

Case Study: Manhattan Beach USD



“Through this partnership, we are teaching tomorrow’s leaders the importance of responsible environmental protection, which, in itself, is invaluable.”

Richard Montgomery
Mayor Pro Tempore
Manhattan Beach, California

School District Partnership Leads to Measureable Waste Reduction

Schools use expert instructors to teach students such academic subjects as history, mathematics, science and literature. But when it comes to everyday challenges such as waste reduction and recycling, school districts often need their own instructors to help them meet their goals.

Manhattan Beach, California, is an upscale community on the Pacific Coast just south of Los Angeles. Although the city has a long history of environmental activism, its schools were generating too much waste. In 2007, a group of concerned parents brought this situation to the School District’s attention, and the District, in turn, looked to the city’s primary waste services provider, Waste Management, for guidance.

Waste Management and its Sustainability Solutions team performed an audit of five elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. Finding numerous opportunities for improvement, it created sustainability programs tailored to address each school’s strengths and weaknesses.

Key to the success of each plan was that day-to-day oversight would come from the District, school staff, parent volunteers and students, with assistance

from Waste Management for collection and transportation, and the city only as required.

Started in 2008 throughout the Manhattan Beach Unified School District, Waste Management’s school-based waste and recycling plan quickly gained momentum. Parent volunteers launched a new non-profit organization ‘Grades of Green’ to engage the whole school community with programs like “Trashless Tuesdays” and “Walk to School Wednesdays.” Working together, kids, parents and school staff were able to produce measurable results. Some examples include:

- School and classroom participation reached a full 100%.
- From 2008-2009, recycling throughout the District increased 23%.
- One school, Grand Elementary, decreased solid waste volume 95% during its “Trashless Tuesdays,” often producing just two bags of waste for 700 students.
- A program aimed at minimizing electricity consumption produced savings of 17% in just one month, with an annual estimated savings of more than \$150,000.

The Manhattan Beach Unified School District Waste and Recycling Program, ‘Grades of Green,’ and the city of Manhattan Beach together received both the U.S. Conference of Mayors Award for successful public/private partnerships and a 2009 EPA Environmental Award.

The ongoing public/private partnership between Waste Management and the School District has resulted in a sustainable, collaborative effort that has enabled the District to lead the community in environmental stewardship. Waste Management looks forward to partnering with other schools and districts throughout the country to develop similarly innovative environmental programs that will benefit students and their communities.