

Three Saugus District schools join Trash Free Lunch competition

By Christina Cox

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FILE PHOTO: Bridgeport Elementary students present the results of their recycling program to judges from Grades for Green on Tuesday, March 28, 2017. Katharine Lotze/The Signal

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Three elementary schools in the Saugus Union School District (SUSD) will show off their recycling and sustainability skills during the seventh annual Grades of Green’s Trash Free Lunch Challenge.

Tomorrow, Skyblue Mesa Elementary School, Charles Helmers Elementary School and Emblem Academy will compete against each other and other Southern California schools to see which one can reduce the most lunchtime waste.

Through the competition, students learn environmental habits and how to reduce waste by packing lunches with containers, reusable water bottles, utensils and cloth napkins. Students also learn how to sort waste for recycling and composting.



regional programs at Grades of Green.

In addition to using reusable containers, students will participate in educational assemblies, receive personalized eco-starter kits, implement waste reduction plans and work with Grades of Green Advisors.

Skyblue's, Helmers' and Emblem's participation in the event marks the second year SUSD schools competed in the Trash Free Lunch Challenge.

[Last year](#), Bridgeport Elementary School and North Park Elementary School both succeeded in the program when Northpark received an award for "Best Student Leadership" and Bridgeport was named [one of three finalists](#) in the elementary division.

This year, 22 Southern California schools—including three in SUSD—are hoping to have the same success during the seventh annual competition.

Grades of Green expects that the schools will reduce more than 300 tons of trash during the yearlong challenge.

Following the students' trash reduction efforts, a panel of environmental experts will evaluate the implementation and success of the three finalists' trash reduction programs.

The panel will then chose one winning school in the elementary school division and middle school division which will each receive a \$1,000 grant to continue its sustainability efforts.

"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," said Grace Hyde, the Sanitation Districts' chief engineer and general manager. "Educating students through programs such as these furthers our mission of converting waste into resources in the communities we serve."

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