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## **SANITATION DISTRICTS OF L.A. COUNTY TEAMS UP WITH GRADES OF GREEN FOR SECOND YEAR TO REDUCE TRASH PRODUCED BY SCHOOLS**

Whittier, CA—Normally, an 82% cutback would not be cause for celebration in L.A. County schools.

But this year, an 82% reduction is actually a goal. It's the benchmark to beat for the second annual "Trash-Free Lunch Challenge," a waste-reduction program sponsored by the Sanitation Districts of L.A. County (Sanitation Districts) and national non-profit group Grades of Green.

"We are excited to be part of this worthwhile effort for a second year," said Grace Robinson Chan Sanitation Districts Chief Engineer and General Manager. "Last year's participating schools averaged an 81% reduction in lunchtime trash to landfills. We're hoping this year's schools will do even better."

This year's contest is expected to divert more than ten thousand bags of trash from area landfills and save schools thousands of dollars in supplies and trash hauler fees. But it also aims to teach kids better habits that will protect the environment in the years to come.

"The goal of the program is to not only reduce waste at schools, but to educate kids, hoping they'll develop the habits of reducing, reusing, recycling and composting for a lifetime," said Lisa Coppedge, Grades of Green Co-director.

Participating schools will ask students to bring lunches that eliminate trash by using reusable lunch containers, reusable water bottles and cloth napkins. All students, including those who buy lunch, will sort waste into recycling and composting.

Any school within the Sanitation Districts' service area is eligible to participate. (Schools with existing trash-free lunch programs are not eligible.) The first 16 schools to register will receive an Eco Tool Kit and professional consultation worth more than \$2,500. All schools must register at [www.gradesofgreen.org/trashchallenge](http://www.gradesofgreen.org/trashchallenge) by September 14, 2012 and complete implementation of the Trash Free Lunch program by March 15, 2013.

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A panel of environmental experts and other judges will evaluate the implementation and success of three finalists' programs. The winning school will receive a Grand Prize of a \$1,000 science grant. The second- and third-place schools will receive \$750 and \$500, respectively.

The Sanitation Districts are a regional agency consisting of 23 independent special districts serving over 5.4 million people in 78 cities and unincorporated territory within Los Angeles County. The Sanitation Districts protect public health and the environment through innovative and cost-effective wastewater and solid waste management, and in doing so convert waste into resources such as reclaimed water, energy, and recycled materials.

Grades of Green is a national non-profit organization that aims to educate, inspire, and empower students and the broader school community to care for and improve the environment. It offers free instruction for making schools greener on its website, [www.gradesofgreen.org](http://www.gradesofgreen.org). Anyone who wants to implement sustainability programs can register their schools online—at no cost—to get tips on reducing trash, emissions, and harmful classroom chemicals, plus dozens of other ways to help the environment.

Grades of Green has been honored with many awards, including the U.S. EPA's prestigious Environmental Award. Grades of Green is growing rapidly, with more than 73,000 students in 21 states enrolled. Its goal is to enroll thousands of schools with millions of kids—all caring for the environment and collectively making a huge impact. For more information on Grades of Green visit [www.gradesofgreen.org](http://www.gradesofgreen.org) or contact Nicole Sevier at 310-938-0974. For more information on the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County, contact Rupam Soni at 562-908-4288, ext. 2303.

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