

# SCHOOL WASTE IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE



# INTRODUCTION



As part of California's ongoing efforts to reduce landfill waste and combat greenhouse gas emissions, **California Senate Bill 1383 (Short-Lived Climate Pollutants)** requires schools to implement and maintain programs for proper separation of recyclable materials (paper, cardboard, metal, plastic, bottles, and cans) and organic waste (food scraps, food-soiled paper, and green waste).

Before launching your program, engage with **district-level administrators** and the **site principal** on these requirements to integrate recycling and organics collection into standard operating procedures and facilities management plans across all school sites.

# ABOUT US

## SACRAMENTO COUNTY'S ROLE

Sacramento County Department of Waste Management & Recycling (DWMR) is required by state law to provide waste compliance education, outreach, and technical support to district offices and public schools (K-12) located in the unincorporated area of Sacramento County. The California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) regulates and enforces waste compliance for all Local Education Agencies.

Private and charter schools are considered businesses and therefore fall under DWMR's authority to enforce waste compliance.

## CONTACT OUR TEAM

Email: [CommercialWaste@SacCounty.gov](mailto:CommercialWaste@SacCounty.gov)  
Call: (916) 874-4200

The Sacramento County School Education and Outreach Team is available to provide technical assistance and guidance with the implementation and clarification on State and local waste laws.

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# HOW TO IMPLEMENT A WASTE PROGRAM AT YOUR SCHOOL



## STEP 1: UNDERSTAND WASTE & RECYCLING COLLECTION REQUIREMENTS

To comply with waste collection requirements, all schools must:

1. Subscribe to organics, recycling, and garbage collection services through a Sacramento County commercial franchised waste hauler.
2. Place  recycling (blue) and  organics (green) containers next to  garbage (black/gray) containers where recycling or organic waste is generated.
3. Ensure containers are clearly labeled and color-coded.
4. Train students and staff on proper recycling and organics sorting.



**DID YOU KNOW?** In October 2023, California passed Assembly Bill 285, which requires science instruction in 1st through 12th grades to include information on the causes, effects, mitigation, and adaptation strategies related to climate change.



## STEP 2: LEARN EDIBLE FOOD RECOVERY REQUIREMENTS

Under SB 1383, local education agencies that qualify as Tier 1 or Tier 2 edible food generators with an on-site food facility (such as a cafeteria) are required to donate all edible food to a food recovery organization (such as a food bank or food closet) that would otherwise be thrown away.

### HOW TO COMPLY:

- ▶ Enter into a contract or formal agreement with a food recovery organization or service (Sacramento Food Bank or local food recovery organization)
- ▶ Maintain records, including:
  - Type of food donated
  - Dates, quantities, and frequency of pickup
  - Recipient food recovery organization or service
  - A copy of the contract or agreement

**NOTE: Keep all records on file as you may be subject to inspection by the Sacramento County Environmental Management Department.**



**TIP!** Visit the Sacramento County Environmental Management Department website or CalRecycle's Food Recovery webpage for more information.



### WHAT IS A FOOD SHARE TABLE?

A food share table is a designated area in the cafeteria where students place unopened, uneaten, or whole food items (milk, fruit, or packaged snacks) that can be recovered for food donations. Students who are still hungry can then take these items at no cost.

#### Why It Matters

Food share tables play an important dual role in school waste programs:

- ▶ **Waste Diversion:** Instead of being wasted, perfectly good food is recovered for consumption.
- ▶ **Feeding Hungry Students:** These efforts help address food insecurity by giving students access to additional food during mealtimes.

When properly managed, food share tables support both **environmental sustainability** and **student well-being**, aligning with state and local goals under SB 1383, and broader school nutrition initiatives.



**TIP!** Foods with certain temperature requirements can be donated to a food recovery organization instead. CalRecycle has a template for schools to maintain records of their surplus.



### STEP 3: IDENTIFY LEAD PROGRAM STAFF

Create a clear and realistic implementation plan tailored to each school site. Start by forming a small team that includes:

- ▶ A teacher or environmental lead
- ▶ A custodian or maintenance member
- ▶ An administrator or office representative
- ▶ A student leader or green team (if available)
- ▶ A cafeteria staff member



**TIP!** Consider having students lead the program (with adult supervision) so they can see that they make a difference!



### CUSTODIAL ENGAGEMENT IS KEY!

Involve custodial staff early in the program to boost their ownership and motivation for success:

- Check-in regularly – as they detect contamination and operational issues first.
- Review custodial service contracts to ensure they include the collection of recycling and organic materials.
- Develop a process for staging and breaking down cardboard and other large items.
- Post clear signage showing acceptable items for each container.
- Provide the tools needed for success, including:
  - Rolling carts or container dollies.
  - Color-coded collection bags to easily identify waste streams (blue=recycling, green=organics, clear=gabage).



