

Recycler's Digest

Newsletter of the Green Schools Project
Carlton County's Recycling & Waste Reduction Grant Program

Volume 4
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Washington Elementary: Cafeteria to Compost

Washington Elementary is in its first full school year collecting organics, or food waste, from its cafeteria. Last school year they used Green Schools Project grant funds for a custom designed sorting station for the cafeteria. Now as the students enter the disposal line after lunch, there is a bucket for leftover milk, a bin with soapy water for utensils, then trash, then leftover food. The bin for food waste is lined with a compostable bag that will be placed in a specific food waste dumpster. The food waste is picked up by their regular waste hauler, Cloquet Sanitary Service, taken to Western Lake Superior Sanitary District in Duluth, and turned into nutrient-rich compost.

It was an involved but successful process to add organics collection in such a busy school cafeteria. It took cooperation of school administration, lead teachers, custodial and cafeteria staff. Preliminary

planning included ordering and placing a food waste dumpster at the school, designing the new sorting station, determining flow of traffic, and purchasing new supplies and equipment such as compostable bags and new bins on wheeled dollies. Before starting the new program, preliminary education was done to prep



GreenCorps member Josie Flatgard assists students the first week using the new sorting station at Washington Elementary.



Black, nutrient-rich finished compost from food waste, at the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District's commercial composting facility.

students. In the classroom, a ten minute video illustrating the “food waste to compost” cycle was viewed by students. In addition, an

informational factsheet was sent home to families announcing the change in the cafeteria and the

environmental benefits of collecting organics.

“I think the end goal is to be more mindful of the resources we have and how we are impacting the environment around us, and it’s a pretty easy way for us to, I think, make a big impact with the size of the building we have and the amount of waste we produce,” Principal Robbi Mondati said.

Green Schools Project grant funds helped the new program along, but it would not have been possible without the team effort of the school staff. Excellent work Washington Elementary!

New Carts, Making Recycling Efficient

Janitorial carts and other equipment that significantly improves collection of recyclables in a school is an eligible item for the Green



Wrenshall School recently purchased carts for collecting and emptying their classroom recycling bins.

Schools Project grant program. Once recyclable material is placed in the correct collection bins within the classroom, hallways, and other school areas, transporting it to the recycling bins outside for pick-up is an important step in the recycling process! Safety, ergonomics, ease of handling and reduced handling time are all things that should be taken into consideration when managing recyclables. Several schools in Carlton

County have utilized a portion of their Green Schools Project grant funds for this type of equipment. See details of school’s purchases on page 5.

Best Practices:

****School recyclables should be loose, not bagged, when emptied into out-door recycling containers for the recycling truck.***

****Exception: Moose Lake School recyclables shall be bagged.***

The Case Against Plastic In School Cafeterias

Six million tons of single use plastics get thrown out every year. Carlton County Schools can make a difference discontinuing the use of plastic utensils in the cafeteria.

Some Quick Facts:

- Buying plastic utensils is a much higher annual supply expensive for schools than reusable utensils.
- According to a MN Pollution Control case study (see link) staff estimated 20 minutes of added time each lunch period to wash and sort reusable utensils. Staff

eliminated time spent ordering, opening boxes, and refilling supplies of disposable plastic utensils. This is from a Minnetonka middle school of over 900 students.

- It reduces the amount of greenhouse gasses, air pollutants, and water consumption from production of plastic

utensils. (Additional water and electricity needed to wash reusable utensils is negligible compared to water consumed to produce plastic.)

- Less solid waste is sent to the landfill in Superior, Wisconsin.
- Students have a better dining experience with real utensils.



