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# How-to Guide for Recycling at Events in DCPS Buildings

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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 guidance 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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PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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## About this Resource

This guidance document was created by the DCPS Recycles! program in the D.C. Department of General Services (DGS). The intent is to provide the necessary guidance and best practices in order for every event held in D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) buildings to comply with the standard procedures of the DCPS Recycles! program. For more info, visit DGS - Healthy Schools at <http://dgs.dc.gov/page/dgs-healthy-schools>.

## 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](mailto:beth.gingold@dc.gov) to help get one started.

Custodial staff will help you set up the correct bins & liners for the waste sorting station(s). If food is served at the event and the school has an organics recycling program, ask your custodial staff to give you *compostable* liners for the organics bin. Regular plastic liners are a contamination source and increase processing time for the composting facility. Custodial staff will also be responsible for bringing the bags of waste to the correct outdoor dumpsters and carts throughout and at the end of the event.

## Request Special Hauling Services from DGS (if necessary)

If your event is expected to generate a large amount of waste, please contact DGS at [beth.gingold@dc.gov](mailto:beth.gingold@dc.gov) to request special hauling services. For example, football games and other large sporting events may require additional hauling services.

## Reduce Waste from the Event

Take steps to reduce waste generated from the event. Here are some ideas:

- **Limit handouts** – Encourage exhibitors to limit handouts to attendees.
- **Avoid boxed meals** – The boxes from boxed meals result in a large volume of wasted material. This causes bins to overflow quickly, which means more bags used and more visits for the school custodial staff to the dumpster.
- **Serve made-to-order food** – Hire food trucks or other made-to-order food services, which can cut down on food waste drastically.
- **Serve snacks instead of a meal** – Consider serving a snack instead of a meal, like Bruce Monroe Elementary School did during its STEM Fair in 2015. Read the case study in the Appendix below.
- **Don't serve food** – Opt to not serve food at the event. At the Maury Elementary Think Tank and STEM Expo, for instance, the event organizer held the event from 5:30pm to 8:00pm and did

not serve any snacks or food. Because the event was scheduled during such a large time window, attendees ate before or after the event.

- **Make a plan for leftover food:** Events often generate a lot of food waste, especially events with catered food. Food trucks and other made-to-order food services can cut down on food waste drastically. Have a plan for uneaten food waste leftover after the event. You can bring the food to a local food bank or homeless shelter. Other best practices include bringing the leftover food to the main exit of the building for people to grab on their way out of the building and offering the leftover food to student athletic teams practicing in the building during the event. Ask the school custodial staff if any athletic teams are practicing during the time of your event.

## Purchase Recyclable & Compostable Items

Contact anyone making purchases or providing supplies for the event, including staff, parents, the catering company, and food trucks, etc. Ask what materials they will be using and buying for the event. Suggest they buy only recyclable and compostable items.

Recyclability and compostability of a material 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, where DCPS organic waste is sent.

### Notes on specific items:

- **No Styrofoam™** - 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](#).
- **Paper cups w/ wax or PLA coating are preferred for composting** – Paper cups, such as coffee cups, are often a large volume of waste at events. The best cups to purchase are paper cups with wax coating or PLA coating (polyactic acid—an alternative to plastic lining). These cups can be composted at the composting facility where DGS sends organic waste. Paper cups with plastic lining and “biodegradable plastics” are NOT readily recyclable or compostable at our facilities.
- **Use only approved compostable utensils** – See the list, provided in the Appendix, of the compostable utensils that are currently accepted by our composting facility.

If you have questions about recyclability or compostability of certain items, please contact Beth Gingold at [beth.gingold@dc.gov](mailto:beth.gingold@dc.gov).



## Spread the Message

*Marketing materials:* In event marketing materials, include text that tells attendees 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:* Students can create posters or signs to promote the waste sorting station.

*Verbal announcements:* During verbal announcements at the event, remind event attendees to sort their waste at the waste sorting station. For instance, at conferences, speakers can reinforce the waste diversion goal to the audience before their session begins.

