

Boulder Valley School District Green Purchasing Guide



Intro



The purpose of the BVSD Green Purchasing Guide is to provide faculty and staff with information highlighting what types of environmentally responsible products are available. The Boulder Valley School District is committed to becoming a leader in environmental sustainability by limiting our negative impact on the environment and using natural resources wisely and in a manner which meets the needs of the community today and in the indefinite future.¹ As we continue to strive to meet our sustainability goals we must look at how our individual purchases through procurement cards (P-cards) and purchase orders can be adapted to help reach our ambitious goals set forth by our [Sustainability Management System](#) Document. This guide provides green attributes to look for when purchasing products, and also provides best practices when using products to promote more sustainable habits.

Overview



There is great power and freedom provided by the districts P- cards and purchase order which implies there is great responsibility. As we move forward and adapt as a school district we must first consider the advantage of using the P-cards as opposed to purchase orders. P-cards require less processing and transaction cost, making them much more efficient. In the 2012-2013 school year we spent over 8 million dollars on district P-cards and continue to increase faculty purchasing each year. Considering our sustainability goals we must look to promote environmentally responsible industries and understand how much of an environmental impact our combined purchases can have. Green products reduce energy consumption, are less toxic, and reduce our impact by using recycled materials to make new products, **often at little or no additional up front cost.** Green products also create a healthier learning environment. In order to help BVSD faculty and staff be more environmentally conscious when conducting district spending, this guide

is organized into six categories of commonly purchased items. They are as follows: Paper Products; Cleaning Products, Paints, & Markers; Small Appliances; Classroom and Office Equipment; Events and Food, and Small Furniture Items. Within each category are five sections:

Introduction: Provides information as to why purchasing green is important for each category.

Components: Specifies what products each category is directed towards.

Green Attributes: Lists what to look for, and what to avoid, when purchasing green products.

Questions to Ask: Provides some sample questions to ask when looking for green products under each category.

Best Practices: This section gives advice on the best way to use and purchase the products.

The second part of this guide provides **Definitions and Information** for some of the words and organizations used throughout the guide. These words are in **green text** throughout the guide.

Paper Products

Introduction

Many of our industrial paper production processes abuse our forests, increase landfills, and leave byproducts in the environment. Buying green paper products is an easy way to decrease our environmental impact.

Components

Printing, copy, and fax paper, notebooks, folders, envelopes, calendars, and disposables (napkins, toilet paper, tissue paper, paper towels, etc.).



Green Attributes

High **post-consumer recycled content***, **compostable**, **Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified**, **Total Chlorine Free (TCF)** or **Environmental Chlorine Free (ECF)** bleaching processes, and avoid deeply dyed paper.

Questions to Ask

Does the Warehouse have these paper products available? What paper products are made with high **post-consumer content**? What paper

products are **Green Seal** or **FSC** certified? What paper products are produced with environmentally friendly processes, for example Environmental Chlorine Free bleaching?

Best Practices

- Contact the Warehouse to check availability of desired paper products (Warehouse Helpdesk at 720-561-5020).
- Use electronic communication instead of printing.
- Make copies and prints double-sided.
- Do not print on neon or deeply-dyed paper, which cannot be recycled but can be composted.
- Buy in bulk or check Warehouse for paper products before buying in inefficient quantities.

*NOTE: "Recycled" does not always mean that a product contains 100% recovered content or that the content is post-consumer materials. Therefore, it is important to specify that you would like products with high post-consumer (preferably 100%) recycled content. See Definitions & Information on page 10.

Cleaning Products, Paints, & Markers

Introduction

The cleaning, paint, and marker products we use often contain toxic chemicals. As a result when we use them they can be harmful to humans, and they eventually end up in our environment and negatively impact our waterways and ecosystems. Use the guideline below to make sure your products are contributing towards a healthy learning environment.

Components

Window, desk, bathroom, and floor cleaners, dishwashing liquids and soaps, disinfectants, air fresheners, paints, and markers.

