

Early Childhood Waste Education Project

Ways to Avoid and Reduce Waste around the Office/Centre

Office Environment

Waste avoidance and reduction

- Opt for double-sided copying and printing. This may mean purchasing printers and copier machines with this capacity to make it easier for staff to use this option;
- Print in draft quality where available to reduce ink or toner usage;
- Print in Black & White & only use colour when absolutely necessary;
- Make the minimum number of copies required;
- Keep mailing lists current to avoid unnecessary use of paper;
- Circulate or share documents, publications, and telephone books. Creating a shared, centralised filing system can be a good way to achieve this;
- Post general announcements in a central location, such as a bulletin board;
- Take steps to reduce unsolicited or junk mail;
- Eliminate unnecessary documents, reduce document size or redesign to use less paper;
- Store documents electronically rather than as hard copies (where feasible);
- Edit and proofread documents on the computer before printing. This can be done using the track changes and comments options in Microsoft Word;
- Eliminate fax cover sheets by using a stamp with company details;
- Fax directly from a computer to eliminate unnecessary printouts;
- Perform routine preventative maintenance of office equipment to ensure longer life.

Recycling and Reuse

- Recover single-sided sheets of paper for reuse in printing draft copies, reuse in fax printing or as scrap paper;
- Collect toner cartridges for remanufacturing or recycling and purchase only remanufactured toner cartridges;
- Reuse paper, egg cartons, containers etc for arts and crafts activities with the children;
- Make recycled paper with the children;
- Reuse shredded confidential paper for packaging;
- Ask if anyone can reuse packaging (eg cardboard boxes) before recycling or disposing;
- Purchase reusable items such as refillable pens;
- Reuse office supplies, such as inter-office envelopes, binders, file folders, paper clips, etc;
- Establish a system and / or central location for reusable office supplies so making it available to other staff;
- Donate unwanted but reusable items such as furniture, equipment & supplies such as old magazines, journals & computer paper to community groups, or charities;
- Provide desktop recycling containers for all employees;
- Provide clearly labeled paper recycling bins near copiers, in mail rooms, record areas & in staff rooms;
- Provide clearly labeled recycling bins for other items (glass, plastic, aluminium, steel etc) in convenient locations particularly kitchens & staff rooms.

Purchase Sustainably

- Only purchase something if you really need it;
- Ask suppliers for information on any 'environmentally friendly' products they can supply. If they don't have any request them;
- Purchase durable, or easily repairable office/centre equipment and furniture;
- Purchase items that can be used multiple times and not just once i.e. rechargeable batteries rather than standard batteries; cloth nappies; reusable containers etc

- Purchase products with a recycled content such as paper, envelopes, pens, other stationary equipment, hand towel & toilet paper;
- Purchase products with no packaging, less packaging or reusable packaging;
- Buy in bulk to reduce packaging;
- When going to purchase something, take your own reusable bag.

Cleaning

Waste avoidance and reduction/ chemical reduction

- Avoid the use of chemicals and toxic cleaning products where possible and use natural cleaning products and reusable cloths;
- Purchase or ask contractors to use concentrated cleaning supplies, such as detergents, to reduce packaging;
- Use washable cleaning utensils (eg tea towels instead of disposable paper towels);
- Opt for vacuum cleaners with non-disposal collection bags over those with disposal paper bags;

Food & Catering

Waste avoidance and reduction

- Purchase products in bulk and / or concentrated form and dispense them in reusable / refillable containers;
- Purchase reusable serving dishes and utensils over disposable ones;
- Encourage staff to use their own reusable cups, plates and cutlery;
- Avoid takeaway containers e.g. use your own travel mug to get a takeaway coffee;
- Use bulk dispensers for condiments (e.g. sugar, milk, jams, and coffee whiteners) instead of individually wrapped packages;
- Request that caterers supplying for functions do so with reusable plates / containers or work with existing suppliers to reduce or eliminate packaging where feasible.
- Encourage employees / children to bring food to work in reusable containers;
- Compost or worm-farm food scraps or organise some chooks.

Landscape Gardening

Waste recycling and reuse

- Plant a herb and vegie garden with the children and parents – keep it well mulched and use the produce for staff and/or children lunches;
- Plant low maintenance gardens which generate less waste (grow slowly, need less pruning and less water);
- Mulch / compost garden organics to avoid having to transport and dispose of them and to reduce water loss and save on the purchase of commercial compost/fertiliser;
- Use the compost generated from collected food organics (bokashi bin, worm farm or compost bin) to fertilise landscaped areas.

General Recommendations

- Minimise packaging at the source by working with your product suppliers, or self regulate by buying in bulk, or choosing alternative brands or products with less packaging;
- Minimise consumables by opting for reusable over disposable products;
- Look for ways of effectively using by-products (including packaging).

Waste reduction activities for children's programs

- Contact your local Council waste or environmental educator, or the NEWF to organise free composting and/or worm farming demonstrations and other waste wise talks;
- Include green books in your book collection/library or request your local library to purchase some of the books on environmental topics as listed in the Resource List;
- Involve the children in separating recyclables for recycling;
- Sing the Recycle and Reuse Song with the children (see the NEWF Resource Kit);
- Involve the children in taking food scraps to the compost and/or worm farm, and harvesting the produce in the herb/vegie garden;
- Have a low-waste lunch day every day!