*Sample communication to caterers & exhibitors:*

Dear Exhibitors,

At the {Event Name} this year, we are managing waste in accordance with the DCPS Recycles! waste management protocol. We will be managing waste at waste sorting stations for the following waste streams: {include all that apply- trash, paper/flattened cardboard, mixed recyclables, organic waste}.

As you prepare for your exhibit, please consider the following:

- 1) Take steps to reduce waste generated at your exhibit.
- 2) Consider a “pack it in, pack it out” strategy. Whatever you bring into the school, bring out with you and reuse.
- 3) When you breakdown your exhibit, please recycle or dispose of your waste in the correct bin at the waste sorting station.
- 4) Purchase recyclable or compostable materials for the event.
  - a. **NO Styrofoam™** - As of January 1, 2016, the use of food service products made of expanded polystyrene, commonly known as foam or Styrofoam™, is banned in DC. The ban applies to all District businesses and organizations that serve food. Learn more at [Foam Free DC](#).
  - b. **Paper cups w/ wax or PLA coating are preferred for composting** – The best cups to purchase are paper cups with wax coating or PLA coating (polyactic acid—an alternative to plastic lining). These cups can be composted at our composting facility. Paper cups with plastic lining and “biodegradable plastics” are NOT readily recyclable or compostable at our facilities.
  - c. **Approved compostable utensils** – See the attached list for the compostable utensils that are accepted by our composting facility.

Thank you for helping achieve our waste reduction and diversion goals. Learn more about DCPS Recycles here: <http://dgs.dc.gov/page/dgs-healthy-schools>.

Sincerely,

Event Planning Team



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## Set Up Waste Sorting Stations

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



Example of waste sorting station in Garfield Elementary School's cafeteria

- **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 (food waste and soiled paper; 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. Clear plastic bags should be used for the blue bin so that custodial staff can monitor contamination and ensure the bag is disposed of correctly.
- **For schools without organics recycling pick-up,** a two-bin system is standard— one grey or 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 if beverages will be served at the event. 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 recycling dumpster after the event.

Each bin should be labeled with a label or sign noting which waste stream should go in the bin. If you do not have labels, DGS can provide PDF versions of labels and signs for you to print out and use at the event.

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

Additional liners and 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.

## Recruit 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) bin monitors per waste sorting station. Monitors will need gloves to pick out contaminants and to compact the trash during the event to reduce the number of bags needed.

## Hide or Label All Other Bins

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

If you cannot hide a bin, label it with a sign, such as the one pictured to the right, that reads “Do Not Use This Bin. Please Use the Waste Sorting Station.”



## Prohibit Eating in Classrooms

DCPS classrooms recycle paper ONLY. There is no standard procedure to recycle organics and mixed recyclables 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(s).

## 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)

Use the [DCPS Recycles! Waste Datasheet](#) to track volume and/or weight data about the waste from the event. This is a great way to engage students in real-world learning. Data collection can also 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 organics, # 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 scale you can weigh and log the weight of each bag.

## Appendix A. Example Events

### Key Elementary School PTA Back-to-School Picnic

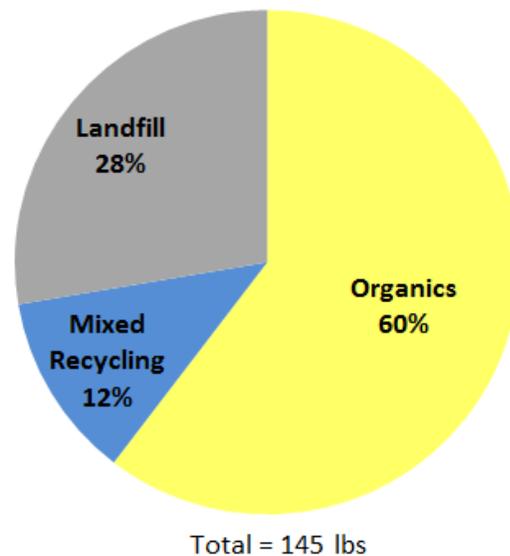
The PTA at Key Elementary School, with the help of DGS, had a waste sorting station at their back-to-school picnic in 2015. Parent volunteers helped to sort waste, recycle empty containers from the buffet table and pick up litter after the event.

