

## Schools find savings by wasting less money on waste



School districts across the country are finding it difficult to balance their budgets. One place some schools can find savings is in their garbage dumpsters. Schools throw away a lot of stuff, and most of it is food and disposable items from their lunchrooms and kitchens. And getting rid of that stuff costs a lot of money.

Through the Food to Flowers (F2F) program, all K-12 schools in Thurston County have a unique resource to help them tap into the cash in their trash by getting the assistance they need to implement successful waste prevention, recycling, and composting programs. This assistance includes help covering the capital costs required to get these kinds of programs started including milk dispensers, durable flatware, and recycling collection containers.

By partnering with the F2F program and involving the entire school community in planning and implementing these changes, schools can realize significant savings. Here are a few examples:

- **Tumwater High School** – Started kitchen and lunchroom recycling and composting program – Annual savings of 30% or \$6,300 in total garbage and recycling costs.
- **Washington Middle School** – Replaced milk cartons with a milk dispenser and durable cups - Annual savings of \$870 a year in electricity and recycling collection costs.
- **Yelm School District** - Replaced spork kits with individually dispensed napkins and plastic sporks at six elementary schools - Annual savings of 25% or about \$2,800 a year.

### **Other benefits**

Food to Flowers is hands-on environmental education and helps schools realize benefits that go beyond just saving money. These include:

- Creating leadership opportunities for students and providing them the opportunity to learn how to become more responsible citizens and environmental stewards.
- Providing teachers the opportunity to integrate recycling and composting into their curriculum.
- Changing behavior at home based on what students learn at school. These changes include packing less wasteful lunches and signing up for curbside compost collection for their household yard and food waste.

Although there are compelling educational, environmental, and financial reasons for schools to prevent waste and recycle and compost more, some schools - given all of the other demands that are made on them – are not ready to implement and sustain a comprehensive F2F program. However, even if your school is only ready to take small steps at this time, like improving your current paper recycling program, F2F staff can help you get started.

To learn more about how your school can partner with the F2F program to reduce waste and save money, visit [www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/FoodtoFlowers](http://www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/FoodtoFlowers). You can also contact Peter Guttchen at [guttchp@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:guttchp@co.thurston.wa.us) or 360-867-2283.

### Results as of October, 2012

Participating Schools:

*Click to see [List](#) or [Map](#)*

**32 Schools**

Participating Students:

**14,725 Students**

Solid waste diverted from landfill each year:

**169 tons**

Average lunchroom recycling rate:

**89%**

Number of spork kits eliminated each year:

**2,740,140 kits**

### Quick Links



[Classroom Presentations](#)

[WA Green Schools](#)

[Waste Free Lunches](#)

