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4Cs Zero Waste Audit for Districts and Schools



Purpose and Overview: This zero waste audit is a baseline assessment of a site and/or school district's zero waste efforts. Utilize the bookmarks below to navigate to each section:

- [School/District Overview](#)
- [School Curriculum & Culture](#)
- [Procurement](#)
- [Waste Sorting \(Walk-Through\)](#)
- [Waste Diversion Audit \(Optional\)](#)
- [Waste Hauling & Processing](#)
- [Hazardous Waste Audit](#)
- [Reflection](#)

SCHOOL/DISTRICT OVERVIEW

School Name & District that are being evaluated in this audit:	School: District:
What is the total student enrollment at your school/district?	School: District:
What is the overall status of waste reduction efforts at your school site?	<input type="checkbox"/> No effort yet <input type="checkbox"/> Entry Level: Beginning stages of a cultural/operational/practices shift within the school community. <input type="checkbox"/> Mid Level: Operational/Culture/Practices shift is underway and gaining traction within the school community. <input type="checkbox"/> Full Integration Level: A complete culture/operations/practices shift has been established within the school community and beyond and is demonstrated with commitment across multiple categories

Before completing the audit in the pages below, briefly describe the perception of your school's waste reduction efforts by capturing any highlights and concerns related to waste.

Highlights:

Concerns:

Opportunities:

List the names and contact information of key stakeholders whose work relates to the school's waste management:

Administrator		Custodian	
Faculty		Parent Volunteer	
Staff Lead		Student	
Community Partner (Waste Hauler, technical assistance):		Other	

SCHOOL CURRICULUM & CULTURE

Curriculum	
Describe how waste system education is integrated into Curriculum and Instruction at the school.	
Provide any clear examples of how waste system education is integrated into core curriculum subject areas:	1) Grade levels receiving lessons about waste and consumption: _____ 2) Subject Areas focusing on waste and consumption: _____ 3) _____# of teachers total teaching units/lessons on waste and consumption

	4) _____ # of students impacted by these classroom lessons on waste and consumption
Describe the most relevant lessons/units being taught on the waste system.	
Describe any ongoing Professional Development for Faculty and Staff related to waste reduction.	
Describe any additional efforts specifically on waste and consumption systems that would be related to curriculum and instruction.	
Culture & Community	
List any specific policies that reinforce waste reduction efforts.	
Describe any student club(s) or Associated Study Body (ASB) activities that support school-wide waste reduction and diversion.	
List any other activities that exist in co-curricular and extracurricular programming that reinforce waste reduction and diversion efforts (i.e. athletics reusable water bottles, reusable art displays, community clean-ups, reuse drives, etc.).	
Describe partnerships with community based partner organizations (i.e. waste haulers, community based partners, etc).	
Describe any additional waste reduction efforts that would be related to	

community engagement and culture.

PROCUREMENT

Directions: The best way to reduce waste is to generate less of it. This section will need to be completed with school district and site level administrators, or other staff that lead purchasing for the district. For instance you may need to have a purchasing representative from each department complete the following questions.

Who are the people who purchase materials for your school? <i>List any known:</i>	
Does your school/district have a written sustainable/environmentally preferable purchasing policy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No → If Yes, link to it here:
Does your school/district use any third-party certification standards (i.e. Biodegradable Products Institute , Fairtrade, Organic, etc.) to support their sustainable purchasing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No → If Yes, link to it here:
Does your school/district purchase paper with recycled content? → if Yes, what percent of paper purchased has recycled content? ____%	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your school/district purchase <u>other</u> paper products with recycled content? (i.e. toilet paper, paper towels, napkins, tissues, etc.) → if Yes, what percent of paper purchased has recycled content? ____%	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your school/district have any programs that focus on reuse? (i.e. compost for landscaping, reusable food ware, reusable water bottle filling stations, art supplies reuse, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No → if Yes describe these programs:
Does your school/district have any programs focused on donation of unused food or materials? (i.e. food share tables, clothing at the end of school year, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No → if Yes describe these programs:
Does your school/district have any purchasing policies to reduce waste for office supplies? (i.e. copiers/printers that can print double-sided, pencils with recycled content, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No → if Yes describe these programs:
If your school/district does any sustainable/environmentally preferable purchasing describe how your school tracks this (examples: annual training, spreadsheets, memo's, etc.)	