Green Attributes

Non-toxic, Green Seal or Design for Environment (DfE) certification, low volatile organic compound (VOC) content, water based paints, biodegradability, use of renewable resources (such as bio-based solvents from citrus, seed, vegetable, and pine oils), designed for use in cold water,

pump sprays as opposed to aerosols, and use of microfiber cloths instead of alternatives (eg. Paper towels and rags).

Questions to Ask

Does the Warehouse have these cleaning products available? Do you offer any non-toxic cleaning products, markers, or paints? Do you offer any DfE or Green Seal certified products? Has the manufacturer conducted a life cycle study on their products? Is this paint water based, as opposed to solvent based? Do you have the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for the product?

Best Practices

- Contact the Warehouse to check availability of desired cleaning products (Warehouse Helpdesk at 720-561-5020).
- Avoid mixing cleaning products due to risk of creating harmful/ toxic mixtures.
- Look for “Low Odor” dry erase markers or other alternatives to dry erase markers; such as white board crayons.
- Buy water based paints rather than solvent based paints to avoid harmful fumes and health risks.

Small Appliances

Introduction

Many small appliances use significant amounts of energy, but can be used much more efficiently with a few easy steps.

Components

Microwaves, toasters, mini-fridges, coffee makers, and lamps.

Green Attributes

Energy Star certified products (particularly for refrigerators) and **energy efficient** light bulbs.

Questions to Ask

Did I turn off all my small appliances that are not in use? Is this product **Energy Star** certified or **energy efficient**?

Best Practices

- Turn off all small appliances when not in use.
- Unplug your small appliances that are used sporadically. Many appliances still use energy when turned off, by unplugging them we can stop this energy drain.

-When heating up small portions use the microwave over the oven.

-When purchasing light bulbs look for Energy Star ratings.

-Energy efficient bulbs:
fluorescent, halogen, CFL, or LED.

Classroom & Office Equipment

Introduction

Office equipment can be both energy and resource intensive. There have been recent changes by BVSD to centralize the use of office equipment and reduce inefficiencies which every employee should know about. For more information on BVSD Multi- Function Devices (MFDs) go to <http://www.bvsd.org/green/Documents/MFDflyer.pdf>.

Components

Computers, printers, fax machines, and copiers.

Green Attributes

Energy Star certified products.

Questions to Ask

Is this product Energy Star certified?
Did I go through the IT Technology Purchase Program (TPP) when purchasing this piece of equipment?

Best Practices

-When available, use the centrally located Multi-Function Devices for your printing, copying, and scanning needs. These devices create a single system for employees to be familiar with and are much more efficient than using multiple individual printers, scanners, or faxes.

-When printing use recycled paper, print on both sides, and print only when necessary (provide electronic copies when applicable).

-Contact IT or the Warehouse at the end of the equipment's life to properly recycle.

-Recycle toner cartridges when empty (check recycling services available through toner provider).

If you would like your electronic equipment to have district software installed and have IT support make sure you go through IT's Technology Purchase Program. For a complete list

of products on the Technology Purchase Program and more information visit their website. <http://www.bvsvd.org/IT/tpp/Pages/default.aspx>

Small Furniture Items

Introduction

Many of the small furniture items we purchase can be labor and material intensive. Look for lightly used items when purchasing small furniture to lengthen their life cycle.

Components

Desks, desk chairs, tables, shelves, and lamps.

Green Attributes

Look to the Warehouse for small furniture items and/or pieces of furniture made with sustainably harvested wood, or FSC certification.

Questions to Ask

Have I checked what the Warehouse has available yet? Is this product made with sustainably harvested wood? Is this product FSC certified?

Best Practices

- Look through the Warehouse Surplus webpage for available small furniture items (<http://www.bvsd.org/businessservices/staff/surplus/Pages/default.aspx>).
- Look for items made with sustainably harvested wood when purchasing new.
- Contact the Warehouse when disposing of furniture so it can be properly recycled or reused.

Events & Food

Introduction

Whether it's a faculty function or classroom event, consider some of the following easy steps to reduce your waste and look for healthy alternatives.

