

Genius School, Inc.

# Ways to Afford More? Waste Less

By Susan Labadi

## WAYS TO AFFORD MORE? WASTE LESS

### **Ways to Afford More? Waste Less**

To be frank, we often make excuses that we do not have money for teachers, teaching resources, and investment in the functional and aesthetic aspects of our schools. However, we rarely consider how much waste is impacting our ability to have more and do more at school. What we should realize is that Allah (God) has given us such abundance, and perhaps we have not analyzed the many areas we could actually save in order to spend on higher priorities. Let's strategize how you can have more by wasting less!

There are numerous means to reducing wastage in our schools, but we need to implement concrete planning for maximum benefit. Schools should consider the following areas for review:

#### **Admission Procedures**

#### **Communication, internal and external**

#### **Abuse of the copy machine**

#### **Neglecting to use available technologies**

#### **Dismissal of potential textbook options**

#### **Too permissive access to office and art project supplies**

#### **Not extending saving opportunities to the community for uniforms, books, toys, home goods, etc.**

Just the cost of saving from not wasting paper in some of our larger schools could actually give us the chance to hire one or two more teachers. Surely this information is relevant to every school, and offers the opportunity to detail areas of potential analysis-as well as supervisory tactics—to implement a trackable program of execution which affects the bottom line.

### **Going Paperless**

Get your shredder ready because you are going to become free of the "paper prison" that has cost you so much! Not only will you find more money for other priorities, but you will become proficient as a

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representative of the modern age and actualize ecological stewardship. Often we are entrenched in habits that should be reconfigured to compliment a life of learning and proficiency in new skills and technologies. Yet, old habits die hard in that we can be resistant to change unless motivated by threat or the promise of glory. I hope you will share these tips and tools to enrich your school and personal life. As with most things though, be cognizant that they will take some practice until they become the new habits.

### **Tools**

First, you will require some investment in tools that will pay for themselves in the long run. Read about each and evaluate time to investigate which serve your needs best.

**Documented Management System.** This entails in-house networking among users and backup using cloud storage. Individual users, such as teachers and students may also use cloud storage for easy remote access to documents.

**Examples.** Dropbox, iCloud, Google Drive, OneDrive

**Internet Service Provider.** This is the company that provides internet access for your school. You will probably also require wireless access to secured search and data transfer within your facility, whether that be via mobile laptops, tablets, and/or cell phones.

**Examples.** AT&T, XFINITY, Time Warner, Verizon

**Hardware.** Computers, laptops, tablets, cell phones, network connected copy machines with document scanners, classroom projectors and possibly student clickers for their feedback. Many companies offer deals to schools and grant funding may facilitate acquisition. Check with your local public school districts' administration offices for guidance, and let your community also be aware when seeking hardware. The help of many people can save a lot on procurement costs.

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**Software.** Here the list can go on and on, but primary to every school are the Student Management System (SMS) or Learning Management System (LMS) that can handle student registration data, gradebooks, progress reports, operational data and reports, and link to a school web portal which can accommodate individual classes' communications and general broadcast capacities. You will also probably benefit from some of the tools by Adobe™ and Evernote™, which uses optical character recognition (OCR) to search with ease. Also, Evernote's Scannable™ allows you to scan documents with your phone or iPad and then save them to Evernote.

### **Admission Procedures**

End it with this year. No more volumes of papers going home in expensive mailed out registration packets. Just the postage will set you back! Think about it. How much paper; how much employee time; how much in sticky address labels; and you find that some parents are missing sheets or didn't get one at all! Begin now to communicate with the next progress report that your school will be taking strides to save money by developing paperless strategies, and that the next registration will be offered online and at school on designated days in the future.

Create your online application forms, and be sure to put a field for parents' email addresses. In case they do not have an email (though that would be rare), include a checkbox that identifies them if they do not. In this case, you will also have to create a file for those few parents who will still require a paper registration application, snail mail progress reports, and continued antiquated paper-wasting concessions.

When your forms are ready, put them on your school's web portal and announce the dates that parents who want to register on the computers at school can come. Arrange for volunteers who can walk the parents through the in-house online based registration process. This way they will have an easier time to do it on their own from home next year.

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### **Communications, external and internal**

