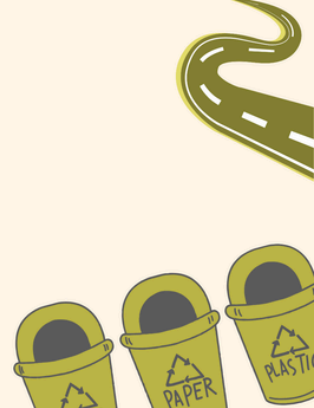




KICK challenge

KEEP IT CLEAN, KANSAS!



Middle School (6th-8th Grade) Challenges

UNDERSTAND / INVESTIGATE / ACTION

Get Registered for the KICK Challenge- 10 points

This is one of the first steps to getting started with the KICK Challenge. Get your school registered on the KICK Dashboard so your students can start earning points and seeing their progress as they complete challenges. Have a teacher or even a student leader walk through the registration process to get your school set up.

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

Your trash doesn't just vanish when it leaves the curb, so where does it actually go in your own community? Take your class behind the scenes at a local landfill, recycling facility, or waste collection center, or check out a virtual tour if you can't go in person. The mission is to follow the waste journey from your classroom trash can all the way to its final stop. What happens to your recycling in your community? Is it actually getting recycled? How long does that water bottle or aluminum can take to break down? You might be surprised by what you find when you see it up close.

How to submit: Alright, time to prove you went on this waste adventure! Turn in a photo of your class at the facility or watching the virtual session along with a short paragraph about one thing your students learned, like where your community's trash ends up and what recycling options are available where you live, whether that's curbside pickup, a drop-off center, or something else. Also include the number of students and adults who participated.

Teacher Professional Development in Environmental Education - 40 points

Teachers, you can earn points for your school too by investing in your own learning. Attend a KDHE endorsed conference like the [Kansas Environmental Education Conference](#) or the Be the Change eeCredential, with graduate credit available. You'll bring fresh strategies and ideas to share with your students and colleagues. Already completed the Be the Change eeCredential? Other KACEE

professional learning offerings count as well. When you grow your skills, your whole classroom benefits.

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.

Spread the Word: Invite Another School - 10 points

Give your students the task of helping the KICK Challenge reach more Kansas schools. They can draft an email to a teacher at another school explaining what your class has been working on and why they should join, create a flyer to share with a school you know, or work with your district to feature the KICK Challenge in district-wide communications. Students can reflect on why spreading the word matters for building a bigger impact across the state.

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.

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.

Fast Fashion Awareness - 15 points

Ever wonder where your clothes come from and where they end up? In this challenge students dive into the environmental and social impacts of fast fashion through research, discussion, and student led presentations. Help them connect their own shopping habits to global waste issues and take a closer look at their relationship with clothing.

How to submit: Submit student work, presentation materials, or a photo from the activity along with a brief description of what students explored and what conclusions they reached.

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 Middle School Waste & Recycling Investigation." Your team can share the link and enter data together into the investigation.

Middle School Waste & Recycling Investigation

Cafeteria Waste Investigation- 25 points

Let the investigation begin where the action is; the cafeteria! Use the Middle School Waste & Recycling Waste Investigation to complete the Cafeteria Waste section to guide your class through a hands-on study of all the food and packaging waste generated during school lunch. Use the [bin labels](#) provided for your Cafeteria investigation to help sort and track what is being thrown away. You might be surprised at what you find!

How to submit: Submit any photos and the Waste & 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

How much trash do classrooms create each day? Let us find out! Use the Middle School Waste & Recycling Investigation to complete the Classroom Waste section and guide your students through sorting, weighing, and categorizing waste from multiple classrooms across the school. By collecting data from different rooms they will see a much bigger picture of how much waste classrooms generate each day and just how fast it adds up over an entire 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 Waste section.

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

Whole-School Waste Investigation- 25 points

Ready to take your waste investigation beyond the classroom? Use the High School Waste & Recycling Investigation to complete the Whole School Waste section and expand the learning across your entire building. Student teams explore different areas of the school, from the library to the gym to the main office, and combine their findings to build a complete picture of the waste stream in your building. Then use what you discover to identify opportunities for school wide waste reduction. Where is the most waste coming from? You'll find out!