<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/living-green/case-study-schools-move-reusable-utensils>

Share Tables: Reducing Food Waste in Schools



"Share Table" cooler at the Wrenshall School

Share Tables are an effort to reduce the amount of food waste in schools. Instead of uneaten foods going into the garbage, they can be placed on a table or in a cooler for other students to take for free. Wrenshall School has had a Share Table cooler in place since the beginning of this school year. Head cook Valerie Dahl says common items include milk, juice,

string cheese, apples, and bananas. Acceptable items are unopened, packaged items and fruits with the skin intact. Unacceptable items would be unpackaged food items or packaged food items where the package has been compromised. A Share Table needs a daily check on quality and expiration dates of food and a cooler needs to be monitored for temperature.

Continued....

Share Tables continued...

The Minnesota Department of Education has created guidance documents on how to start and operate a Share Table in schools.

For more information visit <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/FNS/SNP/gen/safe/>

Students Lead the Way to Sustainability

February 19, 2019:
Science teacher Chris Evavold and the student Bio Club conduct a recycling/solid waste audit at Esko High School to help identify areas of improvement.



February 25, 2019:
Cloquet High School Environmental Club, with guidance of science teacher Tim Anderson, are helping their school start organics collection in the cafeteria, similar to Cloquet Middle Schools organics collection. They are also making improvements to their recycling bins to reduce contamination (trash in the recycle bin) and prevent recyclables from going into the trash.

Green Schools Project

Past Purchases

Barnum Elementary

2017

- Recycling bins for paper in every classroom
- Recycling substation for the entryway
- Water bottle filling station

2018

- Outdoor recycling station for playground area
- Reusable towels for custodial staff
- Reusable tumblers for weekly breakfast smoothies and parfaits
- Recycling education books for school library

Barnum High School

2017

- Recycling bins for classrooms and hallways

2018

- 32-gallon rolling recycling container
- Double capacity janitorial cart
- Four (4) simple-sort two-stream stations
- Equipment for collecting compost on a small scale

South Terrace Elementary

2017

- Recycling bins for every classroom
- Recycling substation for the entryway
- Water bottle filling station

Carlton High School

2016

- Materials to build recycling centers around the school
- Cart to aid the emptying of recycling centers
- Identical blue bins for every classroom, every office, and the library
- Two worm composting towers
- Water bottle filling station

Queen of Peace Elementary

Currently collecting organics

2016

- Recycling bins for every classroom, office, and the lunchroom
- 50-gallon carts for recycling collection in the hallway
- Water bottle filling station

2017

- Bin for organics collection in cafeteria
- Five hand dryers for bathrooms

Washington Elementary

Currently collecting organics

2016

- Recycling bins for every classroom
- Reusable silverware for the cafeteria

2017

- Water bottle filling station for cafeteria
- Plastic recycling container for the cafeteria
- Cart to transport recyclable materials

2018

- Equipment for organics collection start-up

Cloquet Middle School

Currently collecting organics

2016

- Recycling bins and labels for every classroom and office
- Large bins for the school's substations in the hallway
- Reusable silverware for the cafeteria

2018

- Additional recycling bins needed for the hallways and classrooms
- Recycling bins for the exterior and interior of the school's main entrance
- Prizes for student "Team Green" activities

Cloquet High School

2016

- Recycling bins for every classroom
- Recycling bins for the hallway

2017

- Reusable silverware for cafeteria
- Water bottle filling station

Cromwell-Wright K-12

2016

- Recycling bins for classrooms and hallways
- Water bottle filling station

Moose Lake K-12

2016

- Recycling bins for classrooms and hallways
- Outdoor collection carts

2017

- Water bottle refilling station
- Recycling receptacles for new school facility

Wrenshall K-12

2016

- Recycling collection kits for every classroom
- Five recycling substations for use in gyms, common/student areas

2018

- Cooler and shelves for cafeteria "Share Table"
- Bins and dollies to improve the disposal line in the cafeteria
- Condiment dispenser for the cafeteria
- Carts for collection of classroom recycling bins

Green Schools Project is administered by Carlton County Zoning & Environmental Services. For more information on the grant program please visit the web site at www.co.carlton.mn.us/228/Green-Schools-Project or contact the Resource & Recycling Coordinator at karola.dalen@co.carlton.mn.us