



KICK challenge

KEEP IT CLEAN, KANSAS!



Elementary (K-5th Grade) Challenges

UNDERSTAND / INVESTIGATE / ACTION

Get Registered for the KICK Challenge- 10 points

Before your class can start earning points and tracking your waste-reducing wins, you need to get your school registered on the KICK Dashboard! Ask a teacher or administrator to sign up so your school has an official home base for the challenge. Once you're registered, you can start submitting for every challenge you complete.

How to submit: You automatically get the points once you register! No further proof is needed.

Waste Journey Field Trip or Virtual Visit - 15 points

Ever wonder what happens to your trash after the garbage truck picks it up? Does it just disappear? Not even close! Grab your class and go explore a real landfill, recycling center, or waste facility, or take a virtual trip right from your classroom. Peek behind the curtain and find out where our trash actually goes and what happens to the stuff we recycle. It's gonna change how you see that banana peel and water bottle for good!

How to submit: Great job, investigators! Now show us what you discovered by sending in a photo of your class on the field trip or watching the virtual tour. Tell us one cool thing your students learned, like where your town's trash or recycling actually goes. And don't forget to let us know how many students and how many grown-ups went on the adventure.

Teacher Professional Development in Environmental Education - 40 points

Teachers, it's your turn to earn points for your school! Invest in your own learning by attending a KDHE endorsed conference like the [Kansas Environmental Education Conference](#) or the [Be the Change eeCredential](#) with graduate credit available. Then bring back new ideas and strategies to share with your students and fellow teachers. Already completed the Be the Change eeCredential?

No problem, other KACEE professional learning offerings count too. Every new thing you learn helps your students discover even more about the world around them.

How to submit: Take a photo or screenshot of your KACEE registration screen or completion certificate, then write a short paragraph sharing what you learned and how you plan to use it in your classroom.

Connect with KACEE- 10 points

Schedule a [virtual session](#) with the Kansas Green Schools Director to learn more about Kansas Green School opportunities for your school and how we can support you with the KICK Challenge. The session can be just you or include your students who are working on the challenge together. Join the [KGS Network](#) and subscribe to the [KACEE Newsletter](#) to stay connected to resources, ideas, and recognition opportunities for your students.

How to submit: Submit a screenshot confirming your KGS Network Profile, confirm you got connected by subscribing to the KACEE newsletter, and share a brief description of your takeaways from your virtual session with the KGS Director.

Spread the Word: Invite Another School - 10 points

Help the KICK Challenge grow by telling another school about it! Your students can write a friendly letter or draw a poster sharing some of the cool waste-reducing things your school has been doing. They can invite another elementary school to join the challenge or, if you're in a district, work with your administration to get information about KICK into the district newsletter or communications. It's kids helping kids make a difference.

How to submit: Submit a copy of the message, email, or flyer you used to share the KICK Challenge with another school along with the name of the school you contacted, or a screenshot of the district communication it was included in.

INVESTIGATE

Before you begin, open the "Waste & Recycling Investigation" for your grade band and make a copy. Just open the document, click "File," then "Make a Copy." Rename it with your school's name and the Investigation title — for example, "Sunflower Elementary Waste & Recycling Investigation." Your team can share the link and enter data together into the investigation.

(K-2) Lower Elementary Waste & Recycling Investigation (*Investigations found in Section 2)

(3-5) Upper Elementary Waste & Recycling Investigation

Cafeteria Waste Investigation - 25 points

K-2 Cafeteria Waste Investigation: Time to become waste detectives! Use the K-2 Lower Elementary Waste & Recycling Investigation to complete the Cafeteria Waste section to help your class explore what happens to food and packaging during school lunch. Students will look at what gets thrown away and start thinking about ways to waste less. You may want to enlist older students to help with this investigation.

3-5 Cafeteria Waste Investigation: Grab your weighing scales because it is time for a cafeteria waste investigation! Use the 3-5 Upper Elementary Waste & Recycling Investigation to complete the Cafeteria Waste section to guide your class through a hands-on study of food and packaging waste generated during school lunch. Students will sort, measure, and record what is being thrown away then brainstorm ways to make a difference. You may want to enlist older students to help with this investigation.

Use **THESE** bin labels for your Cafeteria investigation.

How to submit: Submit any photos and the Waste and Recycling Investigation by sharing its Google link to verify completion of the Cafeteria Waste section.