How to submit: Submit any photos and the Waste & Recycling Investigation by sharing its 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

Start or strengthen a student-led green team at your school. This group can take on KICK challenges, support KGS Investigations, run or improve your school's recycling, and help everyone know what sustainability efforts are happening. The green team follows wherever their interests lead. If you're brand new, focus on recruiting members, assigning jobs that fit each person, and setting real goals for your first year. If your team already exists, your challenge is staying power. Older students leave and new ones need to step in. How will you recruit each year so the group doesn't fade away?

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 recruitment strategy for keeping the group active long term.

Trashless Lunch Exploration - 15 points

What does a low waste lunch actually look like in real life? Start the conversation with students and invite families to weigh in. This is not about buying anything new or fancy. It is about noticing the waste we create and finding small swaps that work for each family. Ideas could be using a reusable water bottle instead of a disposable one, packing snacks in a container you already have instead of a baggie, or skipping the plastic utensil pack by grabbing a fork from home. No wrong way to try it. Every family does what works for them.

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 for classmates instead of throwing it away. Already have one going? We want to hear how it has evolved; what you have noticed, what is working, and any ideas for making it better. Keep it simple. The goal is to keep food out of the trash, not to get it perfect on day one.

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

The Hallway Line Up Challenge - 25 points

Sometimes one visual can make a big impact. Before lunch, place a clean clear bag inside each cafeteria trash can. Double bag it. After one lunch period, gather and tie up every bag. Line them up side by side in a busy hallway. Snap a photo and post it on announcements or social. Add a sign that says "This is one lunch. Where does it go?" Toss the bags after or leave them out for a bit so students walking by can actually see the impact.

Clear it with your custodian and principal first. Let them know you are using clean bags and handling all cleanup yourself.

How to submit: Send us photos of your lineup and tell us how many bags came from one lunch. How many bags your school would create in a full school year of 180 days?

Conversations with Food Service Staff - 15 points

The people who run your cafeteria know it better than anyone. Take some time to set up a meeting with your food service director to understand the challenges your district faces around food waste, packaging, and disposable trays and utensils if those apply to your school. There is a reason those items are used and it may not be what you think. Really listen to what they are up against. Your team can take what you learn and work toward positive waste reduction solutions together.

While you are at it, talk to the food staff at your school. Ask what they notice about food waste on a daily basis, what challenges they deal with, and any changes they would like to see.

How to submit: Write a 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! First, work with your principal and facilities staff to find the best location. Do your research ahead of time so you can answer their questions about smell, pests, and maintenance with real solutions. A prepared team is much more likely to get approval. Check out the [Food Too Good Waste Program](#) for more about composting.

Collect fruit and veggie scraps from lunch instead of sending them to the landfill. Set up a schedule for collection, train student volunteers to monitor the bins, and create signs or announcements to teach everyone how to participate. Learn why this matters. Food waste rotting in a landfill creates methane, but composting turns scraps into nutrient rich material for gardens.

How to submit: Send a photo of your setup and a brief description of how it works. Include who maintains it and how you are educating your school community.

Compost Production & Sales - 15 points

Level up your composting program by packaging and selling finished compost to the community. Students take charge of the whole process. Bag it up with simple labels that say what it is and why it matters. Decide on a price and where to sell. Money raised can fund more sustainability projects at your school or help buy supplies for your composting program.

How to submit: Submit a photo of your compost product and a brief description of how your sales program works and what the proceeds support.

Mentor Another School in Composting or Recycling - 30 points

Your program is up and running. Time to pass it on. Reach out to a neighboring school and help them start or improve their own composting or recycling program. Visit their school or connect virtually and share what's worked for you, walk them through the tricky parts, and help them figure out their own setup. You don't have to be an expert, you just have to be a few steps ahead of them. Bonus points if you create a simple guide or how to handout they can keep.

How to submit: Describe how your mentorship was structured, which school you worked with, and include photos or materials from your sessions.

Classroom Trash Can Reduction - 10 points

Here's a simple question most classrooms never think about: does every trash can in your room actually need to be there? Count the bins in your own classroom, then expand to a few others around the school. What's the average number of cans per room versus how many are actually needed? Take a classroom with three bins. If two would do the job, that's one plastic bag saved every day. Add that across a few classrooms and it adds up fast. Already made this change? Tell us how your routine has held up or what you've improved since you started.

