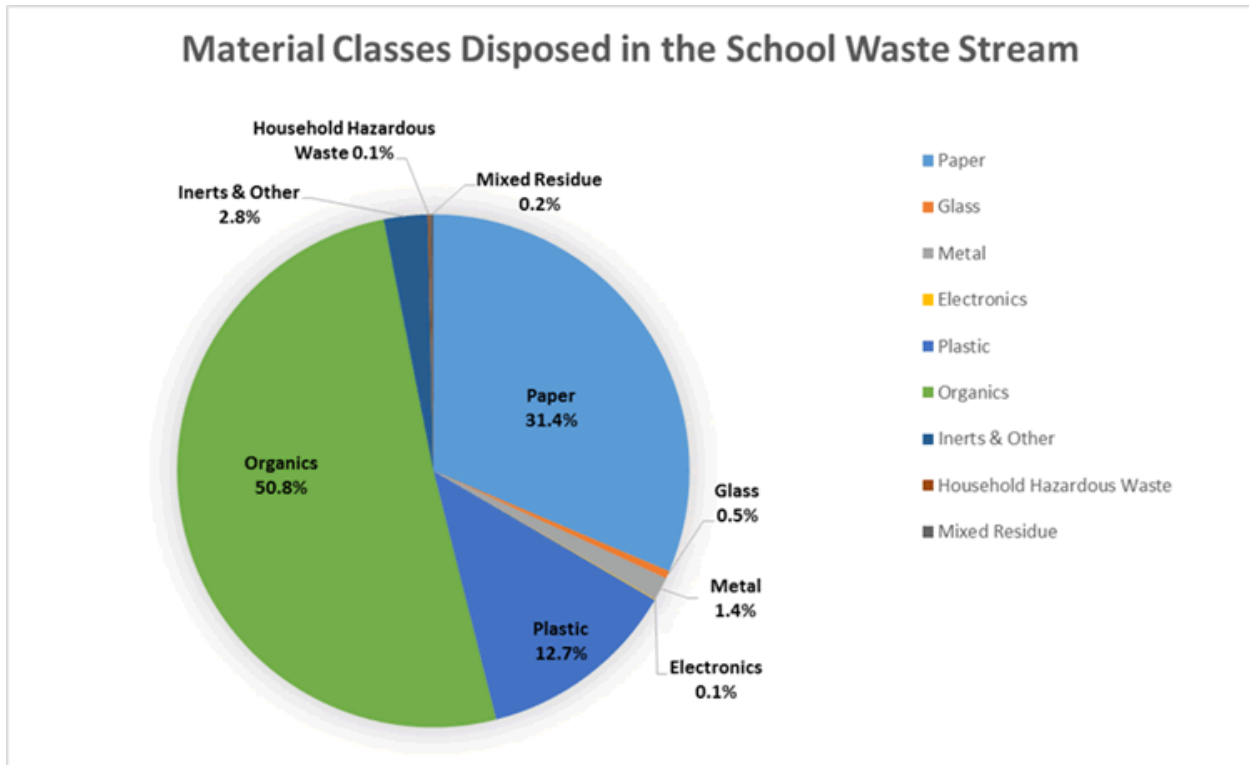


YES – Youth for Environmental Sustainability

Section 1 - Introduction

Welcome to the Youth for Environmental Sustainability (YES) Program developed by Los Angeles County Public Works' School Recycling Program. This toolkit has been developed to assist K-8 schools to establish campus waste reduction and recycling programs.

Benefits of the Program



School campuses can generate large quantities of materials that are typically disposed. The wasted materials consist primarily of: mixed paper; cardboard; food packaging; yard trimmings; and food. The costs to dispose of these materials can be significant. Alternatively, in many cases, these materials can be reduced, reused, repurposed, donated, recycled, or composted, which can save money and benefit the environment. In California, schools and universities dispose over 500,000 tons of waste per year .⁽¹⁾ By reducing disposal, schools can help to reduce methane, a potent greenhouse gas that is emitted when organic materials decompose in landfills.

<https://calrecycle.ca.gov/recycle/schools/composition/>

It's the Law

The YES toolkit is a valuable resource to assist schools to comply with state laws. In recent years California has passed some of the most progressive laws in the nation for reducing, recovering, and recycling resources. Local education agencies are currently required to maintain mandatory commercial recycling and organic waste recycling programs, including ensuring that schools have properly labeled recycling containers to collect bottles, cans, paper, cardboard, food waste, and other recyclable and organic materials. The newest and most comprehensive regulation, Senate Bill 1383 (SB 1383), expanded the definition of organic waste to include food scraps, landscape and pruning waste, organic textiles and carpets, lumber, and wood.

