



DATE: September 14, 2023

TO: Programs and Administration Committee
Planning Committee/Recycling Board

FROM: Angelina Vergara, Project Lead
Arielle Conway, Program Manager

SUBJECT: StopWaste Schools Program Overview

SUMMARY

The StopWaste Schools Project engages K-12 youth and partners by providing educational programming, resources, and technical assistance focused on the 4Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot) and climate action. The project empowers youth, teachers, and school champions to take action at school, at home, and in their communities. At the September 14 Recycling Board and P&A Committee meetings, Schools team staff will provide an overview and update of the services we provide and our evolving approach to serving the larger school community both online and in person.

DISCUSSION

Engaging youth at an early age in schools helps to empower future leaders with tools and resources to increase environmental sustainability and support waste reduction practices at home.

Last school year marked the first year since the pandemic that all 18 school districts in Alameda County returned to in-person school campus learning. In 2021-22, only 65 percent of school districts permitted their classes to participate in StopWaste educational and support programs in-person. By the end of the 2022-23 school year, 90 percent of all school districts reinstated in-person programming, including the Schools team’s core programs: transfer station field trips (in-person and virtual), classroom student action projects and curriculum, school “waste audits,” technical assistance to help with waste prevention and recycling infrastructure, and the StopWaste Ambassador Program.

In addition to our core educational programs, last year the team continued to explore new ways to partner with school communities. For example, the team recently partnered with Green Schoolyards America to pilot the “How Cool Is Your Schoolyard?” national curriculum to address the heat island effect and promote school forest initiatives to address climate change. In Spring 2024, the team will co-host a train-the-trainer workshop with partners to support school districts in using this curriculum in their classrooms and schoolyards.

In collaboration with our grants project, the team also helps schools transition from single-use disposables to reusables in the cafeteria, with three school districts – Alameda, Berkeley, and Fremont – making the switch to date and additional districts on the horizon.

The team also provides technical assistance to help schools comply with SB 1383 requirements and advance city climate action plans, and convenes high-level decision makers like haulers, city staff, school administrators, and youth club leaders to incorporate the 4Rs into everyday school facility operations.

This presentation will provide an overview of these programs and initiatives, a description of the ways in which the team engages with school districts and partners in the county, and how a range of audiences, including the board, can participate and become advocates for youth and schools working to fight climate change and prevent waste upstream.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.