How to submit: Share your observations and results. Bin count before and after any changes you made. Any future plans to reduce waste even more.

Launch or Expand a School Recycling Program - 30 points

Not every community has the same recycling options, so start local. Have students survey what's available. Is there curbside pickup? A drop-off center? Does your school district already have a recycling partnership? Do some digging. Use what you find to either start a new program or strengthen the one your school already has. Set up clearly labeled bins, build a collection schedule that works for your custodian or green team for collection. If no recycling service exists nearby, get creative. Can you partner with a local business that recycles? Can you educate families about drop-off options?

How to submit: Submit photos of your recycling setup and a brief description of how your program is organized, including student roles and what recycling options you found available in your area.

School Grounds Cleanup - 15 points

Your school grounds are used every single day and they deserve some attention. Organize a cleanup with students, staff, or families and tackle the litter that builds up outside. If recycling is available in your area, separate recyclables from trash as you go.

How to submit: Submit a photo of the bags collected along with a brief summary of how much was gathered, what surprised your team, and what you learned from the experience.

Neighborhood Cleanup & Storm Drain Awareness- 25 points

A neighborhood cleanup looks different depending on where your school sits. In town it might mean sidewalks and storm drains. In the country it could be gravel roads, ditches, or a nearby creek. The goal is the same either way: every piece of litter left on the ground is headed somewhere, and that somewhere is usually the nearest waterway. Storm drains, roadside ditches, and creeks all feed into rivers that supply our drinking water and provide habitat for fish and wildlife. Cleanup isn't just about making things look nicer, it's about protecting water quality and keeping our rivers safe for recreation. Organize a cleanup of the area around your school, paying attention to where water flows. Then create awareness materials to help your school and community understand the connection between litter on land and pollution in our water.

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

Holidays come with extra waste, and each holiday has its own kind. Easter brings plastic eggs and candy wrappers. Christmas brings wrapping paper, ribbons, and strings of lights that don't work that end up in the trash. Halloween costumes and candy packaging pile up fast. Pick a high-waste holiday and design a seasonal awareness event or challenge that helps your school community plan ahead. The goal is to educate people before the holiday so they can make better choices from the start. Examples include organizing a holiday light drop-off for e-waste recycling, or challenging students and staff to wrap gifts in reusable or recyclable materials.

How to submit: Submit photos from your event or a brief description of what students did and how it helped reduce holiday waste.

E-Waste Collection or Awareness Campaign - 15 points

Help students tackle the growing problem of electronic waste. Old phones, tablets, and computers contain materials that can harm the environment if tossed in the trash, but many families don't know where to take them. Your class can research where those items safely go in their community and organize a community e-waste collection event, create and distribute educational materials showing local drop off options and what can be recycled, or launch a full student led awareness campaign using morning announcements, posters and the school newsletter to reach the broader school community. Students can track how many devices are collected or how many people receive their message.

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 Collection or Awareness Campaign- 15 points

Help students explore what happens to old tires and why it matters. Waste tires can harm the environment by taking up space in landfills, becoming breeding grounds for mosquitoes, and creating fire hazards. Your class can host a tire collection event in partnership with a local waste district or recycler, or run an awareness campaign that teaches the community about proper tire disposal options in your area. Students can make posters, social media posts, or a map showing where to drop off tires safely.

How to submit: Submit photos from the event or campaign and a brief description of what was collected or how the community was engaged.

Hard-to-Recycle Collection Drive- 25 points

Plastic film, snack wrappers, old markers and many other items are often hard to recycle. That's where specialty programs come in. Trex turns plastic grocery bags and bread bags into composite decking. TerraCycle runs free recycling programs for all kinds of hard-to-recycle items. Set up a school collection point for one or two items that your regular recycling doesn't cover. Research and pick a program, get a bin or box, label it clearly, and start collecting. If your school already has a collection going, share how it's grown or what you've added this year to keep the momentum going.

