



Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Maritza Fairfield

Valerie Martinez

(909) 445-1001

Cesar Chavez Middle School Kicks Off Trash-Free Lunch Challenge 'Prep' Rally Inspires Students and Staff to Cut Lunchtime Waste in Half

Lynwood, Calif. – The students and staff at Cesar Chavez Middle School are ready to take on a new challenge – cutting their lunchtime waste in half. Students and staff kicked off the fourth annual Trash-Free Lunch Challenge, with a “Prep” Rally designed to inspire students and staff to make an impact on their environment.

Sponsored by environmental education nonprofit Grades of Green in partnership with the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County, LAcARGuy and more, Southern California schools compete to see which is most successful at diverting waste from landfills. The rally presented the student body with riveting facts about their carbon footprint and the repercussions on the earth and its animals. According to Grades of Green representatives, Americans constitute only 5 percent of the human population, but create 30 percent of the world’s waste.

“This competition is a fun and engaging opportunity for our students to learn about how they can make an impact on their environment,” said LUSD Board of Education President Briseida Gonzalez, MSW. “Not only are students being educated on how our landfills are being overburdened, they’re also learning what exactly they can do about it.”

Currently, the school produces 16 bags of trash during lunch on a daily basis. Students and staff are being challenged to cut that number by at least half, which would eliminate 1,440 bags of trash every year. They are being encouraged to use re-useable water bottles, utensils and cloth napkins. If the school wins the competition, it will be awarded a \$1,000 education grant.

“I hope that this will inspire people to enjoy helping the environment and the animals,” said eighth-grader Fatima Cordova, a member of the school’s Green Team, a group spearheading the efforts on campus. “This is one big step forward for our school and for our community.”

During the assembly, Grades of Green representatives taught students how to separate their waste into bins marked “landfill,” “compost,” “liquid,” and “recyclables.”

Over the last three years, participating schools have diverted 71,000 bags of trash from landfills and saved thousands of dollars in waste hauler pick-ups.

“Each year that we continue this program, dozens of additional schools help the environment by reducing lunchtime trash, with an added bonus of saving the school money,” said Lisa Coppedge, Grades

of Green's Co-founder and Director of Programs. "As more and more schools learn how to reduce waste, the environmental impact increases exponentially, because the schools continue to divert their lunchtime trash year after year."

In September, experts from Grades of Green conducted their first visit to Cesar Chavez to evaluate how much trash the campus is currently producing. At the same time, Congresswoman Janice Hahn visited the school to see what students and staff are doing to be more earth friendly, including adhering to the 4 R's: reduce, re-use, recycle, and re-think.

"Congratulations to Cesar Chavez Middle School and Grades of Green on the progress you have made in the Trash Free Lunch Challenge! Your efforts are an inspiring reminder that it is never too early to start practicing the 4 R's," Hahn said. "Thank you for welcoming me to your school so I could learn about your efforts to protect the environment. Keep up the good work and get the word out that kids can make a difference!"

The goal of the challenge is to not only make an impact on the school campus, but also to have students bring their new knowledge home, and to their community.

"Taking part in the Trash-Free Lunch Free Challenge will provide our students with great incentive when it comes to making a difference in the environment," said LUSD Superintendent Paul Gothold. "I look forward to seeing the results and I hope that this spreads awareness throughout our entire school district and community."

PHOTO CAPTION: Cesar Chavez Middle School students and staff are taking part in the fourth annual Trash-Free Lunch Challenge, a competition between schools that seeks to divert waste from landfills.

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About Grades of Green

Grades of Green is an environmental education nonprofit dedicated to providing parents, students and educators with free, fun and hands-on Green Activities to inspire and empower students to care for the environment. Anyone wanting to implement sustainability programs can register their school online—at no cost—to get tips and measure their success on reducing trash, emissions, harmful classroom chemicals, plus dozens of other ways to help the environment. Grades of Green has been honored with many awards, including the U.S. EPA's prestigious Environmental Award.

The nonprofit is growing rapidly, with over 170,000 students enrolled across 38 states and five countries. Grades of Green's goal is simple—to enroll thousands of schools with millions of kids, all caring for the environment and collectively making a difference. For more information on Grades of Green visit www.gradesofgreen.org

The Lynwood Unified School District is dedicated to offering students a world-class education to prepare them for success in college and career in the 21st century. Under its Achieving Greatness Initiative, the district is realigning all aspects of its organization to strengthen and expand instructional programs, enrichment and extracurricular activities, and support systems for students and staff. For more information, visit www.lynwood.k12.ca.us.

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