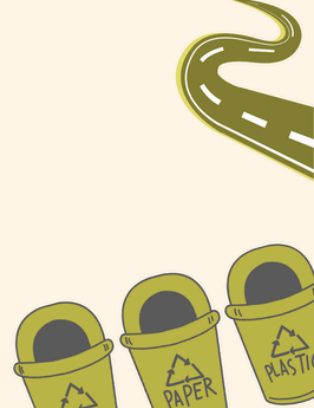




KICK challenge

KEEP IT CLEAN, KANSAS!



High School (9th-12th Grade) Challenges

UNDERSTAND / INVESTIGATE / ACTION

Get Registered for the KICK Challenge- 10 points

Before you can start submitting challenges and racking up points, your school needs to be registered on the KICK Dashboard. This is where you'll track your progress, see how your school stacks up, and submit completed challenges. Have a teacher, administrator, or student leadership team get your school registered so you're officially in the game.

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

You see the garbage trucks every week, but do you know where that trash actually goes? Take your class to a local landfill, recycling facility, or waste collection center, or join a virtual tour if an in-person visit won't work. Your mission is to trace the full waste journey from your school's hallways to its final destination in your own area. What happens to your recycling in your community? Is it processed locally or shipped somewhere else? How long before that plastic bottle or aluminum can actually break down? Seeing it with your own eyes changes the way you think about what you toss.

How to submit: Time to show your work by submitting a photo of your class during the field trip or virtual visit. Include a brief write-up of one key thing students learned, including where local trash goes and what recycling options exist in your community, whether that's curbside pickup, a drop-off center, a transfer station, or whatever fits your town. Finally, send the total number of students and adults who participated.

Teacher Professional Development in Environmental Education - 40 points

Teachers, here's a chance to earn points for your school while strengthening your own environmental education practice. Attend a KDHE endorsed conference such as the [Kansas Environmental Education Conference](#) or the [Be the Change eeCredential](#), with graduate credit available. Bring what you learn back to your classroom and colleagues. Already finished the Be the Change eeCredential? Any qualifying [KACEE professional learning](#) offering counts too.

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 dive into Kansas Green School opportunities and get personalized support for your KICK Challenge. The session can be just you or include your students working on the challenge. Join the [KGS Network](#) and subscribe to the [KACEE Newsletter](#) to stay in the loop on resources, networking, and recognition.

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

Let your students act as ambassadors for the KICK Challenge. Challenge them to create a compelling outreach message to a teacher or administrator at another school, sharing what your school has accomplished and inviting them to participate. They can design a flyer, record a short video invitation, or craft an email that highlights why waste education matters and how easy it is to get started. If you're in a district, students can also work with administration to get the KICK Challenge featured in district communications to reach multiple schools at once.

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.

Fast Fashion Awareness - 15 points

Fast fashion is one of the biggest contributors to global waste and this challenge gets students thinking critically about it. Through research, discussion, and student-led presentations they will explore the environmental and social impacts of the clothing industry, examine their own consumption habits, and consider what a more sustainable wardrobe could look like.

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.

High School Waste & Recycling Investigation

Cafeteria Waste Investigation- 25 points

The cafeteria is one of the biggest sources of waste in any school, so let us dig in! Use the High School Waste & Recycling Waste Investigation to complete the Cafeteria Waste section to walk your class through a structured study of the food and packaging waste generated during lunch. Be sure to use the [bin labels](#) provided for your Cafeteria investigation to properly sort and track everything. Here is the thing; collecting data from just one day can give your students a powerful estimate of how much waste is thrown away in a single school year. That kind of perspective turns data into action.

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 High 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 a variety of rooms they will get a much more accurate picture of daily classroom waste and how quickly it adds up over a full school year. Then challenge them to think critically about where the waste is coming from and brainstorm real solutions to cut it down.

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

Use the Whole-School Waste Investigation module to take your learning beyond the classroom. Instead of one class looking at the same things, have student teams fan out across the building — cafeteria, hallways, offices, art rooms, locker rooms, outdoor areas. Each team investigates a different zone, then comes back together to combine your data. The goal? Build a complete, honest picture of your school's waste stream and identify the biggest opportunities for real waste reduction school-wide.