Bonus: *Your school earns a badge for completing this investigation!*

Classroom Waste Investigation - 25 points

K-2 Classroom Waste Investigation: Time to put on your detective hats and see what is hiding in your school's trash cans! Use the K-2 Lower Elementary Waste & Recycling Investigation to complete the Classroom Waste section to lead students through sorting, weighing, and categorizing waste from different classrooms across the school. This gives them a bigger picture of just how much waste classrooms create each day and over an entire school year. Then talk about ways your school can reduce what gets thrown away. You may want to enlist older students to help with this investigation.

3-5 Classroom Waste Investigation: How much trash do classrooms create each day? Let's find out! Use the 3-5 Upper Elementary Waste & Recycling Investigation to complete the Classroom Waste section to guide students through sorting, weighing, and categorizing waste from multiple classrooms across the school. By collecting data from different rooms they will get a much bigger picture of how much waste classrooms generate each day and just how fast it adds up over a whole school year. Then challenge them to brainstorm ways to cut down on waste and make your school a little greener.

How to submit: Submit any photos and the Waste & Recycling Investigation by sharing its Google link to verify completion of the Classroom School Waste section.

Bonus: *Your school earns a badge for completing this investigation!*

Whole-School Waste Investigation - 25 points

K-2 Whole School Waste Investigation: You have explored classrooms so now it is time to see what the rest of the school is tossing! Use the K-2 Lower Elementary Waste & Recycling Investigation to complete the Whole School Waste section to help students check out other areas of the building like the office, the library, and more. By combining what they find from each spot they will build a complete picture of your school's waste stream and start spotting ways your whole school can waste less. You may want to enlist older students to help with this investigation.

3-5 Whole School Waste Investigation: Time to explore beyond your classroom! Use the 3-5 Upper Elementary Waste & Recycling Investigation to complete the Whole School Waste section and see what is happening in other parts of your school. Student teams visit different areas of the building like the hallways, the office, the gym, and the library. When everyone brings their data together you will have a full picture of your school's waste stream. That is a big clue for finding ways to reduce waste across your whole school! Student teams investigate different areas of the building and combine their findings to build a complete picture of the waste stream in your school building and opportunities for school wide waste reduction.

How to submit: Submit your Waste & Recycling Investigation by sharing your Google link to verify completion of the Whole School Waste section.

Bonus: *Your school earns a badge for completing this investigation!*

★ Waste & Recycling Investigation Completion and Recognition - 35 Points

Complete all three investigations; the Cafeteria Waste Investigation, the Classroom Waste Investigation, and the Whole School Waste Investigation along with a set of background questions and the Action Plan to earn full recognition for the Waste and Recycling Investigation. Each investigation can be submitted on its own for a badge. But when you finish all three you unlock something extra special. This KICK Challenge gives you a great head start on completing the full Waste and Recycling Investigation. Once you finish it your school earns Level 1 Recognition with the [Kansas Green Schools Program](#).

And there is so much more to explore. Kansas Green Schools has five different investigations you can take on. The Healthy School Environment investigation looks at school health and keeping the air inside and outside your school clean. The Learning Community investigation lets you explore school gardens, pollinator gardens, trees, and all the nature on your school grounds. Energy helps you find out where your school uses the most power and what it costs to keep the lights on. Water teaches you about keeping water clean and not wasting it at school and in your community. And Waste and Recycling is all about what your school throws away and how to throw away less.

Complete two or more Green School Investigations and your school earns state and national recognition as a [Kansas Green School of Excellence](#).

How to submit: Share the link to your completed Waste & Recycling Investigation Google Doc and make sure all questions are answered and your Waste Action Plan is filled out. That's all we need!

TAKE ACTION

Form or Reconvene a Green Team or Environmental Club - 35 points

A green team is a group of students who care about your school and the planet. They can lead KICK challenges, help with future KGS Investigations, run recycling, and spread the word about what your school is doing. Some green teams work on school gardens, raise chickens, even plant pollinator gardens. Whatever your group is interested in, that's what you do. If you're starting a new team, recruit classmates, decide on simple jobs like bin monitors or morning announcers, and set a few fun goals. If you already have a green team, show how you keep it going and how you'll bring in new students when older ones move up.

How to submit: Submit a photo of your team, a list of members and their roles, and a short description of what you plan to work on this year. If you are an existing team, include your plan for recruiting new members.

Trashless Lunch Exploration - 15 points

What does a low waste lunch look like in your school? Start the conversation with students and invite families to join in. The goal is not buying new things — it is making the most of what you already have. Share tips like packing drinks in a reusable water bottle instead of a disposable one, using a container you already own instead of a plastic bag, or adding a cloth napkin from home. Every family can pick the swaps that work best for them. Small steps count.

