

Ideas for EARTH DAY... and EVERY Day!

The following activities can be done with an individual class, or as a booth or workshop at a school-wide Earth Day Fair. With each activity, you can combine a brief lesson on a relevant topic (waste, recycling, energy use and climate change, paper use and forest protection, etc.) with a hands-on activity. Communicate the results of your efforts in your school newsletter: number of cards made, number of bottles recycled, number of signatures collected on a petition, or number of shoes or printer cartridges recycled, to celebrate the tangible results and show how collective efforts make a difference.

Bottle rocket... Make rockets out of recycled plastic bottles and shoot them with water and a bicycle pump. http://www.instructables.com/id/Soda-Bottle-Rocket_1/

Recycled Paper... Make handmade paper from paper recycled in the classroom. Or, make recycled paper greeting cards ahead of time to sell at your Earth Day Fair to raise money for a school garden or tree. Contact your local recycling agency and inquire if they have staff who can teach a paper-making workshop. See: <http://www.make-stuff.com/recycling/paper.html> For a paper-making video, see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9R-z26ZSOk>

Solar ovens... They're simple to make out of cardboard and tinfoil. For instructions on building a solar oven and making baked apples and other desserts in them, see: www.solarcooking.org and www.solarcooking.org/recipes/desserts.html

Musical Instruments... Make instruments out of recycled materials: shakers, box guitars, drums, and more. For ideas, go to: <http://home.earthlink.net/~jbertles/>

Poetry... Students write environmental poetry and hang on a line or mural, or share at an assembly. (See: www.riverofwords.org)

Recycled art... Make jewelry, books, sculpture with used materials. For more ideas, check out: http://www.essortment.com/all/recycledartpro_rses.htm

Toy solar cars... Build and race model solar-powered cars in a solar car derby. A variety of kits are available on-line. For comprehensive instructions and resources, go to: http://www.re-energy.ca/t-i_solarelectricitybuild-1.shtml. To see video on a solar car derby click: <http://www.solarschoolhouse.org/flashssh/SIE.html>

Non-toxic cleaners... Make and test eco-friendly cleaners against conventional cleaners. See: <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/make-your-own-non-toxic-cleaning-kit.html>

Worm compost bin... Compost school lunch waste for use in a school garden - <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-Your-Own-Worm-Compost-System>

Earth pledge/mural... Organize a school-wide mural project for individual pledges such as, "I will turn off the lights when I leave the room." A Pledge board or mural could be the start of an "Environmental Mission Statement" for the school. More pledge ideas at <http://earthday.envirolink.org/guide6.html>

Junk Mail Tree... Kids collect junk mail from home, make a tree out of junk mail, and provide information to the school community about how to reduce junk mail, opt out of catalogs, etc. <http://homepages.mtn.org/iasa/junkmailtree/participate/buildtree.htm>

Human Sunclock... Create a human-scale sundial in your schoolyard to connect with the sun and the seasons. <http://www.sunclocks.com/index.htm>

Earth Day Fair Assembly, Booths, and Demonstrations

Have each grade host an activity or booth. Booth displays and posters are opportunities to showcase things students have learned in class. Read on for ideas:

Organic vs. conventional food taste test... Compare the flavors of strawberries or another fruit and provide information about organic food and farming.

Community Petition... Create and distribute a petition to eliminate the use of plastic grocery bags in your city: http://www.healthebay.org/currentissues/ppi/theneed_bags.asp, Also check out Prospect Sierra School's 4th graders' website on plastic bag waste: <http://www.readysetrecycle.org/>

Walk- or Bike-to-School Day... This is a favorite of kids and adults. Go to: <http://www.walktoschool-usa.org/> for tips on how to organize and keep it safe.

Waste-free lunch... Provide information about school lunch waste, and demonstrate how to pack a waste-free lunch – www.wastefreelunches.org

Green cars of the future... Invite Betty Biodiesel or a local group to make a presentation at your school. Learn more at <http://bettybiodiesel.org/education.html>

Issue Booths... Invite a local environmental organization to have a booth at your fair: Animal Rights, Roots and Shoots, your local recycling agency, to name just a few.

Solar Panel Demonstration... Hook up solar panels to water pumps or fans and demonstrate the power of the sun. Build a solar fountain at your school:

www.californiasolarcenter.org/pdfs/ssh/HP106-Fountain-AronsonAllen-final.pdf

For solar kits and other resources, see: <http://www.siliconsolar.com/educational-solar-kits.php> and <http://www.rahus.org/products.html>

"Game Show"... Set up a booth to test your environmental knowledge, and win prizes.

Classes can host the game show and do research to develop the questions and answers. See the Trash Can Quiz at <http://www.greenschools.net/CurriculumIdeas2.htm>

Plants and Animals... Have a booth about local plants and animals, with posters made by kids. Kids can create guides to local plants, birds, and animals.

Earth Day Assembly... Kids can perform a skit, read pledges, read environmental poetry, or invite an outside speaker to address a specific issue.

Beautify your school... Plant a butterfly garden in containers; plant seedlings to give away; make clay balls with wildflower seeds to give away. More info at:

<http://www.schoolgardenwizard.org/>

FreeCycle/Swap Meet... Students and families bring gently used items to school to swap: kids sports equipment, toys, books, games, and clothes. Arrange to have leftovers donated to a local organization.

Recycle/Re-Use Drive... Hold a used sneaker/cell phone/printer cartridge drive. You can have families bring used sneakers to be turned into playground surfaces. Learn how at <http://www.letmeplay.com/reuseashoe/program>. Recycle cell phones and cartridges for cash: <http://www.grcrecycling.com/programs/cell-phone-collections/index.cfm>. Recycle printer cartridges through <http://www.cartridgesforkids.com/>.

Recycling race – Kids (wearing gloves!) compete to sort waste into correct bins.

Guidance and instructions for many of these activities are available at www.greenschools.net on our Resources page. Also see <http://earthday.envirolink.org/guide6.html> for even more great Earth Day ideas and links.