



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PALMER WAY STUDENTS LEAD THE WAY IN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**  
*With an eye on recycling, PAWS has developed best practices for use throughout the district*

**NATIONAL CITY** — Ecologically minded students at Palmer Way Elementary School are leading the National School District toward environment sustainability with new practices that will greatly reduce the amount of waste that goes into the landfill.



The Panthers Attack Waste Squad — or PAWS — has been working since spring to analyze where trash is generated and how it is collected at the school, and develop ways to effectively increase recycling.

Working under the guidance of BCK Programs, an Encinitas-based environmental consulting firm, the student action team has put into place a campus-wide waste diversion plan that can be scaled up throughout the district.

Students estimate they have been able to cut in half the amount of waste that ends up in the landfill from their school alone.

PAWS members presented their findings to the school board and other key administrators at the end of the last school year. This school year, the group's focus has been to enact its recommendations.

One change rolled out in the cafeteria eliminates plastic straws that PAWS determined were not needed for students to drink from a carton. By simply purchasing utensil packs without a straw, which is not recyclable, the district will be able to keep about 500 straws a day from going into the trash.

PAWS recently unveiled the new “spork packets” to the Palmer Way student body during special assemblies that allowed the students to showcase the important improvements to waste reduction being made at the school.

The initiative is an extension of a campaign started by Palmer Way teacher Megan Lachi, who shares the PAWS passion for protecting the environment and has been a driving force in bringing change to the campus.

“My students and I have worked for years to bring attention to plastics in the environment — in particular the impact plastic straws have on marine wildlife,” she said. “When Palmer

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Way was chosen to pilot a student-driven waste diversion program, I knew the time was right to go straw free. We are thrilled the governing board and administration supported our student recommendations and we are ready for the next green challenge!”

Other new practices in the lunchroom include waste stations where students empty any remaining liquid from their milk or juice carton, place the carton in a special collection container for recycling and put the rest of their lunch waste in a third bin.

With this one new practice, PAWS students expect at least 700 to 800 cartons and more than 15 gallons of liquid waste will be diverted from the landfill each day.

In order to create their waste diversion plan, the 40 members of PAWS conducted waste audits in the lunchroom, in classrooms and around the campus.

They found ways to both bolster current recycling efforts and improve practices that will make increased recycling easier, such as using clear liners in recycling receptacles and dark liners in trash bins so that custodial staff can quickly identify the bags for disposal by ECDO.

The students’ efforts not only go toward saving the Earth, but saving the district some money. By reducing how often trash is collected by EDCO, the district will likely be able to lower costs in the future.

The PAWS team isn’t limiting its efforts to waste diversion, however. It also has its eye on tackling food waste through a composting program it would like to develop.



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