How to submit: Share your photos and the materials shared with students and school/district community.

Share Bin: Reducing Cafeteria Food Waste - 15 points

Set up a share bin in the cafeteria where students can drop unopened, unwanted food so a classmate can grab it instead of sending it to the trash. Already have one going? Tell us how it has evolved; what you have noticed, what is working, and any ideas for making it even better. No pressure to make it perfect. Every piece of food redirected is a win.

How to submit: Snap a photo of your share bin in action and tell us how it works: what goes in, where it lives, and how students grab items. Also share a rough estimate of how much food gets redirected each week.

(3-5) The Hallway Line Up Challenge - 25 points

Sometimes one powerful visual can make a big impact. Before lunch, put a clean clear bag inside each cafeteria trash can. Double bag it so you are safe. After one lunch period, gather and tie up all the bags. Line them up side by side in a busy hallway. Take a photo and share it on announcements or social media. Add a sign that says "This is one lunch. Where does it go?" Toss the bags right after or leave them out a little while so students can see.

Check with your custodian and principal first. Tell them you are using clean bags and handling the cleanup yourself.

How to submit: Send us photos of your hallway line up and the number of bags from one lunch. Then figure out how many bags your school would produce in a full 180 day school year.

Conversations with Food Service Staff - 15 points

The cafeteria staff at your school are awesome and they know a lot about lunch. Take some time to talk to them! Ask your food service director and your lunch helpers what they notice about food that gets thrown away. Find out why they use things like plastic trays or spoons or other questions you might have. The answer might surprise you. Listen to what they think could help and share what your ideas with your team to come up with ways to waste less.

How to submit: Write a short summary of what you learned and any ideas or improvements that came out of it. Add a photo if you have one.

Launch or Expand a School Composting System - 40 points

Start or expand your compost bin at your school! Work with your principal and facilities staff to find the best spot. Do your research for your proposal first so you can answer their questions and concerns about upkeep. Collect fruit and veggie scraps from lunch instead of throwing them away. Help add scraps, stir the pile, and watch it turn into nutrient rich material for your school garden. Learning why is the fun part. Composting keeps food out of the landfill and helps make great soil for plants. Check out the [Food Too Good Waste Program](#) for more about composting.

How to submit: Take a photo of your compost setup and write a few sentences about how it works. Tell us who takes care of it and what students are learning along the way.

Compost Production & Sales - 15 points

Take your school composting program to the next level! Once your compost is ready, package it up and sell it to your school community. Students help measure, bag, and label the finished compost. Sell it at a school event, parent pickup, or a local farmers market. Money raised can go right back into your school garden or more green projects.

How to submit: Take a photo of your bagged compost and write a few sentences about how your sales work and what the money supports.

Mentor Another School in Composting or Recycling - 30 points

You've got something good going at your school. Now share it! Partner with a nearby elementary school and teach them what you've learned about composting or recycling. Help them set up their own bins, teach them what can and can't go in, and answer their questions. If you need suggestions, meet with your principal to find a school to work with, then schedule a visit or video call to get them started. Watching another school follow your lead is pretty cool.

How to submit: Write a short description of how your mentorship worked, which school you helped, and share photos or any materials you made for them.

Classroom Trash Can Reduction - 10 points

Does your classroom have more trash cans than you really need? Walk around and count how many are in your room. Then ask, "Are they all full at the end of the day?" If you've got three bins but they're never all full, could you get down to two? That would save one plastic bag from being emptied every single night and give your custodian less work to do. Talk to your teacher and custodian about testing it out for a week. Already did this last year? Tell us how your routine has changed or improved since then.

How to submit: Share your observations and results. How many bins did you start with, how many bins did you remove, and what did you learn?

Launch or Expand a School Recycling Program - 30 points

First step: figure out what's possible. Research what recycling options exist in your community. Call your city offices, research online or check with your waste hauler. Once you know what can be recycled and who can take it, set up a simple recycling system in your school. Clearly labeled bins, a plan for getting the recyclables where they need to go, and students helping keep it going. If your district already has recycling, look for ways to make it better or add something new. The KGS Director can support you with logistics.

How to submit: Submit photos of your recycling setup and a brief description of how your program is organized. Include what recycling options you found in your community and what student roles look like.

