

Zero Waste Schools

FAQs for Custodian Engineers



Why Zero Waste?

Recycling and composting your school's waste has a lot of benefits, including a cleaner building and fewer pests. Proper sorting will also help you make the most of your Department of Sanitation pick-ups, reducing large piles of trash on your curb. Finally, when you recycle and compost, you help to create a better environment for the whole city.

Why was my school chosen?

The Department of Sanitation (DSNY) and the Department of Education (DOE) identified two school truck routes along which all schools currently receive organics collection. All schools on these routes will be included in the Zero Waste Schools Initiative.

What does this mean for my custodial team?

Though it is the **responsibility of students and staff** to properly sort the trash, you and your cleaning crew have a huge influence on the success of the Zero Waste program.

- The evening cleaning crew must maintain the separation of recyclables during collection and disposal.
- Monitor sorting stations throughout the school for consistency of location and ensure that recycling and trash containers are always co-located and properly labeled.
- Custodian Engineers should instruct and train crews to keep waste streams separated.
- **Please keep recycling, organics, and trash in distinct curbside piles** according to existing DSNY collection times. To check your DSNY schedule, visit: www.nyc.gov/zerowasteschools
- The curb is not to be used as a storage area for recyclables or trash. Materials that are placed on the curb on the wrong day will not be picked up by DSNY.
- Please provide teachers with additional bags for in-classroom food parties.

Will there be a change to our DSNY collection?

NO! Your school's collection service will not change.

- **Organics** collections will continue to be Monday - Friday. Organics collection removes all food and plate waste daily. Please ensure proper sorting of food, food-soiled paper, and compostable plates into brown organics bins.
- **Paper & Cardboard** collections will continue to be Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
- **Metal, Glass, Rigid Plastics, and Carton** collections will continue to be Tuesday and Thursday.
- **Trash** collection (2 or 3 times a week depending on borough) will not change with the start of the Zero Waste Schools Initiative. Proper and consistent sorting of waste will be integral to program success while also having the benefit of minimizing trash storage issues.

Trash and recyclables CANNOT be stored on curbs. Items must be set out only on your school building's designated collection days.

What happens if the recycling, compost, and trash are not properly sorted?

If trash is not separated from recycling and/or organic material per City law, your regular DSNY services will be compromised. Services will run more smoothly when source separation of recycling, organics, and trash is happening throughout the inside and outside of school buildings at all times. Consult with your Principal, Sustainability Coordinator, and DOE Zero Waste Coordinator to troubleshoot contamination issues.

What free materials are available to my school?

- Classroom bins.
- Sorting stations for offices, common areas, and teachers lounges (as needed).
- Cafeteria sorting stations and sign holders.
- Ample signs, posters, and decals for all bins.

You can order additional wall posters, signs, and decals for bins directly to your facility at the DSNY website: <http://on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials-schools-organics>

Do I have to use the containers and signs provided by DOE/DSNY?

Yes! Uniformity across all Zero Waste Schools will establish consistency and familiarity for students as they move up from elementary to middle school to high school.



What is required of after-school programs using the cafeteria and serving food?

After-school programs must comply with recycling laws and composting rules. A lack of cooperation with program regulations leads to inconsistent messaging to students and staff, thereby increasing confusion overall. Please work with after-school programs to ensure sufficient brown bins and trash bags for sorting stations.

What is the role of administrators, staff, and teachers?

Principal, staff, and teacher oversight and participation is crucial in getting the students to follow composting and recycling rules.

More supervision and structure might be required in the cafeteria until students are properly sorting their waste and recycling/composting becomes routine.

Teachers need to follow standardized bin set-up in classrooms and provide oversight on daily recycling. In-classroom food parties must also comply with recycling laws.

What is the role of our school's Sustainability Coordinator?

- Work with you to monitor overall recycling and composting participation.
- Troubleshoot issues.
- Facilitate communications with DOE Zero Waste Coordinator and Recycling Champions Program Outreach Coordinator as needed.

What is the role of SchoolFood?

- Monitor the sorting stations in cafeterias for fullness and switch out bags or organics bins as needed.
- Recycle kitchen packaging and collect food scraps for organics collection.
- If your school participates in the Breakfast in the Classroom program, SchoolFood staff has been directed to pick up trash from classrooms and sort recycling, organic waste, and trash in the kitchen to maintain compliance with these mandated programs.

Contact:

ZeroWasteSchools@schools.nyc.gov for more information about assistance and free education programming.