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

Donation Drive - 20 points

Textile waste is one of the fastest-growing parts of the waste stream, and most of it could be reused or donated. Organize a clothing swap or donation drive at your school to keep gently used apparel out of the landfill. For a swap, have students bring in clean clothes they've outgrown and let classmates take what they can use. For a donation drive, set up a collection bin, promote it with flyers or morning announcements, and donate everything to a local organization. Keep track of how many items come in so you can see your impact. Already have a clothes partnership or donation program in place at your school or district? This challenge can focus on spreading the word by creating signage, a social media blast, or a school-wide announcement letting everyone know where to drop off and what's accepted.

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

Waste Reduction Partnership with Local Restaurants - 25 points

Partner with a local restaurant to take on single use plastic straw waste and make a real dent in your community's footprint. Your approach can be creative; educate customers with posters near the soda station, help supply and sell reusable straws as a school fundraiser, or work with the restaurant to switch to an ask first policy instead of automatically dropping straws in every drink. Don't stop at straws either: ask if the restaurant can collect the crayons they hand out to kids and set up a donation system with a local early childhood center, church, or after school program. Your class gets hands on experience with community partnership, waste reduction, and seeing that one conversation can start a ripple effect.

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 Art from Unrecyclable Materials - 15 points

Not everything can be recycled. Bottle caps and Styrofoam are great examples. These are items that often end up in the trash because there's no easy way to recycle them. But they can still have a second life. Challenge your students to collect unrecyclable materials and transform them into a collaborative work of art. A mosaic, a sculpture, a wall hanging, whatever fits your group. The goal is

to show that creativity can find a home for materials our waste system can't handle. Display the finished piece in a visible spot and let it spark conversations about what we throw away and whether there's a better option.

How to submit: Submit a photo of the finished artwork along with a label or description explaining what materials were used, why they were chosen, and the date it was started and completed.

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose Projects - 15 points

The waste hierarchy is more than a slogan. It's a decision-making tool that helps us think through our choices before we make them. Refuse things you don't need. Reduce what you do use. Reuse items instead of tossing them. Repurpose materials into something new. Recycle what's left. Break students into teams and assign each team one tier of the waste hierarchy: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, or Repurpose. A Refuse team could create a skit about turning down plastic utensils at lunch. A Reduce team could design a poster campaign about buying in bulk instead of individual packages. A Reuse team could host a swap day for old books, clothes, or school supplies. A Repurpose team could build a model showing how to turn egg cartons into seed starters or bottle caps into jewelry.

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

Environmental Education Activities - 15 points

Take recycling and waste concepts beyond the basics with hands-on activities that get students thinking. Run a recycling relay with tricky items that force students to sort beyond the obvious — pouches, straws, greasy pizza boxes. Explore the aluminum lifecycle by calculating how much energy is saved when you recycle one can versus mining and refining new aluminum. The key is making abstract environmental ideas feel real and measurable. 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.

School Waste Awareness Campaign - 20 points

Put your students in charge of educating the whole school community about waste. They can design eye catching sustainability posters that tackle common recycling mistakes, take turns writing and delivering weekly intercom announcements with waste tips and fun facts, create a student produced recycling guide that gets shared with every classroom, or run a social media push with posts tagged #KeepItCleanKansas. The campaign should be student led from start to finish; they decide the message, the audience, and how to get people's attention. Extra fun for making it interactive like trivia over the intercom, a poster contest between grade levels or other engaging ideas.

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

Give your students a chance to be advocates for the environment by writing to a real decision-maker. They can craft persuasive letters to a school board member about adding more recycling bins or starting a compost program, an opinion piece for the school newspaper or local paper about a waste issue they care about, or a letter to an elected official encouraging them to support a local environmental initiative. The assignment is real; it gets sent, mailed, or published, not just turned in for a grade. Students learn that their words and research can actually move the needle.

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

Challenge your students to write, film, and edit a short educational video about waste, composting, or recycling. They can create a mini documentary exploring where the school's waste goes, a how to guide for proper sorting that other classes can use, a comedy sketch with a message, or a persuasive piece encouraging students to pack trashless lunches. The goal is making something that educates and entertains; something other middle schoolers will actually want to watch. Videos can be shared schoolwide and submitted for the KICK Challenge.

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

Total Points: 700

34 Challenges



Sponsored by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment

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