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Grades of Green, an Organization After My Own Heart

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I never would have come up with neat-os if we were still living in Berkeley. When you live in the Bay Area you know you live in a bubble, you just don't know how big that bubble is until you leave.

When my kids started their new school a week after we moved to LA, they came home from school with all kinds of questions about lunch. First was the food. Turns out LAUSD cafeteria food is not something you want your kids to eat; a far cry from the salad bar they came from. Then they couldn't find the recycle or compost bins in the lunch area, which they had been so well trained to use starting the first week of Kindergarten.

This is really surprising to me, not because I expected it to be like Berkeley, but because I thought I read in the school handbook something about a waste free lunch policy. So I went to visit and help my girls negotiate the lunch area. They were right! All the recycle bins were hidden to a corner of the yard, and there was not a green bin to be found. Did I read the policy wrong? Was it that there weren't enough green alternatives for packing lunch? Was it that families just didn't care? Or was it that everyone just didn't know what to do or how to do it?

These questions (and a few other reasons like my hate of waste and swearing not to buy another plastic baggie) started me on the neat-os path. In my original conception of neat-os, there was an education piece that went along with the bag sales. I imagined a presentation to schools explaining about waste, landfills, and reusables. This presentation was followed by a fundraising drive for the school selling neat-os. I thought it was brilliant! Then the reality of designing a product and starting a manufacturing business quickly consumed me. I realized running an education program would be too much to take on all at once.

Then the perfect thing happened, I discovered [Grades of Green](#), (actually someone emailed my husband about them upon hearing about neat-os). Anyway, I soon learned more and more about them and decided it was the perfect solution. Grades of Green is already doing very successfully what I imagined — they are teaching schools, kids, families environmental education, and they are local. After talking to them, wanting to get involved, I was more than thrilled to become a sponsor of their [Trash Free Lunch Challenge](#)!

I am so proud to be a Grades of Green sponsor! They are taking on the massive task of implementing environmental educational programs at schools and doing it thoughtfully, creatively and successfully! Their work is no longer just local, they are helping schools across the nation. Grades of Green teaches schools not just about trash-free lunch, but about the impact we all have in all our actions from walking to school to turning off the lights. They have [five initiatives](#) one for each day of the week and over 40 activities schools can participate in. If your child's school could use a little help in this arena, check them out, they have it down!

Next week is Grades of Green's annual Fundraiser, VERTE 2013! This fundraiser will allow them to continue growing, adding more schools, and mostly encouraging more children to learn, get involved and become stewards of their planet's future. If you are interested it's not too late to attend — and you can always [donate](#)!

Tags: [environmental education](#), [Grades of Green](#), [trash free lunch challenge](#), [verte 2013](#)