## STEP 4: CONDUCT A SITE WALKTHROUGH

Tour the campus to assess:

- ▶ Where waste is generated (lunch areas, break rooms, classrooms, outdoor areas)
- ▶ Where containers and signage are needed
- ▶ Food donation opportunities (cafeteria, kitchen)
- ▶ If the school has exterior 3-container waste collection system (recycling, organics, garbage dumpsters).

Use a site map to mark the locations of the garbage, recycling, and organics containers.



**TIP!** Do you need assistance?  
DWMR Schools Education and Outreach Team offers walkthrough support!

### SITE WALKTHROUGH CHECKLIST

**Instructions:** Under "Location", list all Student Accessible Areas (ex: cafeteria/multipurpose room, classrooms, hallways) and Staff Accessible Areas (ex: kitchen prep area, break room, custodial closet). During your site walkthrough, note the containers currently at these locations to identify what is needed.

| LOCATION                                                     | Recycling Containers |      | Organics Containers |      | Garbage Containers |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------|---------------------|------|--------------------|------|
|                                                              | Have                 | Need | Have                | Need | Have               | Need |
| <i>Example:<br/>Kitchen prep area</i>                        | 0                    | 1    | 0                   | 1    | 1                  | 0    |
|                                                              |                      |      |                     |      |                    |      |
|                                                              |                      |      |                     |      |                    |      |
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|                                                              |                      |      |                     |      |                    |      |
|                                                              |                      |      |                     |      |                    |      |
| <b>TOTAL CONTAINERS</b>                                      |                      |      |                     |      |                    |      |
| <b>TOTAL SIGNS NEEDED</b><br>Add up "have" and "need" counts |                      |      |                     |      |                    |      |





## STEP 5: SET UP WASTE SORTING STATIONS

### STUDENT-ACCESSIBLE AREAS

Use the table to set up waste sorting stations in student-accessible areas.

**NOTE:** Containers must be clearly labeled, color-coded, visible, easily accessible, and placed wherever garbage containers are present.

| LOCATION                            | CONTAINER LAYOUT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | RECOMMENDED<br>CONTAINER<br>SIZES (GALLONS) | WHAT GOES IN EACH CONTAINER                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | SPECIAL COMMENTS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CAFETERIA / MULTIPURPOSE ROOM       | 4- or 5-Stream Station:<br> Share Table<br> Liquid Pour-Out*<br> Recycling<br> Organics<br> Garbage | 32-gal                                      |  Unopened, uneaten food<br> Leftover drinks<br> Bottles, cans, boxes, clean paper<br> Food scraps, used napkins, non-coated food trays<br> Food packaging, plastics wrappers and single-use utensils | <p>Place all containers side-by-side with signage at eye level for students.</p> <p>Use signage with corrugated metal posts or lamination that can be pinned or taped above containers.</p> <p>Consider placing a table at the end to collect food trays if not compostable.</p> |
| OUTDOOR EATING AREAS                | 3-Stream Station:<br> Recycling<br> Organics<br> Garbage                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 32-gal                                      |  Metal and plastic bottles, cans, boxes, clean paper<br> Food scraps, food-soiled paper, used napkins (if present)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>Ensure containers are weather-resistant with secure lids, with durable/visible signage.</p> <p>Anchor containers to prevent tipping.</p>                                                                                                                                      |
| CLASSROOMS/ HALLWAYS / COMMON AREAS | 2- or 3-Stream Station:<br> Recycling<br> Organics<br> Garbage                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 10-, 14- or 23-gal                          |  Food scraps, food-soiled paper, used napkins (if present)<br> Food packaging, plastics wrappers and single-use utensils, plastic bags, chip bags, candy wrappers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Consider assigning a student to take classroom food scraps to designated organics containers that are regularly monitored.</p> <p>Place near water fountains or high-traffic areas.</p> <p>Lids recommended.</p>                                                              |
| LIBRARY / OFFICE WAITING AREAS      | 2-Stream Station:<br> Recycling<br> Garbage                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 10- or 23-gal                               |  Paper, magazines<br> Facial tissues, plastic wrappers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

\*Containers are optional depending on if the waste stream is generated.



## STAFF ONLY AREAS

Use the table to set up waste sorting stations in staff only areas.