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 CafeteriaWaste Investigation, the Classroom Waste Investigation, and the Whole School Waste Investigation — along with a set of background questions to earn full recognition for the Waste and Recycling Investigation. Each investigation can be submitted individually for a badge, but completing all three unlocks the full award. This KICK Challenge helps you get a running start on completing the Waste and Recycling Investigation and earning Level 1 Recognition with the [Kansas Green Schools Program](#).

And there is more to explore. Kansas Green Schools offers five distinct investigation areas. The Healthy School Environment investigation examines school health, indoor and outdoor air quality, and integrated pest management best practices. The Learning Community investigation looks at school gardens, pollinator habitats, tree canopy, and the school grounds as a learning environment. Energy investigates where your school uses the most energy and explores the true cost of powering and lighting the building. Water explores water quality and conservation in your school and surrounding community. And Waste and Recycling investigates your school's waste stream and waste reduction strategies. Complete two or more Green School Investigations to earn 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 the engine that keeps sustainability moving at your school year after year. Your group can coordinate KICK challenges, support the completion of KGS Investigations, manage recycling, and raise awareness about sustainability efforts happening on campus. The team follows its own interests. If you are starting fresh, recruit your founding members, give everyone a real role, and map out your first year of goals. If you are reconvening an existing team, the real work is sustainability of the team itself. Seniors graduate, juniors need to step up, freshmen need to be welcomed in. Build a plan for recruiting new members every year so your team's knowledge and momentum doesn't walk out the door with a diploma.

How to submit: Submit a photo of your team, a list of members and their roles, and a brief description of what you will work on this year. If reconvening, include your recruitment strategy for keeping the team active long term.

Trashless Lunch Exploration - 15 points

What does a low waste lunch look like in real life? Get students thinking and invite families into the conversation. This is about working with what you have and finding easy swaps that fit your routine. Ideas might include using a reusable water bottle instead of a disposable one, packing snacks in washable containers you already own, skipping single-use utensils, or wrapping a sandwich in a cloth napkin. Every student gets to choose what works for them. No pressure; just progress.

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 to grab instead of sending it to the landfill. Already have one running? Tell us how it has evolved; what you have noticed, what is working, and what changes you are thinking about. No need for fancy systems. A simple bin that keeps food out of the trash is a success.

How to submit: Snap a photo of your share bin in action and explain how it works: what goes in, where it is located, how students access it. Also 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 and take the lead! Before you begin, meet with your principal and facilities staff. Do your research so you can answer their questions about smell, pests, maintenance, and location with real solutions. A well prepared proposal makes all the difference. Check out the [Food Too Good Waste Program](#) for more about composting.

Once approved, own the system. Design how food scraps will be collected in the cafeteria. Set up a maintenance schedule. Train volunteers. Track how many pounds of waste you divert each week. And dig into the science. Food rotting in a landfill creates methane, a greenhouse gas about 80 times more powerful than carbon dioxide. Composting stops that and turns your lunch scraps into nutrient rich material for school gardens or local community gardens.

How to submit: Submit a photo of your composting setup and a written description of how it works, who maintains it, what educational efforts you made, and any data you collected on waste diverted.

Compost Production & Sales - 15 points

Turn your compost into a small business! Students manage everything from production to sales. Package it in bags with labels that include care instructions and the story behind your program. Research pricing, pick sales locations or school events, and track your revenue. Proceeds can support your school's sustainability efforts, buy new equipment, or fund other green projects you want to start.

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

You've built something that works. Now multiply it. Formalize your knowledge and mentor a neighboring school through the same process. Work with your principal and their admin to set up the partnership if you need making a connection. Visit their school in person or virtually, assess where they're at, give them a step by step plan, and help them troubleshoot their first few weeks. Create materials they can keep. A checklist, a signage template, a FAQ based on the questions you got when you started. The whole point is making it easier for the next school than it was for you. That's how a good idea turns into a movement.

How to submit: Submit a description of how your mentorship was structured, which school you worked with, and photos or materials from the sessions.