School Grounds Cleanup - 15 points

Grab some gloves and head outside. Organize a cleanup of your school grounds with your teacher and classmates. Pick up litter around playgrounds, parking lots, and fields. If your school has recycling, sort what you find and put trash in the right place. Even a small cleanup makes your school feel better for everyone. Take a picture before you start so you can show the difference you made.

How to submit: Submit before and after photos of the area you cleaned and a short note on how much you collected.

Neighborhood Cleanup & Storm Drain Awareness - 25 points

Clean up doesn't have to mean a neighborhood. Whether your school is in town or out in the country, litter on the ground has to go somewhere. When rain or wind moves it, that trash can end up in a storm drain, a ditch, or a nearby creek. From there it travels to bigger rivers and eventually affects our drinking water, the animals that live in those waterways, and our chances to swim, fish, and play outside. Take your cleanup team outside and pick up litter around your school grounds and the surrounding area. Look for storm drains, ditches, or the nearest creek so students can see the path the trash might take. Then spread the word by creating simple awareness materials for your school and community.

How to submit: Submit photos from the cleanup and an example of your awareness materials such as a sign, a social media post, or a newsletter item that shows your education outreach.

Holiday Waste Awareness Events - 10 points

Different holidays mean different kinds of waste. Think about all the wrapping paper, plastic eggs, broken lights, and single-use decorations that get thrown away every year. Pick a high-waste holiday and design a simple awareness event or challenge that helps your school community think ahead about reducing that waste before the holiday even starts. It could be an Easter egg recycling drive, a reminder about using reusable gift wrap options, or a collection point for old holiday lights.

How to submit: Submit photos from your event or a brief description of what students did to raise awareness.

School Art from Unrecyclable Materials - 15 points

Some trash can't go in the recycling bin, but that doesn't mean it has to go to waste. Bottle caps, plastic packaging, broken toys, and other odds and ends can be turned into something beautiful. Work together as a class or group to create a new piece of art using materials that can't be recycled the usual way. Let the materials spark your imagination. A mural of bottle caps, a sculpture from broken pieces, a collage of twist ties and wrappers. The only limit is what you can dream up. Display your finished artwork somewhere your school community can see it and start conversations about waste, creativity, and finding new uses for things we usually throw away.

How to submit: Submit a photo of the finished artwork along with a label or short description that explains what materials were used, why you chose them, and the date it was started and completed.

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose Projects - 15 points

The waste hierarchy is a fancy name for a simple idea: the best thing we can do for the planet is not make waste in the first place. And if we can't refuse it, we try to use less. And if we have to use it, we use it again or find a new job for it. Break students into teams and assign each team one tier of the waste hierarchy: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, or Repurpose. Each team researches what their tier means and creates a hands-on project to teach the rest of the class. For Refuse, maybe they make a poster about saying no to straws and single-use plastics. For Reduce, they could pack a "low-waste lunch" challenge. For Reuse, they might design a way to use a glass jar instead of buying something new. For Repurpose, they could turn an old T-shirt into a produce bag. The projects should be simple, visual, and hands-on for this age group.

How to submit: Submit photos of student projects and a brief description of what tier of the waste hierarchy each project addressed.

Hard-to-Recycle Collection Drive- 25 points

Some things can't go in your regular recycling bin at home, but that doesn't mean they have to go to the landfill. Plastic grocery bags, snack wrappers, and broken markers are just a few examples. Set up a collection point in your school for one type of hard-to-recycle item and send it to a program that can actually recycle it. Trex accepts plastic film like grocery bags and bread bags to turn into decking. TerraCycle offers free programs for snack wrappers, writing instruments, and more. Pick one program, set up a labeled bin or box in a visible spot, and collect as a school for a set amount of time. Already did this last year? Keep it going by adding a new material or showing how your routine has changed.

How to submit: Submit a photo of your collection point along with the name of the program you worked with or added.

Donation Drive - 20 points

Gently used clothes that still have life in them don't belong in a landfill. Host a donation drive at your school where students and families can drop off clothes they've outgrown or no longer wear. Set up a collection box in the front hallway or by the office for a week or two, then donate everything to a local charity or thrift store. If you want to make it extra fun, turn it into a clothing swap instead; students bring in old clothes and take home something new to them. Already have a clothes partnership or donation program in your school or district? Great! This challenge can be about raising awareness instead. Make a school-wide announcement or a flyer showing where families can drop off clothes and why it matters.

How to submit: Submit a photo from the drive and a brief report on how many items were collected if applicable.

