

CAFETERIA WASTE MANAGEMENT: RESET CHECKLIST



Goal:

- To reduce solid waste, with a priority for reducing organic waste, in cafeterias and kitchens starting in the new School Year (SY)

Implementation Timeline	Workflow	Action Item	Status
Early Spring	Engagement	Develop engagement timeline and plan. <i>Key questions to consider in planning:</i> - Who needs to be engaged in planning/implementation efforts? - How frequently? - Who will lead the engagement? - What will engagement look like?	
		Identify key stakeholder groups. <i>Examples include:</i> - Facilities staff - Cafeteria staff - School staff - Students - Vendors or Consultants? - Other? NOTE: Many of these individuals could become the formal “District Green Team” or “School Green Team” as the work shifts from planning to implementation.	
Early - Late Spring	Context Building	Review local school policy/law regarding what schools must do with waste: - Recycling? - Composting? - Other?	
		Conduct cafeteria needs assessment to understand changing context: - What is going well? What needs to change in advance of the new SY? - Current school/cafeteria priorities? - Current methods to reduce overserving? - Current methods to reduce overordering?	



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		● Current Enrollment vs. Anticipated Enrollment for next year? ○ Changes that could impact food service? ○ Impact of free/reduced price lunch programs on waste? ● Observe cafeteria/meal routines: ○ Do students eat in classrooms? Cafeteria? ○ Before or after recess? ○ How do students enter/exit the cafeteria? ○ How do students get food? ○ How do students throw away food? ○ How frequently are meals/snacks happening? ○ What parts of the day are most waste generated? ○ How frequently are trash bins/cans emptied? Additional Resources: Food Service & Cafeteria Waste Reduction Suggestions Exploring Cafeteria Waste Practices & Metrics	
	Waste Audit	Conduct food waste tour & audit to understand baseline: ● Waste bin-ventory ○ Create Campus Map with locations for bins/dumpsters for composting/trash/recycling (current & needed) ○ Additional or new inventory needed? ○ Available signage? Additional signage needed? ○ Removal / Emptying capacity needed? ● Understand scope of current waste: ○ Liquid waste? ○ Organic waste? ○ Food waste? ○ Single use disposable waste? Additional Resources: How a Facilities Team Approached their Bin-ventory (video) Waste Assessments & Audits Tracking Waste Data (system)	

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Late Spring	Vendor Engagement & Waste Management Context Building	Review waste management concerns, potential changes, rules, acceptable material options, procedures, and costs with existing and potential new waste vendors or partners: • Waste Haulers • Recyclers • Composters • Food Pantry • Farmer • Food Services • Facilities Staff / Contractors for waste removal Review options with waste & food service vendors for common use items, including: • Milk cartons • Disposable trays • Disposable silverware • Packaging of supplies / food • Types of bags • Compostables • Recyclables Additional Resources: Strategies to Reduce Food Waste in Schools & Child Nutrition Programs Tips for Negotiating with your Waste Hauler (digital page18) Tips for Reducing in a School Cafeteria	
Late Spring	Planning	Develop waste management plan: • Plan should address local law & minimize organic waste routed to landfills (at minimum) • Plan should address gaps identified during food waste audit & tour, including design of waste stations • Plan should be aligned to conversations with waste management vendors & food service vendor Additional Resources: Guide to Zero Waste (NYC Schools) Cafeteria Recycling & Organics: Set-up Guide & handbook (NYC Organics Collection) Healthy Sustainable Schools: Guide for Change & Assessment Tool (digital pages 33-42) School Waste Reduction Programming Composting School Food Scraps	

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Late Spring / Summer	Planning	Select new cafeteria supplies based on waste management plan Update ordering logs	
		Update cafeteria budgets & food ordering needs Plan should be aligned to food services contract and changes in enrollment / volume needed (at minimum)	
		Update waste procedures, roles & responsibilities - Design processes - Identify additional signage and supply needs, for example: - Create signage for what is / is not recyclable / compostable (simplify when possible) - Order mesh bags for cartons & splash guards for liquids - Set up cafeteria waste stations Practice systems / procedures during summer school programming Additional Resources: <i>Example:</i> Exemplar Waste Station “Waste Train” (Adams 12 Five Star Schools)	
Summer	Engagement & Implementation	Design training for all stakeholder groups to implement new waste management procedures - Facilities staff - Cafeteria staff - School staff - Students Determine/develop incentives for implementing new waste management procedures Additional Resources: <i>Example Training List:</i> What bin does it go in? (Adams 12 Five Star Schools) Reducing Food Waste Lesson plans Activities for Students on Waste Reduction, including a Milk Carton Wallet	
		Implement trainings & communications around new waste management procedures - Train Facilities & Kitchen staff - Train School staff	



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		Train Student leaders (if possible) Additional Resources: <i>Sample Teacher Training:</i> Waste Sorting 101 (Oakland Unified School District)	
First Week of School	Implementation	Cafeteria Waste Management program Launch - Train Student leaders - Launch with Students, School Staff, Families, etc Additional Resources: Samples quizzes for students or staff to know recyclables (Prince George's County Public Schools)	
Fall	Engagement & Implementation	Formalize "Green Team" to monitor implementation - Formalize systems for monitoring progress, completing waste audits - Apply for grants or certification programs to support waste management strategies Additional Resources: Forming A Green Team	

Additional Resources:

- Environmental Equity: Closing the Opportunity Gap in Urban Schools
 - [Green Team Creation & Strategic Planning](#)
 - [Waste Management Excerpt](#) and ["waste" resources](#)
- [Healthy Sustainable Schools: Guide for Change & Assessment Tool](#) (digital pages 33-42= Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, including Food waste & Composting)
- [Help Fight Climate Change with Composting](#) (video)
- [Zero Waste Activity Guide](#) (Eco-Cycle)
- [Practical Guide to School Waste Reduction](#) (Oregon Green Schools)
- [Food Waste Reduction Strategies](#) (Illinois Schools)