

Manhattan Beach Middle School students sort waste to reduce lunchtime trash

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Waste Management and environmental education nonprofit Grades of Green spent a recent afternoon getting their hands dirty with Manhattan Beach Middle School (MBMS) students sorting through the trash generated during that day's lunch period.

The hands on lesson aimed to educate the middle school students on how they can reduce their lunchtime trash as part of a program being launched to promote "Trash Free" lunches at MBMS.

A time-lapse video of the waste audit will be shown as part of Grades of Green's presentation titled "Dumpster Diving" at the Manhattan Beach TEDx conference Journey to Purpose, which is also taking place at Manhattan Beach Middle School campus on Saturday, October 13th, 2012.

The trash sorting activity took place in the campus quad and was attended by fifteen energetic students, many of whom are from the MBMS Associated Student Body. Participating students received waste audit safety education and training ahead of time by Grades of Green staff.

All materials, including water bottles, soda cans, leftovers, baggies, and other lunchtime waste, were sorted and weighed. In total, 446 pounds of waste, enough to fill 30 trash bags, was recorded at the beginning of the waste audit. Of that amount, only 13 bags were landfill waste.

Using the audit numbers as a baseline, Grades of Green and WM will work with students, staff, and other stakeholders to significantly reduce the amount of lunchtime waste that is generated and sent to the landfill.

Explains Lisa Coppedge, Co-Founder and Director of Programs at Grades of Green, "We are so excited to work with WM and Beach Cities Health District to make lunch time more sustainable at MBMS. Our goal is to reduce lunch time landfill waste by as much as 50 percent; we can do this primarily by reducing or recycling lunch items that are packed or purchased on campus."

While Waste Management and Grades of Green have previously worked together to implement Trash Free Lunch programs in many of Manhattan Beach's elementary schools, this program represents their first efforts working together at the middle school level; the timing is important.

As Stephone Paige II of Waste Management explains, "WM and Grades of Green have worked together for the last 5 years promoting zero waste lunches to Manhattan Beach grade school students. Now, those students are entering middle school, so it made sense to launch a zero waste effort at the middle school as well."

The MBMS Trash Free Lunch program kicking off this month includes educational activities, assemblies, and contests. It is funded through a Waste Management grant that is in addition to the education programs provided for in the Company's franchise

agreement with the City. Additional grant funding was provided through a Beach Cities Health District Micro Enrichment Grant .

For more information, contact Waste Management Customer Service at [\(310\) 830-7100](tel:3108307100), or visit manhattanbeach.wm.com, www.gradesofgreen.org, or ortedxmanhattanbeach.com.