



TEACHING THE ZERO WASTE GENERATION

by Lorraine Roulston

Start the school year by Reusing, Repurposing and Recycling school supplies. Already, paper, pop cans and plastic containers find their way into blue boxes. For many students, composting also has become a way of life. Here are some suggestions for expanding your recycling program.

CLASSROOM PAPER

Before tossing a used workbook into the blue box, remember to remove any plastic or metal coil bars. As well, paper should be free of paper clips and plastic tabs. Donate unwanted books to a thrift store. If the books are in grim shape, check with your municipality as to whether the hard covers need be removed before recycling the pages. Paper that is shredded for confidentiality reasons can be put into a clear plastic bags for recycling. John Mullinder, executive director of the Paper and Paperboard Packaging Environmental Council, says “Most of the boxes and cartons made in Canada are 100% recycled content, so we need that used paper to make new boxes. If a napkin or other type of paper is soiled with food, then please put it in your organics collection or green bin. That’s the beauty of paper—you can recycle or compost it. Just please don’t put it in the trash.” Statistics for paper state that, for each ton of newspaper recycled, nineteen trees are saved.

PLASTICS

Besides the familiar numbered coded containers, both plastic film and hard plastic are now starting to be accepted at recycling depots. In my Peterborough Ontario area, not only do they recycle hard plastic containers at the main recycling depot, but also special event “hard plastic collection days” are hosted within the county. This can include broken rulers, kindergarten toys, beginner’s scissors, pen tops, packaging and CD cases.

METAL

Most recycling depots have a designated scrap metal heap for rusty paper clips, broken binder bars with rings and twisted book coils.

ELECTRONICS

E-waste constitutes 70% of toxic waste in landfills. This includes old computers, printers, mobile phones and ipods used in schools. A new program, run by the Ontario Electronic Stewardship, recently began a 32-school educational tour about the importance of recycling electronics. “Our job is to go out to the schools and inform the students because they are the ones using the majority of the electronics today,” explained Samantha Daminai, during a 45-minute “Recycle Your Electronics” presentation. “We want to show them why electronics should be recycled and why we shouldn’t just keep them in a drawer gathering dust or tossing them in the garbage.” To accompany the presentation, a school can opt to receive an electronics collection box for fundraising purposes. When full, the e-waste is collected with funds given for each ton gathered. The overall goal of the educational tour is to create new habits. For details visit: recycleyourelectronics.com.

INKJETS

Teachers and students can recycle their inkjet cartridges at many of the locations where they are purchased. There are also several other participating retailers that will accept them.

FELT PENS

The Crayola ColorCycle program was launched for students in schools from K – 12 across the United States and parts of Canada. This initiative collects and repurposes all brands of used markers, regardless of their plastic makeup or how they are assem-

bled, to be processed into energy. The program, which is free for schools, asks teachers to collect markers, weigh or count their contribution, and call FedEx. Crayola is hoping to expand the program to include home school groups, day cares and pre-schools in the future. In the meantime, they encourage anyone using markers to contact their local school. This program is diverting hundreds of tons of markers from landfills. crayola.com/colorcycle.aspx

CRAYONS

To repurpose broken and stubby bits of wax crayons, fill muffin tins lined with paper muffin cups with the crayon bits (paper removed). Oven bake on low heat until the crayons melt. When cooled, they are thick with swirls of colour, making them both interesting and ideal for kindergarten fingers.

3RS CRAFT BOX

To a container holding such items as scrap fabric and paper for crafts, add discarded school supplies and their packaging. This box can include pen caps, binder coils, springs from pens, and even broken elastic bands. You can stretch your classroom budget with a 3Rs Craft box and at the same time offer children an opportunity to be creative.

To support the Zero Waste Generation, environmental stewardship can not only be taught by example, but also be an integral part of the curriculum.

Lorraine authors illustrated adventure books with resources that help teachers explain the benefits of composting. Learn more at: castlecompost.com

