
Best Practices Guide for Recycling at Events in DCPS Buildings

DCPS Recycles! Program
D.C. Department of
General Services (DGS)

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About this Resource

This resource document was created by the DCPS Recycles! program in the D.C. Department of General Services (DGS). The intent is to provide the necessary resources and best practices in order for all events held in D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) to comply with the standard procedures of the DCPS Recycles! program.

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Coordinate with Custodial Staff

Before the event, it is very important to coordinate with the school's custodial staff. Ask them what type of waste is sorted, collected, and picked up from the building. If the school does not have a recycling program, contact Beth Gingold at beth.gingold@dc.gov to get one started!

Custodial staff will help you set up the correct bins & liners for the sorting station. If food is served at the event and your school has an organics recycling program, it is very important that your custodial staff give you compostable liners for the yellow bin. Plastic liners increase processing time and are a contamination source for the composting facility. Custodial staff will also be responsible for bringing the bags of waste to the correct dumpsters and totes throughout and at the end of the event.

Request Special Hauling Service from DGS (if necessary)

If your event is on a weekend and/or is expected to generate a large amount of waste, please contact DGS to request additional hauling service over the weekend. For example, football games and other large sporting events on weekends will most likely require additional hauling service. Please contact Beth Gingold at beth.gingold@dc.gov to request additional hauling service.

Purchase Recyclable & Compostable Items

Get in touch with anyone making purchases or providing supplies for the event, including staff, parents, the catering company, food trucks etc. Ask what they are using and buying for the event. Suggest they buy only recyclable and compostable items.

Take note that recyclability and compostability depend on whether the item is recyclable or compostable at the *specific facility* it is sent to. For instance, a cup that says "compostable" may not actually be compostable at the Western Branch Composting Facility contracted through DGS. Review the Western Branch Composting Facility's Acceptable Materials List below. If you have questions about recyclability or compostability of certain items, please contact DGS at beth.gingold@dc.gov.

Note: As of January 1, 2016, the use of food service products made of expanded polystyrene, commonly known as foam or Styrofoam™, is banned in D.C. The ban applies to all District businesses and organizations that serve food. Learn more at [Foam Free DC](#).

Set Up a Waste Sorting Station

To set up a waste sorting station, set up bins for each waste stream anticipated.



- **For schools with organics recycling pick-up,** the three-bin system is standard—one grey or black bin for trash, one blue bin for mixed recycling (bottles, cans, cartons, juice boxes, etc.), and one yellow bin for organics (if food is served at the event). Note on liners: Special compostable liners must be used in the yellow bin for organics. If your school participates in organics recycling, your custodial staff should have these in storage. Ask your custodial staff to provide compostable liners for use at the event. Clear plastic bags should be used for the blue bin so that custodial staff can monitor contamination and ensure the bag is disposed of in the correct place.
- **For schools without organics recycling pick-up,** a two-bin system is standard— one grey/black bin for trash and one blue bin for mixed recycling (bottles, cans, cartons, juice boxes, etc.).
- A **liquid** bucket is optional, but highly recommended. Bottles, cans, juice boxes, etc. with liquid still inside of them should be emptied before placed in the mixed recycling bin.
- **Paper and cardboard recycling** is recommended during the event. A small blue bin for paper can be borrowed from a classroom during the event. Cardboard should be broken down, collected during the event in a centralized place, and placed in the paper/cardboard dumpster after the event.

Each bin should be labeled with a sticker or sign noting what waste stream goes in the bin. DGS can provide PDF versions of stickers and signs for you to print out and use at the event.

Minimize the number of waste stations. One waste station can work well even for an event up to 200 people. If you must have more than one waste sorting station, each station should be set up identically and monitored throughout the event.

Additional waste bags should be available and on-hand at the event to replace bags once they are full. The full bags should be placed somewhere where custodial staff can easily access them and bring them to the correct dumpster or toter during and after the event.

Organize Bin Monitors

Bin monitors educate students and event attendees on how to sort their waste properly. Monitors may be students, staff or volunteers. DGS has found that bin monitors are VERY important during events since people unfamiliar with the school recycling program may be in attendance. **ANY UNMONITORED BINS WILL BE CONTAMINATED.**

DGS suggests two (2) monitors at a waste sorting station. If there is a buffet table, it is helpful to have one volunteer throwing away empty containers and clearing space on the buffet table during the event. One volunteer should be assigned to pick up litter after the event.

Monitors will need gloves to pick out contaminants and to compact the trash during the event to reduce the number of bag changes needed.

Hide or Label All Other Bins

Temporarily hide all other bins at the event besides the bins at the waste sorting station(s).

If you cannot move or hide a bin, label them with a sign that says something like “Do Not Use This Bin. Please Use the Waste Sorting Station.”



Prohibit Eating in Classrooms

DCPS classrooms only recycle paper, and occasionally, bottles and cans. There is no standard procedure to recycle organics and mixed recyclables aside from paper in classrooms. As a result, it is best practice to prohibit eating in classrooms during the event.

If eating in classrooms during the event occurs, event attendees should be encouraged to *take their waste out of the classrooms* and dispose of it in the correct bins at the waste sorting station.

