

COMPREHENSIVE WASTE REDUCTION IN SCHOOLS

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 2007

- WHEREAS, The California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 requires that all California cities and counties reduce solid waste disposed of in landfills by 50 percent through source reduction, recycling and composting activities, and California school districts responsible for disposing of nearly 800,000 tons per year are a natural partner in this process; and
- WHEREAS, The Public Resource Code, sections 42620-42622, requires the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) to provide school districts assistance in establishing and implementing source reduction and recycling programs, and states that source reduction and recycling programs in schools will educate children on the importance of these activities and will teach them waste management skills that will last throughout their lives; and
- WHEREAS, The School Diversion and Environmental Education Law (DEEL) of 2001 mandates that the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education shall include integrated waste management, and other environmentally important topics, in the K-12 science framework; and
- WHEREAS, The DEEL also encourages every school district and school site in California to implement source reduction, recycling, and garden composting programs in order to achieve the following goals: reduce waste and conserve resources, provide pupils with a “hands-on” learning experience, minimize the expenditure of taxpayer and education dollars on solid waste collection and disposal, cooperate with cities and counties in developing plans and programs to meet and exceed the state’s waste reduction and recycling mandate, utilize to the maximum extent feasible, products and supplies made from recycled materials; and
- WHEREAS, The Legislature provides for funding of grants to school districts to be used for supplies and professional development related to the establishment of instructional school gardens, and has declared that school gardens provide an interactive, hands-on learning environment in which pupils learn composting and waste management techniques; and

WHEREAS, California Education Code, sections 32370-32376, recommends that each school district establish and maintain a paper recycling program in all classrooms, administrative offices, and other areas owned or leased by the school district, and encourages school districts to give preference to the purchase of recycled paper with the highest percentage of post consumer waste possible and to eliminate the purchase of paper and paper products which are deemed potential contaminants of the educational agency's paper recycling program; and

WHEREAS, The CIWMB has determined that at least 15 schools in the State of California demonstrate that school district waste reduction programs can be successful, and collaborative partnerships are effective, and cost-savings tools are readily available to school districts to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of waste reduction programs; now therefore be it resolved

RESOLVED, That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to support implementation of effective waste reduction programs at their schools by helping to create partnerships with parents, teachers, students, district and city personnel, and waste management companies; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the California State PTA, its units, councils and districts, promote local school and school district waste reduction practices such as paper, glass, aluminum, and plastic recycling, composting of food waste and other organic materials, use of recycled and recyclable products, and reduction or reuse of paper and packaging; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the California State PTA educate, encourage, and empower its units, councils and districts to educate its membership and school communities about waste reduction strategies and the environmental and monetary benefits of waste reduction.

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Background Summary

Parents, teachers, students and staff all share their responsibility to leave their world a little better and a little cleaner. Although California school districts are not required to implement waste reduction programs, a number of political factors make the development and implementation of innovative and cost-effective programs possible. The School Diversion and Environmental Education Law (DEEL) mandates a change in the California Education Code to incorporate environmental concepts into the California State Science Framework and curriculum. It also established a grants program for schools, school districts, and county offices of education to promote integrated waste management education and waste reduction programs.

In response to the DEEL initiative, an effective and efficient waste diversion program model was developed for the Davis Joint Unified School District (DJUSD) in 2002. This model – RISE (Recycling is Simply Elementary) – addresses some of the core issues affecting the long-term sustainability of school recycling programs, and has been responsible for increased levels of solid waste recycling, organic composting and waste reduction in participating elementary and intermediate schools. The DavisRISE Program has been recognized and promoted by the CIWMB and the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) initiative.

Sustainability of the DavisRISE Program is achieved through the reallocation by the DJUSD of the savings derived from decreased solid waste disposal fees for the schools. A portion of savings in solid waste collection and disposal are applied annually toward the RISE Program. In 2003-2004, the first year of implementation, the reduction of solid waste generation in the schools saved the DJUSD approximately \$31,000 in solid waste costs. Maintaining the approximately 50% reduction in solid waste volumes continues today through the public and private partnership of the DavisRISE Program (www.DavisRISE.org).

As outlined by the California Integrated Waste Management Board, the most effective way to institutionalize waste reduction practices at the school district level is for the school board to adopt clear statements of environmental management policy, and for the school district superintendent to adopt best management practices and operating procedures to implement environmental management policy.

A California State PTA resolution in support of environmental management and specifically waste reduction through the environmental “Three R’s” – “Reduce – Reuse – Recycle” would facilitate the institutionalization of waste reduction and environmental conservation practices in California schools. The proposed resolution shall serve to encourage PTAs throughout the state to participate in the improvement of local environments, the savings of school district resources, the teaching of important skills of California students.