WASTE SORTING - CAMPUS WALK THROUGH

Directions: Conduct a site assessment by accessing and evaluating the areas of highest waste generation at your school campuses. If assessing multiple campuses, complete the audit questions for each campus individually. Use the individual campus audits to make a [summary document](#) with the waste sorting from across the district. If conducting an audit on site, auditors should take photos to document the existing waste sorting practices. *If this audit is being conducted virtually (under COVID-19) note that in the assessment and complete to the best of your ability.*

PERIMETER/OUTDOOR AREAS

Walk the perimeter and outdoor areas of your campus to make observations. <i>Make sure to visit athletics fields/gardens as well.</i>	
Where are the bins located? Are they grouped together?	How many bins are there total for each type? ___ Landfill ___ Recycling ___ Organics
Are the bins correctly labeled? <i>Describe:</i>	
Do a visual scan of the contents of the bins and record observations:	
Use the questions below to make observations about litter on your school campus.	
List locations on campus where you find litter:	Are there any patterns or trends you notice about where litter is on your campus? (examples: next to road, near the sports field, etc.)
Describe the contents of the litter you see: - Example: Plastic Bottle - -	
Are there any signs on campus related to litter reduction? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

MEAL BREAK AREAS (Breakfast, Lunch, Snack, etc.)

Meal break areas are typically where the most organic waste is produced at school. Choose the area(s) on campus where most people eat (cafeteria, main courtyard, etc) to complete these questions.

Where are the bins located? Are they grouped together?

How many bins are there total for each type?

___ Landfill ___ Recycling ___ Organics

Are the bins correctly labeled? *Describe:*

Do a visual scan of the contents of the bins and record observations:

CLASSROOMS

Choose three classrooms to investigate. Try and select different types of classrooms (i.e. different grades, different buildings, etc.). Your team can select additional classrooms if desired to gather enough to generate a baseline assessment.			
	Class 1: _____	Class 2: _____	Class 3: _____
Number & type of waste receptacles (recycling, trash, organics):	Recycling: __ #, Size__ gal Trash: __ #, Size__ gal Organics: __ #, Size__ gal	Recycling: __ #, Size__ gal Trash: __ #, Size__ gal Organics: __ #, Size__ gal	Recycling: __ #, Size__ gal Trash: __ #, Size__ gal Organics: __ #, Size__ gal
Describe the waste receptacles locations (ex near the door). Are they placed all together or separate?	Recycling: Trash: Organics:	Recycling: Trash: Organics:	Recycling: Trash: Organics:
Are the receptacles correctly labeled?	Recycling: Trash: Organics:	Recycling: Trash: Organics:	Recycling: Trash: Organics:
Observations on contents:	Recycling: Trash: Organics:	Recycling: Trash: Organics:	Recycling: Trash: Organics:
Do students eat snacks or meals in this classroom?			
Are there any special conditions that might have affected the results of your audit? (examples: holidays, special events, COVID)			
Are there any signs that teachers or students are engaging in reuse projects (such as collecting scrap paper)?			
Other/Notes:			

OPTIONAL: WASTE SORTING AUDIT

This section should be conducted on a typical school day, after a lunch period. If that is not available then a simplified version could be completed by opening waste bags in collection dumpsters. By analyzing the waste created during a lunch break you can get a sense of how well your school is doing at sorting. The goal is to determine what your school's waste diversion rate is. This calculation will inform a cost-benefit analysis of waste sorting training, organic waste service, and other waste reduction efforts.

Materials: Waste audit worksheet and pencil, gloves, tarp, plastic liners, waste bins after a lunch break, optional: scale for weighing waste.

Directions:

- 1) Weigh and record volume of each container of waste: Landfill, Recycling and Organics (if present). Record in the space below.
 - 2) Lay down a large tarp (big enough for all the waste from a lunch break) on a flat surface
 - 3) Put on gloves.
 - 4) Complete the Observations Portion of the audit to record what you found in each bin (do not resort materials yet)
 - 5) Complete the waste diversion calculations portion. Correctly sort/resort all of the waste items and calculate what your diversion rate with correct sorting and organics would be
- Do not touch any hazardous items without gloves. Wash hands thoroughly after audit.
- Do not attempt this on your own - complete audit with your school staff team.

