

NYS: Wasted Food Resource for Compost Champions



READY TO REDUCE WASTED FOOD?

By taking steps to reduce wasted food, schools contribute to a more sustainable future. This fosters a culture of environmental stewardship among students and their school community.

Key elements to successfully reduce wasted food include:

- strategic purchasing
- right-sizing portions
- donating excess edible food
- food scrap diversion

Success depends on the cooperation between 4 key stakeholder groups:



Administrators



Compost
Champion



Custodial Staff



Dining Services
Supervisor

As a Compost Champion, you will:

- Advocate for the program and promote participation from students and staff
- Lead the setup, monitoring, and success of wasted food reduction efforts
- Collaborate with key stakeholders to make the program a success

GET SET TO START YOUR PROGRAM

• **Identify opportunities for food share or donation**

- Review [USDA's Share Table Guide](#), [NYS Education Department Share Table Guidance](#), and [CET's Food Donation Guidance](#)
- Ensure share table has signage
- Define daily plan for leftover items, such as in-school food pantry or external donation
- Coordinate with food rescue organizations
 - Familiarize yourself with accepted items, pick-up frequency, minimum quantities, etc.
 - Local food rescue organizations might take daily leftover share table items as well as unserved items from the kitchen
 - *Note: Refrigerated and prepared items need to follow safety guidelines before being donated. Put back on ice or refrigerate as soon as possible.*
- Provide contacts to cafeteria/food service staff for food rescue partners to coordinate scheduling as needed

• **Assess opportunities for food scrap and recycling diversion**

- Good: Visual assessment by looking in bins
- Better: Visual assessment plus [wasted food estimation calculation](#)
- Best: Visual assessment, plus wasted food estimation calculation, plus:
 - Divert all the waste from a lunch wave or two
 - Have students help sort, measure, evaluate, and propose solutions
 - Take lots of pictures or a video to use in education materials
- **Connect that removing food scraps from the trash not only reduces the weight and smell but also reduces greenhouse gas emissions**

- **Manage the cafeteria separation program**

- Build enthusiasm among students and staff to implement waste reduction efforts
- Teach volunteers, students, teachers, and staff the importance of proper separation, waste reduction, and the environmental impact of wasted food
- Coordinate set-up/breakdown and monitoring of cafeteria sorting stations
- Coordinate with custodial staff for the emptying and maintaining of sorting station bins
- Bin signage (from CET or developed by the school) needs to be posted for each material stream
- Train student or volunteer monitors on what items go in each sorting station bin. Supply gloves and tongs or trash grabbers to easily correct items placed in the wrong bins. Uncorrected contamination leads to copycat users and reinforces the wrong message about proper sorting.
- Organize workshops or presentations to bring awareness about what is/is not accepted in each bin. This can be done in the first week of school with reminders conducted after breaks. Consider creating a video to show on digital message boards during lunch and/or morning announcements and use it for refresher training.



Source: [Recycling Guide from RecycleSmart.org](https://www.recycle-smart.org/)

LAUNCH YOUR PROGRAM

- **Provide ongoing feedback** to Administration, Custodial, and Dining Services on successes and challenges for continuous program improvement
- **Engage students through a compost club or Green Team** to encourage involvement in sorting, monitoring, and learning how to teach their peers
 - Examples from [MassDEP's The Green Team](#), [Rutgers: NJ Leaves No Bite Behind](#), [Cornell University](#), [WWF Food Waste Warriors](#), [K12 Food Rescue](#), and [Central Vermont](#).
- **Celebrate success!**
- **Don't forget about recycling:** Mixed recycling includes cardboard, paper, plastic, glass, and metal containers. Resources like the [RecycleRightNY](#) website are available to clarify what materials are included in mixed recycling.

In New York State, CET works with schools to develop or expand their best practices for wasted food reduction and diversion of usable resources.



cetonline.org | 886.306.0911 | wastedfood@cetonline.org

This document has been produced through grant funding received by the NYSDEC's Rethink Food Waste program. Some resources were developed through other programs but contain relevant information for this project.