

10 EASY WAYS TO BE AN ENVIRONMENTAL ROLE MODEL

Teachers and parents are the biggest influences in a child's life. Research shows that children look to the behavior of others as a guide for choosing their own course of action. It is important that you demonstrate sustainable behaviors in the classroom because your students are looking to you to set an example! Below are 10 easy ways to be an environmental role model. As an Ocean Connectors teacher, we hope you'll adopt these techniques at work and at home. Thanks for your efforts!

- 1. Use a reusable water bottle & coffee mug instead of disposables.** Disposable drink cups are one of the most common types of trash and we need to reduce the amount of waste being created, particularly plastic items which find their way into the ocean and are ingested by marine animals. Invest in a reusable water bottle and mug and bring them to class each day.
- 2. Use reusable shopping bags instead of plastic.** Plastic bags are commonly swallowed by sea turtles and other marine life. Additionally fuel and petroleum are used to produce new plastic bags. Use a reusable bag or backpack instead, and try to keep plastic bags out of your classroom.
- 3. Use both sides of paper.** It is helpful to remind students that paper is made from trees, an important, and diminishing, natural resource. Whenever possible, print two-sided and encourage students to use the back as well as the front side for assignments.
- 4. Use recycled paper and other education supplies.** Today there are many recycled products available for your classroom. In addition to recycled paper, you can purchase recycled crayons (www.crazycrayons.com), pencils, and folders (www.guidedproducts.com).
- 5. Place a recycling bin in class, labeled with a list of recyclable items.** People, especially children, are often misinformed about what can be recycled. Visit www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dpw/recycling/residentialrecycling.html, print out the blue recycling guide, and tape it to your classroom recycling bin. Help your students to understand that since not all materials are recyclable, it is better to reduce the amount of waste we create in the first place.
- 6. Pick up one piece of trash on campus per day.** Litter tends to find its way out to sea, so let your students see you picking up one piece of trash each day. They are likely to follow your example.
- 7. Bring your lunch in reusable containers.** Rather than Ziplocs, paper bags, and disposable silverware, bring lunch materials that demonstrate your commitment to the environment. You can find eco-friendly lunchbox options at www.laptoplunches.com.
- 8. Turn off lights and computer equipment when not in use.** Schools tend to use a lot of energy, but your classroom can be an exception if you make a point to turn off equipment that's not being used. Reducing energy use combats climate change and minimizes your carbon footprint.
- 9. Use only one paper towel to dry your hands, or better yet, air-dry.** Paper towels are made of trees and they create unnecessary waste that heads to landfills. It is important to be conservative with paper towel use. Particularly if you have a sink in the classroom, use only one paper towel to dry your hands. Or better yet, use a reusable cloth towel or air-dry.
- 10. Reward students that carpool or minimize waste.** If any student shows a special dedication to helping the environment, such as by bringing a reusable lunchbox or carpooling, please find a way to reward their efforts. This will increase the likelihood that other students adopt similar behaviors.