SB 1383 applies to all local education agencies, including:

- K-12 public and charter schools
- School districts
- County offices of education (that are not subject to the control of the city or county solid waste regulations)

SB 1383 places several requirements on local education agencies which went into effect on January 1, 2022, including:

- Recycle organic waste
- Educate employees and students about organic waste prevention
- Inspect organic waste containers for contamination, inform employees if containers are contaminated, and instruct employees on how to properly sort material into the correct containers.
- Provide containers to collect organic waste and recyclables in all areas where disposal containers are provided, except in restrooms.
- Install proper color-coded containers: blue for recycling, green for organic waste and gray/black for trash, and ensure all containers are appropriately labeled to identify accepted and prohibited materials.

Additionally, starting January 1, 2024, local education agencies with an on-site food facility (like a school cafeteria) will be required to donate to a food recovery organization all edible food that they would otherwise throw away. Schools and districts don't have to wait until 2024 to start a food recovery program. You can start now by donating food to local food banks, food pantries, and other food recovery organizations and services.

Food Recovery Requirements

- Arrange to recover the maximum amount of edible food that would otherwise be disposed.
- Contract with food recovery organizations or services that will collect the education agencies' edible food or self-haul their edible food to a food recovery organization.

- Have a formal agreement in place with a food recovery organization or food recovery service.

For more information on these laws, visit:

<https://calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/slcp/schools/>.

How to Use this Toolkit

This toolkit includes the guidance you need to set up a waste reduction and recycling program. The toolkit provides mechanisms to involve students, parents, teachers, staff, and volunteers. It features many opportunities to incorporate learning prompts in mathematics, science, and leadership development. There are also predeveloped lesson guides to kick-start the learning. With Simple-to-follow guidelines and templates that your school can customize, and step-by-step instructions, you're already on the path to success. Let's get started...YES!

Get permission!

Yes, you must talk to your school administrators! While it may be tempting to take the ball and run, it's important to make sure that you've checked in with the appropriate school personnel. Coordinate activities with your school administrator or principal, and custodial staff.



Section 2 - Let's Get Started!

Once you've gotten permission from your school, it's time to get started. Follow these guidelines to understand how to:

- Estimate the amount of trash, organic waste, and recyclables being generated
- Get a quote from your authorized waste hauler

How much do we generate?

Before you know the types and quantities of recyclables and organic waste that your school has, you need to get a full picture of the amount of materials being **generated**. "*Generated*" means how much waste and recyclables are produced at your school. To determine an estimate of how much waste and recyclables are being produced and disposed (thrown away), use the Recycling Estimator Tool included in this toolkit. The estimator will also help you identify how much recycling and organic waste collection service is needed.

The truth is, much of what a school throws away is probably *recyclable* or *compostable*. In fact, nearly half of what schools throw away can be recycled or composted.

Working with a Waste Hauler

Once you have an estimate of how much trash, recycling, and organic waste services your school needs, you can work with a waste hauler, aka service provider, to assist setting up services. All waste haulers are required to:

- Perform a waste assessment at your school. This assessment can help verify accurate service levels of trash, recycling, and organic waste
- Provide at least one (1) cubic yard per week of free recycling service, and additional recycling at 50% the cost of disposal.

For schools located in County unincorporated communities, visit <https://pw.lacounty.gov/epd/swims/Businesses/CommercialFranchiseSystem.aspx> for more information on County Authorized Commercial Franchise Haulers, or consult with your school district directly.

Section 3 - Engaging Volunteers and Participants

Implementing a successful waste reduction and recycling program involves a team of participants. This section will help identify the roles and responsibilities of participants, assist with organizing and leading planning meetings, and provide templates of outreach materials that you can customize for use at your school.

Who are the champions that will help this program succeed at your school?

Students

Students will actively need to participate in the program if it is going to be successful. Students are the front-line participants and can assist with monitoring and educational efforts. Students can actively participate in almost every aspect of the recycling program, including assessing the types and quantities of recyclables to be collected, monitoring participation in the classrooms or common areas, educating fellow students, and reporting on the progress of the program. This toolkit is designed to empower students to actively participate in the program and learn why waste reduction and recycling can contribute to a healthy environment.

Teachers

Teachers should encourage students to participate and provide educational programming that supports the campus' waste reduction and recycling efforts. This toolkit offers teachers a variety of ways to incorporate recycling and waste reduction educational components into lesson planning.

Staff and Administration

The role of school staff and administration is to actively promote and support the program. If students don't perceive the program as a priority, it will lose momentum. Administrators can promote the value of the program by encouraging teachers to

incorporate learning aspects of the program into the classroom, and by sharing how much money the program has saved the school, or how much has been recycled. Administration should track key performance indicators of the program and continue to highlight the value of the program throughout each school year. The administration can also provide support through assemblies, games, and prizes associated with meeting target goals.

