

Zero Waste Schools

FAQs for Sustainability Coordinators



Why Zero Waste?

Recycling and composting your school's waste has a lot of benefits, including a cleaner building and fewer pests. Recycling connects directly to STEM education and helps students cultivate healthy habits.

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 Sustainability Coordinators?

Sustainability Coordinators have a huge influence on the success of the Zero Waste program. This program will provide resources and support to help Sustainability Coordinators improve recycling and organics collection. Sustainability Coordinators should:

- Continue to submit mandatory annual sustainability plans.
- Be encouraged to partner with outreach staff to schedule assemblies, PDs, and teacher outreach.
- Be encouraged to start and/or oversee a student green team to get students engaged in recycling. Resources and support are available through Recycling Champions.

Monitor participation and troubleshoot with DOE Zero Waste Coordinators and the Custodian Engineer.

What free resources are available to my school?

- Classroom bins.
- Sorting stations for offices, common areas, and teacher lounges (as needed).
- Cafeteria sorting stations and sign holders.
- Ample signs, posters, and decals for all bins.
- Assembly programs and in-class activities for students from Recycling Champions.
- Curriculum and activity development assistance.
- Professional development for ALL adult staff.

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

What should a classroom setup look like?

- 3-bin setup should include:
 - 1 black trash bin.
 - 1 blue metal/glass/plastic/cartons bin.
 - 1 green paper bin.
- Recycling bins next to every trash bin.
- Bins should be together and in the same place every day.

Decals and posters should be placed on and above bins.



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 DOE Zero Waste Coordinator to troubleshoot contamination issues.

Do we 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 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.

What is the role of our Custodian Engineer?

- Distribute, label, and set up the free bins provided to your school by the DOE.
- Custodial staff should maintain the bin setups required to dispose of trash, recycling, and organics daily.
- Instruct and train crews to maintain waste separation during evening collection and to place trash, recycling, and organics on the curb in separate piles according to DSNY schedule.

It is the responsibility of students and staff to sort trash, recyclables, and organics into the correct bins.

What can I do to help my school reach Zero Waste?

- Encourage participation and involvement from teachers, students, and staff.
- If possible, get parents involved.
- Consistently model waste sorting in classrooms.

Seek support from DOE Zero Waste Coordinators and Recycling Champions Program Coordinators.

Contact:

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

