



Tips for Sustainable PHS PTO Events

When planning PHS PTO events, please consider these following suggestions to help make programming more sustainable.

Food:

- ◆ If possible, consider buying bulk bags of chips, pretzels, etc., and allowing students to use tongs to select the amount of snack they'd like to eat or have a volunteer distribute the snack item. Donate leftovers to the PHS custodial staff or wrap and place in the faculty room for the teachers to enjoy.
- ◆ It is understood that because of allergies, it may be preferable to buy individually packaged snacks. When that is the case, try to purchase the amount that is needed. Look for items with the least amount of packaging. Reuse leftover items for other events..
- ◆ If the PHS composting program is running in the cafeteria and there are volunteers willing to stand by the bin, consider asking Mr. C about having composting at the event. If you opt to do this, you must have clear signage indicating that only food is composted, as well as having someone staffing the bin at all times. Otherwise, the bin will end up with trash in it and will become contaminated.
- ◆ Consider offering at least 1 healthier snack option, like fruit or mini carrots/hummus, etc. If that's not appropriate, try to offer something without added sugar and fewer additives.
- ◆ Buy locally whenever possible, so for example, think Terhunes for apples and cider donuts, Lilipies for baked goods, Milk and Cookies for cookie trays, etc.
- ◆ When ordering trays from caterers, ask if the food can be put on a reusable tray that can be returned at a later date.
- ◆ When volunteers provide trays of food, ask if they can bring their items on a reusable tray that they can pick up at a later date.

Beverages:

- ◆ If offering water/drinks in large dispensers, ask students to put their initials on their cups so that they take just 1 to limit the number of cups thrown away.
- ◆ If offering single serve water bottles, make sure that there are recycling bins close by with clear signage.
- ◆ If offering coffee for PTO meetings, consider purchasing it in a reusable container from Small World Coffee. Someone would need to return the container following the meeting.

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Decorations/Tableware:

- ◆ Opt for items that committee members already own or can borrow from other parents. If buying new, opt for items that can be reused for other events.
- ◆ Opt for plants (ex. mums, poinsettias) for decorations and then donate the plants to PHS when the event is over (or have volunteers take plants home). Remember that the PHS Choir runs its holiday plant sale in November.
- ◆ Opt for reusable tablecloths that can be wiped down and re-used, as opposed to cheaper, one-use only flimsy plastic cloths or paper cloths that rip easily.
- ◆ Avoid helium balloons; opt for air-filled balloons that can be shaped into decorations.
- ◆ For PTO meetings, encourage attendees to bring their own mugs/reusable hot cups to reduce the number of disposable cups used.
- ◆ Try to offer snacks that don't need plates. Purchase 100% recycled or bamboo napkins; avoid plastic cups. **Remember that paper cups and napkins aren't recyclable or compostable.**

Registration/Give-aways:

- ◆ When possible, add registrants to a list as opposed to giving out bracelets.
- ◆ When possible, have an opt-in sign-up for give-away items (t-shirts, water bottles, etc.) as opposed to giving them away to everyone.

Clean-up:

- ◆ Recycle all cardboard packaging, as long as it is clean (ex. if you order a tray of pretzels that come in cardboard, the tray can't be recycled because most likely it will have food stains on it).
- ◆ Recycle big plastic beverage jugs (ex. water, lemonade, iced tea, etc.).
- ◆ If anyone is willing to gather it, clean plastic bags and shrink wrap packaging can be taken to McCaffrey's for recycling. This packaging takes up a lot of space in the trash, so it is always good to collect and recycle it if someone lives locally and is willing to do it on their next trip to McCaffrey's.
- ◆ Educational materials, bin signs, reusable gloves, aprons, and trash grabbers are all available for loan from Sustainable Princeton; request items through this form:
<https://www.sustainableprinceton.org/contact-us/>

Thanks for your help in making PHS events more sustainable!