Classroom Trash Can Reduction - 10 points

Most classrooms have more trash cans than they need. Each one gets a plastic bag emptied every night, often with just a few items inside. Do an investigation of your own classroom, then expand to others around the school. Collect the real data. How many bins per room? How full are they? If a room consistently has three bins that are never all full, cutting to two is a better option. One fewer bag per room per day adds up fast across a whole school. Present your findings to your principal and custodial staff. Already a returning team on this? Share how your system has refined over time.

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

Start with the facts. Have students investigate what recycling options exist in their community. Contact your city or county, talk to local haulers, research online and nearby drop-off centers. From there, launch a new program or strengthen an existing one. Design clear signage, set a collection schedule that works with your green team or custodial team, and assign student-run roles. Collection teams, contamination inspectors, outreach coordinators who teach other students what goes where. If there is no recycling option near you, focus on an advocacy or creative campaign for what could change.

How to submit: Submit photos of your recycling setup and a brief description of how your program is organized, including student roles and how your community's recycling options shaped your approach.

School Grounds Cleanup - 15 points

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

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

Trash doesn't disappear just because you can't see it anymore. Whether your school is in the middle of town or surrounded by farmland, litter on the ground eventually finds its way to a storm drain, a ditch, or the nearest creek. From there it travels downstream into rivers that provide our drinking water, support fish and wildlife, and give us places to swim, paddle, and fish. The connection between how we treat the land and the health of our water is direct and immediate. Organize a cleanup of the area around your school with an eye on where water flows. Look for storm drains, roadside ditches, culverts, and waterways near your property. Find the paths litter takes and explore why picking it up matters far beyond your school grounds. Then extend your impact by creating educational materials that explain this connection to your school and the broader 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

Every holiday leaves a waste footprint, and the types of waste shift throughout the year. Plastic eggs and candy packaging after Easter. Wrapping paper, bows, and ribbons after Christmas that can't be recycled. Broken holiday lights full of copper and glass that belong in e-waste recycling, not the trash. Pick a high-waste holiday and design an awareness event or challenge that educates your school community on what can be reduced, reused, or recycled before the holiday arrives. One example is a holiday light e-waste collection event. The key is timing; help people plan ahead rather than clean up after.

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

E-Waste Collection or Awareness Campaign - 15 points

Challenge students to address the fast growing problem of electronic waste in their community. Many people don't realize that old laptops, phones, tablets, and small appliances contain toxic materials like lead and mercury that can leach into soil and water when thrown away. 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 social media, morning announcements, and posters 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

Challenge students to tackle the issue of waste tire disposal in their community. Old tires are bulky, hard to dispose of, and can create environmental hazards from leaching chemicals to providing mosquito habitat. Your class can organize a community tire collection event with a local recycling partner or waste management facility, or design and launch an education campaign that informs the public about proper disposal and the environmental impacts of illegal dumping. Students can research tire recycling options in the area, create data driven content, and measure how many tires or how many people they reached.

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

The recycling system handles the basics like paper, cardboard, aluminum, certain plastics, but there's a long list of everyday items that technically can be recycled if you know where to send them. Plastic film to Trex. Snack wrappers, coffee pods, and contact lens cases to TerraCycle. Batteries and electronics to local drop-off sites. The barrier isn't the material, it's the logistics. Your job is to solve that for your school community. Research and set up a collection point for at least one hard-to-recycle material and partner with the right program to make sure it gets where it needs to go. If your school already runs a collection drive, show how the routine has evolved, what you've added, or what you've learned since starting.

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

The average American throws away about 80 pounds of clothing every year, most of which could have been donated, swapped, or repurposed. Host a clothing swap or donation drive to give gently used apparel a second life. A swap keeps items local and lets students refresh their wardrobe without spending money. Consider a dress swap around homecoming or prom season where students can trade formalwear instead of buying new. A donation drive channels clothes to a local shelter, thrift store, or textile recycler. Promote the event, set a collection timeline, and count the items that come in to measure your impact. If your school already has a clothing partnership or donation program, focus this challenge on awareness. Create a school wide campaign showing where to drop off clothes, what's accepted, and why keeping textiles out of landfills matters.