Environmental Education Activities - 15 points

Bring recycling and waste concepts to life with hands on fun. Set up a recycling relay where teams race to sort items into the right bins. Explore the aluminum lifecycle by having students crush cans and explore how many steps it takes to go from raw material back to a new can. Teachers, not sure where to start? Check out KACEE's Professional Learning opportunities for ready-to-use curriculum and training.

How to submit: Submit a description of the activity, photos from the event, and a brief reflection on what students took away from the experience.

Waste Reduction Partnership with Local Restaurants - 25 points

Team up with a local restaurant to tackle single-use plastic straws in your community. You could make colorful posters explaining why skipping the straw helps the planet, sell reusable straws as a fundraiser, or ask the restaurant to offer straws only when customers ask instead of handing them out automatically. Another fun idea is collecting crayons that restaurants give to kids and donate them to local early childhood centers or churches so they get a second life instead of hitting the trash. It's a small change with a big feel-good factor.

How to submit: Share what your class did, who you partnered with, and what impact or response you saw. Photos, letters, or any materials you created are welcome.

School Waste Awareness Campaign - 20 points

Get the whole school buzzing about reducing waste with a campaign your students create and run. They can design colorful sustainability posters to hang in the cafeteria and hallways, write short weekly intercom announcements with fun waste reduction tips, put together a simple recycling guide with pictures so everyone knows what goes where, or create a social media post tagged #KeepItCleanKansas to share what your school is doing. Keep it visual, keep it positive, and watch the habits spread.

How to submit: Submit photos or copies of your campaign materials and a brief description of who the audience was and how it was shared.

Student Voice on Sustainability - 25 points

Help your students discover that their voice matters when it comes to protecting the planet. Have them write a letter or draw a picture with words about a waste or environmental issue that matters to them; why littering harms the environment, why recycling is important, or why we shouldn't waste food. Send their letters to a real audience: the school principal with ideas for less waste at lunch, a local restaurant thanking them for using fewer straws, or even a family member with a promise to be more earth-friendly at home. The goal is showing kids that speaking up can make a difference.

How to submit: Submit a copy of what students wrote and confirmation that it was sent or published or a date and description of a talk if they spoke to someone in person.

Student Waste Education Video - 20 points

Let your students become filmmakers for a cause! Have them plan and produce a short video about waste, composting, or recycling. It could be a classroom news segment, a fun skit showing what goes in each bin, a tour of your school's recycling setup, or even a stop motion animation with a waste saving hero. Share the finished video with the school community during morning announcements or at an assembly. Videos can also be submitted for the KICK Challenge.

How to submit: Submit a link to or copy of the video.

E-Waste Collection or Awareness Campaign - 15 points

Even the youngest students can help solve the e-waste problem! Teach your class about electronic waste and why old phones, tablets, and batteries shouldn't go in the trash. Your students can create colorful posters that show where to recycle old electronics, design a hallway display with e waste facts, or launch a schoolwide collection drive where families can drop off old devices for proper recycling. Partner with a local recycler if possible so students can see where the e-waste goes next. It's a hands on way for kids to learn that what we do with our old electronics really matters.

How to submit: Submit photos or marketing materials from the event or campaign and a brief description of what was collected or how many people were reached.

Waste Tire Awareness Campaign - 15 points

Old tires are a big problem once they're thrown away! They take up a lot of space, don't break down for a very long time, and can even fill up with rainwater and become a home for mosquitoes. Teach your class why tires shouldn't be dumped in yards, ditches, or empty lots, and find out what happens to tires once they're properly recycled, some get turned into playground mulch, new rubber products, or even roads! Then help spread the word. Your students can make posters, create a hallway display, or put together an announcement that teaches your school community where old tires should really go.

How to submit: Submit photos of your posters, display, or announcement, along with a brief description of what your students learned and shared.

Fast Fashion Awareness - 15 points

Have you ever thought about where your clothes come from, or where they go when you're done with them? A lot of clothing gets thrown away instead of reused, and making new clothes takes a lot of water, energy, and resources. Teach your class about "fast fashion," or clothes that are made quickly and cheaply, then thrown away just as fast. Talk about ways to keep clothes out of the trash, like hand-me-downs, clothing swaps, or donating things we've outgrown. Then have students share what they learned through a poster, a short presentation, or a class discussion about one change they could make with their own clothes.

How to submit: Submit student work, presentation materials, or a photo from the activity, along with a brief description of what students learned and one idea they came up with.

Total Points: 700

34 Challenges



Sponsored by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment

<https://challenge.kansasgreenschools.org/activities>