



The Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County celebrates the achievements of some of the participants in the Trash Free Lunch Challenge. The program by the non-profit Grades of Green and sponsored by organizations such as the Sanitation Districts pits Southern California schools against each other in a battle to reduce waste. Twenty area schools will together reduce our landfills by over 300 tons this year. The winning school receives a \$1,000 education grant.

GRADES OF GREEN

Environmental Education Non-Profit

Twenty Southern California schools are on track this year to reduce our landfills by over 300 tons due to the Trash Free Lunch Challenge! The challenge is held exclusively between Southern California schools and hosted by Grades of Green, an environmental education non-profit. Over the course of the year, each school competes with the rest of the state to see who can reduce their footprint on the Earth the most. One of the most recent champions, Lindbergh STEM Academy of Long Beach, was able to eliminate their waste at an impressive rate of 92%. The winning school is rewarded with not only a prize of a \$1,000 education grant but more eco-conscious students.

"Grades of Green's goal ... instill[s] environmental and waste reduction habits that will stay with students for a lifetime."

Allie Bussjaeger
 Director of Regional Programs
 Grades of Green

Grades of Green provides the participating schools with educational material, 40+ eco-activities, and their own personal Grades of Green advisor at no cost to the school. One of the essential tools used to foster success is the lunch preparation class. Students learn a multitude of green skills such as packing trash-free lunches, by replacing

disposable materials with reusable receptacles. Even the students buying their lunches benefit by learning the importance of separating their waste into the appropriate categories.

Sanitation Districts' Chief Engineer and General Manager Grace Hyde stated, "The goal of the Trash Free Lunch Challenge is not only to reduce waste but also to teach children how to reuse, recycle and compost. Educating students through programs such as these furthers our mission of converting waste into resources in the communities we serve."

Several California businesses, including The Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County, are recognizing the importance of such programs and are showing their green support by sponsoring the Trash Free Lunch Challenge. Sponsors include the City of Santa Monica, LUSH, Northrop Grumman, Los Angeles County 3rd district, Los Angeles County 4th District, Carton Council, and the Johnson Ohana Foundation.

The Director of Regional Programs at Grades of Green, Allie Bussjaeger said, "Grades of Green's goal with our Trash Free Lunch Challenge is to help participating schools start lasting green programs to instill environmental and waste reduction habits that will stay with students for a lifetime."

With over 550 different schools and over 450,000 students nationwide participating in the green school movement, Grades of Green is arguably achieving that goal. The last seven years has brought about success by way of 117 Trash Free Lunch Challenge schools diverting 2,300 tons of waste! That's almost 340 industrial dumpsters worth of trash being eliminated by these proud students. Bussjaeger states, "We are changing the course of the future by making environmental protection second nature in young minds today."