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

This challenge puts you in the driver's seat of a real community waste reduction initiative. Partner with one or more local restaurants to tackle single use plastic straw waste; you choose the strategy. Design educational materials for customers, research and supply reusable or paper straw alternatives the restaurant can offer, run a reusable straw sale as a fundraiser that also spreads awareness, or negotiate a policy shift where straws are given only on request rather than by default. Level it up by adding a crayon collection component: work with restaurants that hand out crayons to kids and set up a regular donation pipeline to early childhood centers, church nurseries, or Head Start programs in your area. Track the estimated reduction in straw use and pounds of crayons diverted from landfills. This is community organizing with a measurable outcome.

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

Hard-to-recycle materials are a gap in our waste system, and they pile up fast. Bottle caps, plastic six-pack rings, Styrofoam, worn-out shoes and other odds and ends. Most people toss them without a second thought. Collect these materials and turn them into collaborative art that makes people stop and think. A large-scale installation, a mosaic, a sculpture, or a mixed-media piece that puts these materials on display. The piece should do more than look interesting. It should invite questions about consumption, waste, and how we might design materials differently. Display your work where the school community can see it and let the art do the talking.

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.

School Waste Awareness Campaign - 20 points

Challenge your students to plan and execute a full waste awareness campaign that reaches the entire school community. They can design professional looking sustainability posters that use data to make an impact, write and deliver weekly intercom announcements that rotate through different waste topics like recycling guidelines, composting basics, the impact of food waste, or even fast fashion. Students could produce a comprehensive student recycling guide that gets distributed digitally or run a coordinated social media campaign using #KeepItCleanKansas with posts that are informative, shareable, and trackable. The campaign should have a clear goal; whether it's reducing contamination in recycling bins, increasing compost participation, or getting more students to pack trashless lunches, they should be able to point to results. This is real world communications and community education work.

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.

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose Projects - 15 points

The waste hierarchy asks harder questions: Do I need this at all? Can I borrow instead of buy? Can I fix instead of replace? Break students into four teams and assign each a tier: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, or Repurpose. Each team researches their tier and creates a hands-on project to teach others. A Refuse team could make a poster challenging classmates to say no to one single-use item like straws for a week. A Reduce team could pick one item everyone uses like plastic water bottles and count how many get thrown away in one day, then hang a sign showing that number with a note about using less. A Reuse team could organize a small swap table at lunch for trading old books or school supplies. A Repurpose team could turn plastic bags into something useful like a tote, showing a before and after.

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

Get students thinking critically about waste and the systems behind it with hands-on activities that connect to real world impact. Run a waste sorting challenge with hard to recycle items and household hazardous waste: batteries, light bulbs, electronics so students learn where the tricky stuff goes. Map the full aluminum lifecycle from bauxite mining to can to can recycling and have students calculate the energy, water, and carbon savings. Or create a reduce, reuse, replace design challenge where students reimagine a common school or household item to be less wasteful from the start. The goal is connecting classroom learning to the choices students make every day. Not sure where to start? Incorporate environmental education lessons straight into your classroom. 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.

Student Voice on Sustainability- 25 points

Challenge your students to use research, persuasion, and real world writing to make their voices heard on an environmental issue they care about. They can write a formal letter or present to a school board member, city council representative, state legislator, or member of Congress making a clear, evidence-based case for a specific waste-reduction or sustainability policy. Or they can write an opinion piece or article for the school newspaper, a community blog, or the local paper that informs and persuades the broader community. The key requirement: it must be sent to the intended audience or submitted for publication. This is civic engagement in action; students see that their voice, backed by facts, is a tool for real change.

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

Students take on the role of producers and storytellers to create a short film focused on waste, composting, or recycling. They can produce a mini documentary investigating the school's waste stream with interviews and data, a public service announcement with a call to action, a creative short film that makes an environmental theme relatable, or an instructional video that could be used as an educational resource in younger grade classrooms. The project should demonstrate research, planning, and clear communication. Videos can be shared with the school and surrounding community and submitted for the KICK Challenge.

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

Total Points: 700

34 Challenges



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