**NOTE:** Containers must be clearly labeled, color-coded, and located at points of disposal (e.g., food-prep stations, dishwashing areas, break rooms).

| LOCATION                         | CONTAINER LAYOUT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | RECOMMENDED<br>CONTAINER<br>SIZES (GALLONS) | WHAT GOES IN EACH CONTAINER                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | SPECIAL COMMENTS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| KITCHEN / FOOD PREP AREA         | 3-Stream Station:<br> Recycling<br> Organics<br> Garbage | 23- or 32-gal                               |  Boxes, clean packaging, cardboard<br> Food waste, peels, food scraps from prep<br> Gloves, plastic wrappers, plastic film                          | Keep near prep and dish areas.                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| STAFF LOUNGE / BREAK ROOM        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 10- or 23-gal                               |  Bottles, coffee cup sleeves, paper<br> Leftover food scraps, coffee grounds, food-soiled paper<br> Wrappers, single-use utensils, plastic film | Place signage on refrigerators and microwaves (available by request).                                                                                                                                                                             |
| CUSTODIAL CLOSET / UTILITY AREAS |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | See Special Comments                        | Sort collected waste for final transport to exterior containers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Centralize waste for efficient disposal; train and educate custodians for contamination checks.<br>Using large roll carts or containers on dollies (sized for hauling to dumpsters) is recommended.<br>Consider using liners or compostable bags. |



## **STEP 6: PLAN FOR STAFF AND STUDENT EDUCATIONAL TRAININGS**

Develop training material to share the purpose of the program, why it matters (ex: effects of climate change), how to sort waste, the location of waste sorting stations, food recovery opportunities, and levels of involvement for:

- ▶ Custodial and kitchen staff
- ▶ Teachers and administrative staff
- ▶ Students

During training, invite students to be involved. Create a team of student monitors during lunch breaks to guide their peers on how to properly separate their waste streams into the correct bins.

Training materials and resources may include:

- ▶ Assemblies or classroom sessions
- ▶ Posters near collection bins
- ▶ Newsletter or parent emails



### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The DWMR Schools Education and Outreach Team provides presentations/assemblies and educational material for staff and students upon request.



## **STEP 7: SET A PROGRAM LAUNCH DATE**

- ▶ Choose a launch date that allows time for staff preparation and communication.
- ▶ Announce the program through staff meetings, student assemblies, student clubs, newsletters, and social media



**TIP!** Consider launching on a larger event like Earth Day, the beginning of a semester, or a school-wide sustainability initiative.



## **STEP 8: MONITOR AND MAINTAIN THE PROGRAM**

After the program has been launched, monitor the success of the program by:

- ▶ Inspecting containers for contamination
- ▶ Gathering staff or student feedback
- ▶ Making adjustments as needed to improve efficiency

Celebrate progress and share success stories! By working together, schools not only help meet state environmental compliance goals, but also model sustainable practices that carries beyond the classroom. Students share what they learn with their families, friends, and communities, inspiring broader environmental awareness and action at home.

# FREE SCHOOL WASTE PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKITS!



Sacramento County Department of Waste Management & Recycling is offering free Schools Waste Program Implementation Toolkits to schools in the unincorporated area of Sacramento County to support education and compliance. Toolkits include free recycling and organic collection containers, container signage, liners, trash grabbers, vest for waste monitors, training materials, and technical assistance to help schools kick off their waste programs! Apply today (while supplies last)!



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS



The DWMR Schools Education and Outreach Team has resources to help schools meet the requirements for waste collection, container labels and signage, and overall education. Access more information at **SacGreenTeam.com**



**Seasonal Newsletter:** DWMR created a seasonal Schools newsletter to provide educational resources, funding and grant opportunities, as well as compliance assistance. Interested in receiving the newsletter? Visit our Schools webpage to subscribe.

**Free Loose Compost for School Gardens!** DWMR offers free loose compost for schools made from residential curbside organics recycling!

**Touch-a-Truck Class Visits:** DWMR offers Touch-a-Truck events where students can learn the functions of a garbage truck and receive practical lessons on recycling techniques they can implement at home.

For more information on compost or class visits, contact  
**SacGreenTeam@SacCounty.gov**





**EXPERT GUIDANCE  
FOR SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS.**

Department of Waste Management and Recycling  
10863 Gold Center Drive  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-6047

### **Schools Education and Outreach Team**

For more information on regulations, recycling tips,  
and other resources:



 [SacGreenTeam.com](http://SacGreenTeam.com)  
 [CommercialWaste@SacCounty.gov](mailto:CommercialWaste@SacCounty.gov)  
 [SacGreenTeam.com/Translates](http://SacGreenTeam.com/Translates)