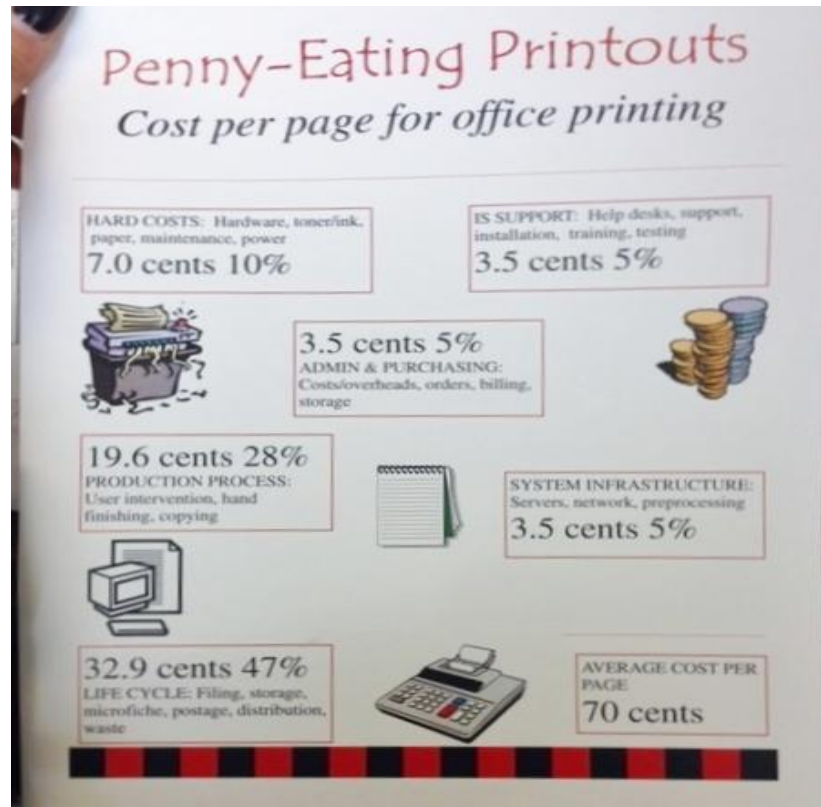
No need to stuff backpacks with classroom newsletters when you can do it online. **With parents' email addresses, all correspondence can easily be sent to keep parents informed.** In addition, **the school portal and classroom websites can also archive the communications** for your accreditation review records and **for administrative verification of posting.** Additionally, **students may also easily find syllabi, lesson plans, homework, and supplemental study resources online.** These may be videos, notes, articles, handouts, online forms-including quizzes and tests—for their benefit. Why waste the school's paper when these tools can be used?

How many teachers have not checked their mailboxes on a daily basis? I've seen overstuffed mailboxes that are telltale signs that some have no idea what they contain. **With school email addresses and categorized group emails, you can have timely connections and expedient results.** Some mail servers also can indicate to the senders if their emails were opened on the other end by recipients. This system has many advantages not only in broadcasting information about faculty specific details, but it can provide updates on student situations, parent requests, community family issues that may affect students, and can even be a conduit for professional development and spiritually uplifting messages.

### **Abuse of the copy machine**

According to Xerox, 45 trillion pages are printed annually worldwide. A typical office worker prints up to 34 pages a day; 17% are never used. They typical office laser printer creates 100 lbs. of waste each year.

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The National Wildlife Federation cites the following:

- Paper can account for as much as **60 percent** of school waste.
- Producing recycled paper requires about **60 percent of the energy** used to make paper from virgin wood pulp.
- Manufacturing **one ton of office paper** with recycled paper stock can save between **3,000 and 4,000 kilowatt hours** over the same ton made with virgin wood products.
- Preventing one ton of paper waste saves between **15 and 17 mature trees**.
- Recycling one ton of paper saves enough energy to heat an average home for six months.
- The greenhouse gas emission reductions from recycling **10 tons of mixed paper** are comparable to preventing the use of **94 barrels of crude oil**.

A school's IT director noticed that many teachers used their classroom computers to send print orders to copy machines in teachers' workrooms, but they never picked them up! He surveyed over 3 days and

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extrapolated the wastage to reveal that **the school could essentially hire another teacher or two with the money that was completely wasted on just this habit of leaving behind such unused documents.** I

have also seen teachers who printed online books for themselves—as they were using school resources for graduate degree studies and refused to pay for texts—and very long articles for each of their students, which resulted in vast waste of paper, toner, and staples. It also tied up the copy machine so that I was unable to make copies for my own students in a timely manner. Needless waste and frustration could have been avoided if such abuse of the copy machines were countered with administrative actions and personal accountability tactics.

Most copy machine companies will offer free customer training; and this is key, because **a class or two for faculty and staff from a qualified vendor representative gets the attention and need for change emphasized better than the same content being delivered from an administrator or resident IT director.** These trainers can clearly explain how to use the scanning features and upload functions that make a huge impact on paper, toner, and equipment wear and tear. This can be backed up with **administrative steps to assign and monitor each user who is issued a unique copier code and network folder for documents.** Teaching the teachers to use digital documents can save time, enhance accessibility to content, and save money. Professional development can also include teachers discussing among themselves in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) how using the copy machine in a different way has impacted their classes.

What else can be done to save paper? **Your IT director can set the machine's default to make 2-sided copies** when the machines do consume paper; and **when extra sheets of blank paper come up, teachers should be instructed to pile them for reuse in the paper tray again.** Conscious consumption and awareness make a difference overall.