Custodial and Kitchen Personnel

Custodial and kitchen staff will play a key role in the program, as they will handle much of the recyclable and compostable materials as part of their job. They can serve as program monitors and advocates by sharing feedback on what is working and what needs help, such as the wrong materials being placed in the recycling bins, or recyclables being thrown out.

Parents and Other Volunteers

Parents and other volunteers can assist in many ways, including supporting and encouraging student participation. They can also help to monitor what students place in the trash and recycling bins, and help to identify where additional help is needed, such as more bins, outreach, or incentives. Most of all, parents and other volunteers can assist with monitoring, supporting, and encouraging student participation.

Get participant and volunteer input and feedback before the program starts

Now that you know who the program participants are, it's important that you involve them in the process from the very beginning. This can include designing surveys, coordinating planning meetings, and/or providing training. Every school will be unique in how they approach engagement from their volunteers and participants. This toolkit includes some sample materials that can assist in this effort, including:

- Campus Leadership Team Meeting Agenda Template
- Campus Leadership Team Input Template
- Stakeholder Interview Questions Template

Notify everyone at the commencement of the program.

Prepare for the program by sharing information about it with everyone at your school. Implement the outreach campaign to inform and engage the entire school. Build anticipation for the program before it is launched through the use of the YES program templates, including the following:

- Student Informational Card and Drawing Activity Template
- Student Pledge Card Template

Section 4 - Launching the Program: Training and Program Resources

YES, you are ready to launch the program. This toolkit provides a variety of templates that can be used for training and education through activities and lesson plans. The training section is broken down into three training components for:

- Teachers
- Custodial and Kitchen Staff
- Students and program participants

Plus, the toolkit has a section on resources that contains templates for outreach materials, signage, posters, and a link to request classroom recycling bins.

Teacher Training Resources

The goal of training classroom teachers is to gain their support for the program. Teachers should be made aware of the program logistics, they should be informed about state and local requirements to recycle and provided with the toolkit in-class training and lesson plans. This toolkit contains the following resources for teachers:

- Teacher Meeting Agenda Template
- Meeting Overview PowerPoint
- Teacher Standards Concept Menu

Custodial and Kitchen Staff Training

Training the custodial and kitchen staff is a key element of the overall program success. The kitchen or cafeteria area typically generates a large volume of material in the back-of-house where the chef works. The custodial staff is responsible for handling all the materials generated on the campus and moving these materials to the trash or recycling bins. Making sure that custodial and kitchen staff are properly trained will help ensure that your program runs smoothly and successfully. This toolkit contains the Custodial and Kitchen Training Overview to assist with your training efforts.

Student and Staff Training

Typically, students and staff will participate in many aspects of the school recycling program. For purposes of training, it's key that ALL students and staff understand how to correctly participate. This toolkit contains several resources to assist with your training efforts, including:

- Recycling Assembly Guidelines
- Student Training Resources:
 - Recycling Program Training Outline: a guideline of recyclable sorting training for student (3rd-5th) to receive the recycle champion.
 - Champion Sort Team Name badges and Sign-up Sheet
 - Reduce Lesson plan with Activities
 - Reuse Lesson plan with Activities

Program Resources

The more visible the recycling program is to everyone on campus, the better the results will be. Placing signage, posters, and messages throughout the campus will be an ongoing reminder to participate. This toolkit contains a variety of signage and posters that can be utilized in the existing format or can be customized. Available print materials include:

- Bin Signage Bin Signage Customizable Template
- Cafeteria Poster Cafeteria Poster Customizable Template
- Classroom Poster Classroom Poster Customizable Template
- Material Type Posters (3) Material Type Posters – 3 Customizable Templates

To request a starter kit of classroom and deskside recycling bins, please contact the YES Coordinator at: BusinessRecycling@dpw.lacounty.gov

Section 5 - Best Practices for Reducing Waste

In addition to recycling, there are many things your school can do to reduce the amount of waste generated. This is also referred to as **waste reduction**. Waste reduction means reducing purchases and consumption of products that become waste. These guidelines will help your school be less wasteful of our planet's precious resources.

In the Office and Classroom

- Promote reuse by encouraging staff, teachers, and visitors to use china, glassware, and silverware instead of single-use products. Consider providing a reusable mug or cup to employees as an incentive to reduce the use of disposable products.
- Establish a reuse area for unwanted office items where reusable items can be stored rather than thrown away. Encourage staff to reuse these items in the workplace or students to reuse these items in the classroom. Reusable items may include binders, folders, staplers, calculators, pens, markers crayons, rulers, etc. These items can also be donated to non-profit organizations if they are no longer needed or used.