	Landfill A	Recycling A	Organics A
Step 1: Current Diversion by Weight & Volume	Weight: _____ lbs Volume: _____ gallons	Weight: _____ lbs Volume: _____ gallons	Weight: _____ lbs Volume: _____ gallons
	Total Weight A (Landfill A+Recycling A+Organics A) = _____ lbs Total Volume A (Landfill A+Recycling A+Organics A) = _____ gallons		
	Landfill A	Recycling A	Organics A
Step 2: Observations (note commonly mis-sorted items, most generated items, etc.)			

	Landfill B	Recycling B	Organics B
Step 3: Waste Diversion Calculations *Complete after sorting the lunch waste into 3 streams*	Weight: _____ lbs Volume: _____ gallons	Weight: _____ lbs Volume: _____ gallons	Weight: _____ lbs Volume: _____ gallons
	Potential Waste Diversion (waste diverted from the landfill) Weight: Recycling B _____ lbs + Organics B _____ lbs = _____ lbs Diversion		
	Potential Waste Diversion Percentage: _____ lbs Diversion / _____ lbs Total Weight A x 100 = _____ % Diversion Rate		
	Waste per Person (estimate number of people if needed): _____ lbs Total Weight A / _____ Number of people at your school = _____ lbs of waste per person _____ lbs of Total Weight A X _____ Number of school days in a month / Number of people at your school = _____ lbs of waste per person per month		
Step 4: Common Items	List the most common waste items found in your school during your waste audit (i.e. Paper, Cardboard, Food waste, Plastic Bottles, Plastic Wrappers, etc.)		

WASTE HAULING & PROCESSING

WASTE BILL/DUMPSTER (BIN) AUDIT

What waste hauling companies does your school/district use for their collective services? List all that apply, if different per school

Calculate the total amount of each waste stream your school/district produces in a month. To complete this section you will need to acquire the monthly bills for waste hauling for your district. Assume that the collection bins are full each time they are picked up. Example: Landfill is 6 yards, twice a week. That makes your schools total landfill weekly 48 yards (convert units as needed).

School Site	Landfill				Recycling				Organics			
	Size (Yards)	# of Weekly Pick ups (Days of Week)	Total Yards/ Monthly	Total Cost/Monthly	Size (Yards)	# of Weekly Pick ups (Days of Week)	Total Yards/ Weekly	Total Cost/Monthly	Size (Yards)	# of Weekly Pick ups (Days of Week)	Total Yards/ Weekly	Total Cost/Monthly
Add rows as needed												
TOTAL:												

Do a visual scan of the contents of each collection bin. Describe any contamination or issues with sorting in the bins:

School Site:

School Site:

ON-SITE COMPOSTING

Many schools have gardens in which some organic matter is composted. *If the school site does not have a garden skip this section.*

What types of composting systems do you have on-site? Who takes care of the compost bins?

School Site:

School Site:

Estimate how much organic matter is composted in your school compost bins annually:

School Site:

Weight: ____ lbs

Volume: ____ gallons

School Site:

Where does the material for the compost bin come from? *Examples: Garden yard waste, food scraps from kitchen, etc.*

School Site:

School Site:

HAZARDOUS WASTE DISPOSAL

Does your school district have a written policy or procedure for handling hazardous waste items?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No → if Yes include a link to it here:																												
Has your school district tried to reduce hazardous waste? Describe those efforts if they have.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No → if Yes describe efforts here:																												
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REFLECTION

Directions: Use these questions to help summarize your findings and make a strategic plan to address waste and consumption at your school.

A) On a scale of 1-10, how well was your waste sorted before your school district waste audit?

- 1 = Waste was not sorted correctly at all.
- 5 = About half of the waste was sorted correctly.
- 10 = Waste was sorted perfectly in the correct bins

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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B) Based on your audit, what could your school/district do to increase the amount of waste they divert from landfills?

C) Based on your audit, how could you help school stakeholders integrate waste reduction into the curriculum and overall school culture?