



Starting Organics Recycling in Your School Cafeteria

In the U.S., we waste 40 percent of all food. When food is thrown in the trash and brought to the landfill it produces harmful gasses that negatively affect our environment. According to the U.S. EPA, organic waste sent to landfills decomposes and produces 18% of U.S. methane gas emissions. Recycling at school can inspire students to care about the planet, to examine the resources that we use to make our world sustainable, to look at the consequences of using resources and generating pollution and waste. Learning these lifelong skills at a young age will ensure that these basics will become a custom and taught to the generations to come. MPS' True Food, No Waste initiative is addressing food waste prevention and recycling efforts within our district and working to make MPS an even healthier school system—ethically, environmentally, and economically.

1. **Create a team of recycling champions at your school.** These champions will advocate for and support your recycling efforts by helping with school-wide education, supervising cafeteria recycling sorting stations during lunch as needed, communicating with staff and families, and generating excitement at your school about organics recycling. This team could include teachers, support staff, administration, parents, community members, etc.
2. **Connect with your school's Senior Custodian**, this is one of the most important partnerships! Let them know that your school is interested in starting an organics recycling program and you have a team of staff and/or volunteers ready to support the effort.
 - a. If your school does not have green organics recycling bins, ask your head custodian to put in a request to other schools to inquire if there are any extra bins in the district that your school can have.
 - b. If no bins are available, your school will need to purchase the proper bins using school funds or fundraised money. Facilities and MPS Culinary and Wellness Services can help you identify bins sizes and other equipment, as well as suppliers to purchase from.
 - c. Ask your Senior Custodian to contact Plant Operations to request the drop-off of an organics dumpster. Supervisor Site Assignments are listed under "Additional Resources". • James Tschida, Director of Plant Operations – James.Tschida@mpls.k12.mn.us
3. **Educate!** Before you roll out organics recycling, educate your students and school community about: 1) the importance of organics recycling (environmentally, economically, etc), and 2) how to properly recycle organics at your school. Resources and ideas for outreach can be found in





our Education and Outreach for Cafeteria Recycling document, available on MPS Culinary & Wellness Services' True Food, No Waste webpage.

4. **Supervise.** During the first week of recycling implementation and longer as needed, recruit volunteers or your team of champions to oversee and help students properly sort their lunchtime waste.

5. **Sustain your organics recycling program:**

a. Your Senior Custodian can request green compost bags from Plant Operations. b. Maintain an active team of staff recycling champions to continue advocating for organics recycling at your school.

c. Form a student "Green Team" to encourage students to take ownership of recycling efforts. When peers are leading, students may be more likely to follow their lead! d. Subscribe to MPS CWS's bi-weekly newsletter, The Whole Carrot, for updates on True Food, No Waste

e. Contact MPS CWS for classroom or school-wide assembly presentations. Staff from CWS, the City of Minneapolis, and Hennepin County are all available to give onsite presentations.

f. Take a field trip! Hennepin County will provide bus transportation for schools to take students on environmental field trips. This can be a meaningful experience for students to learn about sustainability in action and develop a closer connection with the natural world. Examples of recycling-related destinations include: The Mulch Store in Rosemount, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community Organics Recycling Facility, and the Shakopee Dem-Con Recycling Center. Visit www.hennepin.us/environmentaleducation to learn more.