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**

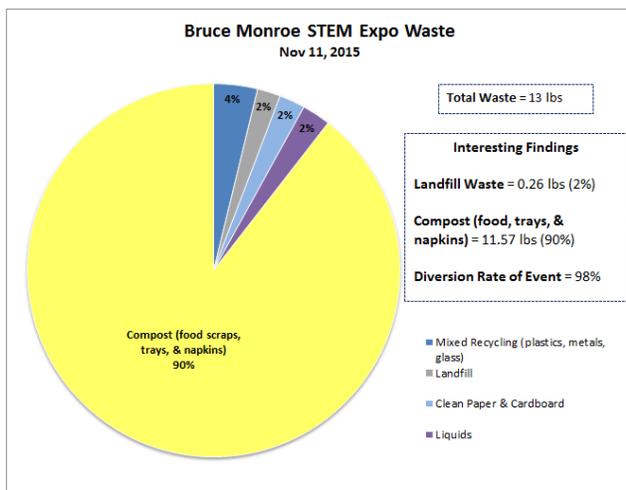


## Bruce Monroe Elementary School STEM Expo

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

Bruce Monroe served healthy fruit and vegetable snacks to STEM Expo attendees. Ordering healthy snacks instead of full meals substantially reduced waste at the event.

After the event, the Cardozo student volunteers 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.

## Appendix B. Acceptable Compostable Utensils List



### Prince George's County Organics Composting Facility

6550 Maude Savoy Brown Road  
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772  
301-627-6388



### Acceptable Compostable Utensils March 2015

		<p><a href="#">Asean Corporation</a> Corn based utensils. Sizes: Item #: cPLA-001, cPLA-002, cPLA-003</p>
		<p><a href="#">bamboo</a> Bamboo utensils. Sizes: Item #: 061400, 061800, 061600, 061500, 061700</p>
		<p><a href="#">Bioshell Tableware</a> Compostable CPLA Utensils Sizes: 6.5" Item #: CPLA-UT-F6.5</p>
		<p><a href="#">Birchware</a> Wooden utensils. Sizes: Item #: WDC-160B-F, WDC-160B-K, WDC-160B-S</p>
		<p><a href="#">Eco Products</a> Corn based Utensils Sizes: Fork, Spoon, Knife Item #: SO11, SO12, SO13</p>
		<p><a href="#">ecoKloud</a> cPLA Corn based utensils. Sizes: 6.5" Item #: EG-FO-PS-65, EG-SP-PS-65, EG-KN-PS-65, EG-RK-PS</p>
		<p><a href="#">Ecoware</a> Wooden utensils. Sizes: Item #: GW-2404, GW-2406, GW-2405</p>



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**Acceptable Compostable Utensils – continued**  
**March 2015**

	<p><b>Global Bio Alternatives</b>          Bio plastic utensils.          Sizes:          Item #: 001T, 001TS, 001K, 001F</p>
	<p><b>Leafware LLC</b>          Birch wood fork          Sizes: 7"</p>
	<p><b>Nat-Ur (Cereplast)</b>          Regular and heavy duty corn based utensils.          Sizes:          Item #: 8921670000: 6900, 7000, 7100</p>
	<p><b>Natur-Tec</b>          mPLA cutlery.          Sizes:          Item #: 01009-B01, 01021-B01, 01006-B01, 03168-B01, NT1890-Bulk-00012, NT1890-Bulk-00013, NT1890-Bulk-00014, NT1890-IND-00014, NT1890-IND-00015, NT1890-IND-00016, NT1890-IND-00017</p>
	<p><b>Vegware</b>          Corn based cutlery.          Sizes: 6.5" Knife and Fork          Item #: JF6JAK, JF65AF</p>
	<p><b>WNA</b>          Earth Sense Vine utensils.          Sizes:          Item #: CGESV: FKBR500, KNBR400; ESV: KBK500, KNBK500  <a href="#">Click here to locate a distributor</a></p>
	<p><b>World Centric</b>          Corn based utensils.          Sizes:          Item #: FO-PS-6, SP-CS-WH, SP-PS-6</p>