In the Kitchen and Cafeteria

- Replace single-use plastic utensils and compostable paper trays and food boats. It is recommended that these items be replaced with reusable utensils and plastic compartmentalized trays. Compostable counterparts may also be available but check with your local service provider to ensure they can be recycled or composted.
- Encourage students to only pack lunches with food that will be eaten. Additionally, encourage the use of reusable lunch boxes and containers versus disposal packaging.

- Establish a “food swap” table, where students can exchange food items. These tables are typically placed within the lunch area. Students may place an item on the table that they do not want to eat. Other students may pick up an item to eat. Click here for more information on [Share Tables](#).
- Establish a food donation program with a food recovery organization. Visit the [Food DROP website](#)
- for more information and to find a partner organization.

Campus-wide

- Consider installing hand dryers to reduce the amount of paper towels generated in restrooms. Door opening hardware can also be installed to eliminate the need for using paper towels to turn door handles.
- Install drought-tolerant landscaping and grasscycle to reduce the amount of yard trimmings that are disposed.

Section 6 - Best Practices for Recycling and Composting

In the office and classroom

- Place a recycling bin in every classroom for easy recycling and place trash bins outside of classrooms for use as needed.
- Deskside trash bins in offices should be removed and replaced with deskside recycling bins. Staff can dispose of trash in strategically placed bins in common areas, and conveniently recycle at their desk.
- Recycling bins should have proper signage so it is clear to staff and students what they can and cannot recycle.

In the Kitchen and Cafeteria

- Establish a vermicomposting program, where students feed food scraps to worms. The finished product can then be used to the greenery on the grounds.
- Set up a compost pile for food scraps that cannot be vermicomposted, and blend it with copious amount of yard waste on site. Keeping yard waste out of the trash bins will reduce the volume of materials discarded.
- Establish an organic waste collection and recycling system for food, food soiled paper, paper towels, and food scraps that cannot be composted on site.

Campus-wide

- Recycling containers should be placed next to all printers, in common areas, and paired with trashcans.
- Recycling information should be included in the new-hire orientation process so staff is aware of the recycling procedures.

- Donate all excess school supplies, equipment, and clothing at the end of each school year.

Section 7 - Monitoring and Reporting Results

If you've gotten this far in the toolkit, then chances are you have a successful recycling program established at your school. YES! The best way to make sure the program remains successful is through monitoring and reporting the results. This section provides some simple tips for long-term success.

- Make sure that the program always has champions. Champions are those people who will commit to overseeing the program's success for the school year.
- Have a long-term plan for reestablishing training and leadership from year-to-year.
- Have scheduled monitoring of all signage, bins, and equipment. Use the Bin Monitoring Template to track fullness and contamination in the bins.
- Have a system in place to repair or replace damaged signage and equipment
- Provide ongoing training and outreach throughout the school year
- Have a system for tracking recycling reports, notices from hauler about contamination or overflow, and feedback from participants.
- Meet at least quarterly to review and discuss the program, including best practices and what needs improvement.
- Each year, survey key partners, such as teachers and staff about the program. A sample Year-end Staff Survey Template is provided.
- Have a system for sharing results with all participants. Create a recycling report to help your school keep track of their progress or email businessrecycling@pw.lacounty.gov to request a free consultation from the County School Recycling Program.

Section 8 - Additional Resources

County Programs

The County offers a number of programs to assist your school, including:

- Environmental Defender school assemblies
- Generation Earth Program
- School Garden Program
- Fight Food Waste LA
- Food Donation & Recovery Outreach Program (Food DROP)
- Los Angeles County Food Redistribution Initiative

For more information about these programs, visit:

<https://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/sbr/schools-county-programs.aspx> or to request assistance with implementing your school recycling program, email BusinessRecycling@dpw.lacounty.gov

Model School Programs

There are a variety of model programs for you to learn from that may be something your institution can implement. See how other institutions are recycling by visiting:

<https://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/sbr/schools-model-programs.aspx>

Clean LA

Clean LA offers a variety of information on ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle, as well as information on household hazardous and electronic waste collection events. For more information, visit: www.888cleanla.com

The California Education and the Environment Initiative (EEI) Curriculum

The K-12 EEI Curriculum uses the environment as a context to help students learn science and history-social science. The curriculum is a model for educators to demonstrate how to integrate environmental literacy into classroom instruction.

<https://www.californiaeei.org/Curriculum/>

CalRecycle

Provides several links and resources to assist schools implement recycling programs.

<https://calrecycle.ca.gov/recycle/schools/>

Resources to assist schools set up recycling, organics, and food donation programs.

<https://calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/slcp/schools/>