**Neglecting to use available technologies**

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It was not until I was an administrator that I realized how much those Scantron bubble sheets cost; so I'm glad to share a resource that can save you money, even if you choose to print the answer sheets. It is the **ZipGrade.com** site which features a smartphone app for iPhone and Android phones that makes grading and data analysis a simple task. This is just one example of new technologies that are improving teaching while saving costs to schools. The challenge is in encouraging teachers to use the technologies, and for that it helps if they can be asked to explore and share some of them with their peers. Relying on someone to take the initiative of their own is unlikely to result in risking an uncertain outcome in front of one's students, but an administrator's nudge to ask for a critique or review of a technology tool for one's department or a conference presentation can make it happen.

**PollEveryWhere.com** is another quick way to have formative assessments or exit slips that give teachers feedback on class performance or sentiments. Rather than using paper, this requires a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) classroom. If some students do not have their own smartphone, then a solicitation to parents to donate retired cell phones which can connect to your school's Wi-Fi can make this strategy work. Students will not have voice phone service, but can text and access internet from your network. Just confirm with parents who may not want their students to have a cell phone to verify that in-class use for educational purposes is allowed.

**Kahoot!** is a model of gamification for education. It is worthwhile exploring and benefiting from a large community of developers for its "Kahoots." Some of my favorite EdTech professionals use this to create multiple choice questions paired with videos, images and diagrams to make fun learning games that challenge and engage students. You can even see on the dashboard what students' answers were as they compete for top ranking. Yet, these software tools are for the end game of assessment; let's consider how content is delivered to students.

### **Dismissal of potential textbook options**

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Increasingly, we see transition to e-texts which save space, students' spines from many heavy books, and they offer a plethora of resources for teachers. Schools may see the initial monetary outlay as threatening to the bottom line, but this can be truly helpful for new and overwhelmed teachers who have several courses to prepare for each day. Companies like Pearson have ample resources for their Prentiss-Hall textbook customers. You can peruse some of their offerings without even having to purchase texts at <http://www.phschool.com/atschool/> in order to get an idea of what possibilities are available. Often times, these resources permit teachers to avoid using the school's paper for mountains of handouts, and even feature rich, colorful graphics when used as intended.

### **Too permissive access to office and art project supplies**

Along with teachers who help themselves to using the copy machine without restraint, is the issue of not being conscientious about copious waste of paperclips, folders, erasers, markers, scissors, staplers, and other sundry office supplies. Issuing a finite quantity of supplies at the beginning of the school year and then keeping supply inventory locked can reduce consumption. Teachers and staff need to personally **solicit for refills from a designated inventory czar**, who can best monitor how readily supplies are used. Ditto for art supplies. When one person is responsible for the inventory that is used by the whole school, and this does not include individual classroom supplies provided by parents, there is greater accountability and management of costly colored paper, paints, brushes, and other craft items and art supplies.

### **Creating Conservation Awareness in All Stakeholders**

Stack the deck in deliberately creating conservation campaigns of all kinds, and get the students and PTO involved as well. **Teach the students and faculty about not using too many napkins, paper towels, wasting notebook paper, and even water and electricity in school.** Turn off the lights! This should be incorporated before April's Earth Day; in fact, you can set a designated date in the first grading cycle. Be

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sure to connect the campaign to a tangible goal for the school. An example would be to let people know how much the water or electricity bill was from a previous year, and try to reduce consumption. Get the ecology club to take charge of projects. Encourage everyone to make strides to help the school this way.

Do your parents a favor by scheduling **book exchange and uniform exchange days**. **Bulk buy school supplies** for parents who subscribe to your service and get discounted rates on all the merchandise they'd normally buy from Walmart. Prior to Eid, perhaps you can arrange for **a toy exchange** so that less plastic goes into landfills. This can apply to **clothing exchanges** too, because kids keep growing! You can take the lead to keep the savings for your own community to enhance offerings at your school, whether that be through additional hiring, more clubs, or a multitude of other possibilities.

In conclusion, we have the tendency to not want to exercise effort toward change, but these projects can be delegated and used to build leadership in your community. We are losing much potential in the ability to spend in areas that really impact the performance of our students, namely improvement in our school infrastructure, programming, and staffing. Give these initiatives a try and afford more.

Additional information on the topic can be found at my website, [susanlabadi.com](http://susanlabadi.com) and my Pinterest page <https://www.pinterest.com/susanlabadi/> under Paperless School Classroom.

## RESOURCES

Kahoot! (n.d.) <https://getkahoot.com/>

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National Wildlife Foundation. (n.d.)

<https://www.nwf.org/Eco-Schools-USA/Become-an-Eco-School/Pathways/Consumption-and-Waste/Facts.aspx>

Pearson Prentice-Hall School. (n.d.) <http://www.phschool.com/atschool/>

PollEveryWhere. (n.d.) <https://www.polleverywhere.com/>

Susan Labadi Pinterest page (n.d.) <https://www.pinterest.com/susanlabadi/>

Susan Labadi website (n.d.) <http://www.susanlabadi.com/>

ZipGrade. (nd.) <https://www.zipgrade.com/>