Components

Food, drinks, tableware (plates, bowls, and cups) and utensils, and paper products for events.

Green Attributes

Local and organic foods, avoid Styrofoam (polystyrene) products, reusable utensils and tableware (if reusables are not available use recycled or biodegradable), and recyclable or compostable utensils and paper

products.

Questions to Ask

Can Food Services adequately provide what I need? Is this food locally or organically grown? Am I using reusable products where possible? If reusables are not available, am I using utensils and paper products made from material that can be recycled or composted? Have I checked with Eco-Cycle about their Zero Waste products?

Best Practices

- Contact Food Services at 720-561-5042 to check catering options.
- Look to minimize packaging by ordering bulk food items, or finger foods, that have large serving trays or boxes.
- Check with Eco- Cycle about their Zero Waste products.
- Bring pitchers to serve drinks rather than using individually bottled drinks, and ask participants to bring their own water bottle.
- Consider offering healthy alternatives such as fruit and water or juice instead of cookies and soda and baked vs. fried items.
- Limit paper waste by posting event details and invites electronically.

Definitions & Information

-Alternative Bleaching Processes: Bleaching is the process used to whiten paper. Chlorine bleaching, which produces toxic dioxins, is the common method used. There are alternative bleaching processes which reduce or eliminate the emission of dioxins, which are as follows:²

-ECF (Environmental Chlorine Free): bleaching process that substitutes chlorine dioxide or other chlorine compounds for elemental chlorine gas.

-TCF (Total Chlorine Free): bleaching process that introduces no chlorine into the bleaching stage, using instead of oxygen, hydrogen peroxide, and ozone to separate and whiten fibers.

-Biodegradable: Describes a material or liquid that is capable of breaking down by natural processes.²

-Compostable: Describes a material that can be placed into a composition of decaying biodegradable materials and eventually turns into a nutrient-rich material. This does not include liquids.

-Design for the Environment (DfE): An EPA program that works to prevent pollution. DfE evaluates concerns with chemicals and analyses safer alternative chemicals. DfE allows the use of its logo on products that are made with safer chemicals.³

-Energy Efficient: Products that are energy efficient use less energy and produce less pollution than conventional products. Also, using these products can save money by lowering energy bills.

-Energy Star Label: The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established energy efficiency criteria for office products that reduce energy consumption and emissions. Energy Star equipment reduces pollution, lowers your energy bill, generates less heat, and has a longer life span than other

equipment.³

-Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certified Paper Products: Paper assured to come from more “responsibly harvested forests”. These forests are managed to ensure long-term renewable harvests, sustainable re-growth, and biodiversity protection.

-Green Seal certified products: products that have met life-cycle based sustainability standards.

-Low volatile organic compound (VOC): Low odor. Vapor density is lighter than air and emits fewer volatile organic compounds and other toxins.

-Non-Toxic: A substance or mixture of substances that is less likely to harm humans or other living organisms from airborne or skin contact in the environment. There are many toxic chemicals in the products we use; ammonia, benzenes, and formaldehyde are a few.

-Post-Consumer Recycled Paper: Paper that has been manufactured, used, and then recycled through a recycling program. “Recycled” paper is paper that has just been used and was leftover from the manufacturing process.

-Styrofoam (Polystyrene): The production and disposal of Styrofoam products contribute to a number of environmental issues. The production of Styrofoam products extrudes hydrofluorocarbons (HCFCs) which have been a major contributor to the issue of global warming. Styrofoam is also non-biodegradable and when discarded will remain in its physical form for hundreds of years.

-Solvent Based: Solvents are one of the causes of volatile organic compounds (see Low VOC definition). Look for water, vegetable, or citric bases.

References

1. Boulder Valley School District. "Sustainability Management System Document." Brendle Group. July 8, 2009.
2. University of Colorado Environmental Center. "Green Products Guide: A Purchaser's Guide to Environmentally Friendly Products." ecenter.colorado.edu, April 2001. Web.
*This guide was used as a framework when making the BVSD Green Purchasing Guide.
3. "US Environmental Protection Agency." epa.org. Web.

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