fun challenge with a big climate-saving payoff.

BRING: Waste prevention presentations & more

Invite BRING educators into your classroom to explore one or more concepts of waste prevention. From reuse and recycling to food waste reduction and the circular economy, lesson plans will foster connections between natural resources and consumption and explore ways students can change behaviors to have a positive impact on the world around them. Classroom presentations may also be scheduled with field trips for extended learning. More at bringrecycling.org/learn/in-the-classroom.

Materials Exchange Center for Community Arts (MECCA)

MECCA is a Eugene nonprofit that sells secondhand arts and crafts supplies. According to its website, the nonprofit is “driven by our commitment to inspiring creativity, supporting education, and reducing waste.” It also has a section full of supplies that are available for FREE to teachers and educators in schools, community organizations, clubs, service groups, home schools, churches, non-profits, and social justice organizations. More at materials-exchange.org.



Lane County School Waste Reduction Grants

Waste Wise Lane County offers mini-grants to fund purchasing waste-reduction materials and equipment to help advance school sustainability and waste-reduction goals. More at lanecountyor.gov/wastewise-schools.

EWEB energy and water learn-at-home resources for kids

Test your electrical grid IQ. Why do power lines sag on hot days? Learn the answers to these and more at EWEB’s resource page. Check out this curated collection of free activities and lessons if you are looking for ways to supplement distance learning and help prepare for the future. More at eweb.org.

FOOD & WATER

Reducing wasted food at home and in school

Did you know that 30-40 percent of all food produced is wasted? Yikes. Preventing wasted food and rescuing food from the trash can make a big difference in many ways. Hungry neighbors can eat, and natural resources and money can be saved. Plus, limiting food waste is one of the most powerful things we can do to help address the climate crisis.

Green Lunchrooms Program

Oregon Green Schools (OGS) offers a “Green Lunchroom” certification track for school lunchrooms, which are known to generate food waste and garbage, including milk cartons and plastic items. According to the program website, the program provides school cafeterias with a resource guide that includes “outdoor curricula and practical resources.” Additionally, an “OGS regional coordinator and partner schools in the OGS network will assist (your school) in defining, refining, and meeting your school’s goals.” More at oregongreenschools.org/green-lunchrooms, then visit pssogs.org to get started.

DID YOU KNOW?

Skipping one hamburger per week for a year saves 22,100 gallons of water, equivalent to flushing your toilet nearly 38 times a day for a year.

ENERGY

Energy, every day

If you think of your normal day, what activities do you do that take energy? Maybe it’s watching TV, using your phone, or playing video games. When you save energy, you help slow climate change and save money—meaning you can spend your money elsewhere on other fun activities!

Green Child Magazine: Energy Checklist

Green Child Magazine created a checklist that parents and kids can use to save energy while having fun at home. “Think about ways your family might waste energy,” said the article. “Are the kids always leaving the lights on or the fridge door open? Add those items to your checklist.” See the checklist at greenchildmagazine.com/teach-kids-to-save-energy-checklist.

DID YOU KNOW?

Methane gas generated at Lane County’s Short Mountain Landfill is captured and used to provide electricity to local homes. Enough energy is recovered to supply the energy needs of 1,200 average homes annually.

Springfield, Eugene & Veneta families and schools: Compost with yard waste carts

Eugene, Springfield, and Veneta customers with yard waste carts can put all unwanted food (no packaging) into yard waste bins. Items can include everything from apple cores to meat, bones, and vegetable scraps. No liquids, paper, pet waste, or packaging/containers.

Schools in Springfield, Eugene, and Veneta interested in composting services should contact their haulers.

Lane County residents and schools without compost pickup can consider composting at home or on school grounds.



While just an estimated 3% of the global population flies, aviation is responsible for about 5% of global warming emissions.

Get active to fight the climate crisis

In Oregon, transportation—by air, water, rail, or road—accounts for the biggest portion of greenhouse gas emissions (40 %). That means the more you walk, bike, or skate to and from school, the better.

Shift Community Cycles

Shift Community Cycles is a local nonprofit community bike shop dedicated to removing barriers and empowering more individuals and communities to join the world of bicycling. A team of volunteers and community partners help Shift connect people with bicycles, including a free-bikes-for-kids program. Shift also offers free bicycle repair education and a space to work on bikes at little to no cost. More at shiftcc.org.

Lane Transit District: K-12 students ride free

All K-12 students in Lane County can get their free LTD Student Transit Pass from their school, using either the Umo Mobility smartphone app or tap card. This pass allows students in public, private, charter, and home schools to ride LTD buses for free. Passes will be issued to students through their school and are valid from Sept. 1 of the current school year to Sept. 30 of the following year, giving year-long access to transit. More at ltd.org/student-pass.

The marvels of sustainable innovation: BRING's Student Product Design Challenge

By Emily Reynolds, Director of Education + Outreach, Rethink Business

Last spring, nine weeks of intense creativity and dedication resulted in extraordinary outcomes for the BRING Student Product Design Challenge! Since 2018 BRING's Challenge has nurtured and harnessed the creative potential of the next generation. Serving as a springboard for budding designers, the Challenge contributes to our local community's culture of honoring natural resources through innovative reuse.

Participants are tasked with conceiving, designing, and building products that address real-world needs in their homes, classrooms, or communities using materials sourced from the BRING Planet Improvement Center. This process empowers students to think outside the box to envision products that fulfill a need while minimizing environmental impact.

This year, close to 30 Lane County student participants, working individually or on a team, successfully breathed new life into discarded materials and crafted inspiring products that push the boundaries of eco-conscious design. Each entry is judged by a panel of materials management experts in the following categories: Quality + Creativity, Education, Description, Supporting Photos & Videos, and Waste Prevention Understanding.



CONGRATULATIONS 2023 WINNERS!

- 1st** Noah, Relaxation Station
Chinese Immersion School
- 2nd** The Jordan Builders,
Wings of Change Drying Rack
Yolanda Elementary
- 3rd** Kaia, Bookshelf
Centennial Elementary
- People's Choice**
Andrea, Garden Lopper Table
Agnes Stewart Middle School