Spread the Message Before & During the Event

Marketing Materials: In all event marketing materials, include text that lets attendees know that waste at the event will be managed to minimize the waste going to landfill and/or incinerator in accordance with the DCPS Recycles! program. Marketing materials should say something like: “*This event has the goal of diverting as much waste as possible from landfill and incineration. Please be conscious and dispose of your waste in the correct bin at the waste sorting station.*”

Posters & Signs: Have students create posters or signs to promote the waste sorting station.

Verbal Announcements: Remind event attendees to sort their waste during any verbal announcements made during the event. For instance, at conference events, speakers should reinforce the waste diversion goal to the audience before their session begins.

Pick Up Litter After the Event

To protect our waterways and local environment, pick up litter after the event. This is a good task to assign to a student or volunteer.

Collect Waste Data (Optional)

Collecting volume and/or weight data about the waste from the event is a great way to engage students in real-world learning. Data collection also helps to motivate your school to either start or improve your school's recycling program. You have two options for collecting the data:



A River Terrace student weighs waste using an electronic fish scale.

- *Option 1: Count & Estimate Volume* – Count the number of bags of each waste stream. (# of trash bags, # bags with recyclables, # bags with compostables, # cardboard boxes). Estimate the volume (in gallons) of each waste stream based on how full the bag is. A typical bag is 32 gallons, but you should ask the custodial staff what size the bags are in order to accurately estimate the volume.
- *Option 2: Weigh* – To go a step further, if you have a fish scale on hand, you can weigh and log the weight of each bag.

Send your waste data to DGS so we can recognize and promote your efforts by emailing Beth Gingold at beth.gingold@dc.gov.

EXAMPLE EVENTS

Key Elementary School PTA Back-to-School Picnic (September 2015)

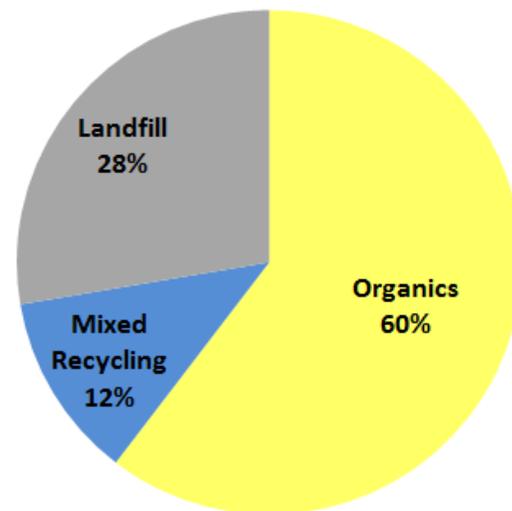
The PTA at Key Elementary School, with the help of DGS, had a waste sorting station at their back-to-school picnic. Parent volunteers helped to sort waste, recycle empty containers from the buffet table and pick up litter after the event.

The event achieved a 72 percent diversion rate by weight (diverted from landfill and incineration), surpassing the 45 percent waste diversion target for DCPS under the Healthy Schools Act of 2010.



A Key ES parent volunteer serves as a bin monitor to ensure waste is sorted into the correct bins at the back-to-school picnic.

**Key School PTA Back-to-School Picnic
Waste Composition (by weight)
September 2015**



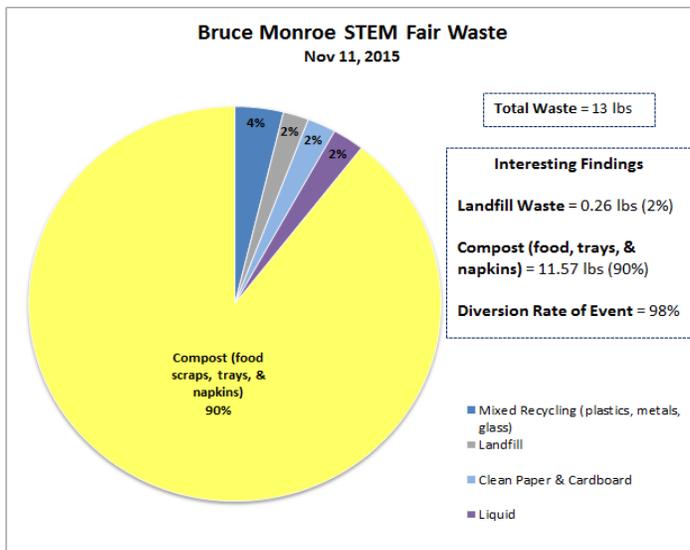
Total = 145 lbs

Bruce Monroe Elementary School STEM Fair (November 2015)

Bruce Monroe Elementary School invited DGS to have an educational table and waste sorting station at their annual STEM Fair. Students from Cardozo Education Campus volunteered to educate STEM Fair attendees about recycling and present their findings and accomplishments in placing 2nd Place in the Most Improved category of the 2015 D.C. Recycle Right Competition.

Bruce Monroe ES ordered healthy fruit and vegetable snacks to serve at the STEM Fair. Ordering snacks instead of full meals substantially reduced waste at the event.

After the event, the Cardozo students weighed and estimated the volume of each waste stream to determine the diversion rate. About 90 percent of the waste at the event (by weight) was compostable material—food scraps, compostable trays and napkins. Through organics recycling, mixed recycling (plastics, aluminum, etc.), and smart purchasing, the event achieved a 98 percent diversion rate, making it virtually a zero waste event.



Students from Cardozo Education Campus tabling at the event



Waste sorting station set up near the food table



Healthy snacks served at the event



Students from Cardozo Education Campus weigh the waste to determine the waste diversion rate.