



*The innovative
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This document is available online at
http://www.seattleschools.org/area/conservation/resources_links.html



How to Begin a School Composting Program for Organics/Food Waste Recycling

Collaboratively Prepared by Seattle Public School District and Cedar Grove Composting

- **OVERVIEW:** *Seattle Public Schools has started an off-site composting program for interested schools that meet Cedar Grove Composting and School District criteria. This program allows for schools to collect lunchroom food waste and have it containerized, hauled and recycled by Cedar Grove Composting, Inc.*
- *Lawton School was the first school in Seattle to successfully pilot this program in 2005. As a result, Lawton's program is used as a base model for other schools to implement the program. Observation or viewing a video of composting at Lawton is mandatory for the lead team players to fully comprehend and effectively plan their composting program.*





Why *recycle your organics through Cedar Grove Services?*

Financial Savings Benefits:

Garbage Service vs. Organics Recycling-

- **Organics recycling fees on a per ton basis are generally half of waste disposal service fees.** We will help you evaluate your costs to obtain the most savings.
- **Recycling is a non-taxable service.** For example, the City of Seattle charges a 12.99% city tax and a 3.6% state refuse tax for all garbage collection. Tax does not apply to organic wastes hauled by Cedar Grove.
- **Recycling is good for the environment.** Protect natural resources by recycling your organics into quality compost soil and avoid using chemicals!

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- **Team Leader/ Teacher(s)**
 - ✓ Sign & return attached checklist to Seattle School District Resource Conservation Specialist (for Seattle Public Schools) when initiating the intent to begin food waste collection/recycling program.
 - ✓ Be prepared to include organics/ compost lesson plans in curriculum.
 - ✓ Plan for and allow necessary time for Cedar Grove Composting Educational Coordinator or Representative to train lead class and discuss how to train school.
 - ✓ Allow class time for students to monitor lunchroom waste disposal.
 - ✓ Provide oversight and coordination of the program and participating students.
 - ✓ Ensure that all items on the checklist have been completed in the order listed.
 - ✓ Involve custodians and food service staff in all program planning, dumpster sizing and placement. (see “Custodians and Food Service Staff” below)
 - ✓ Provide progress reports, issues, communications to School district, Cedar Grove Representative, and other key team members.
 - ✓ Plan for and purchase biodegradable bags, after supply of 3 boxes of free bags from Seattle Public Utilities/ Resource Venture incentive program is depleted. Budget accordingly. (see “Biodegradable Bags” below)
- **Students**
 - ✓ Typically the older classes of students take on the leadership, training and monitoring of the program, i.e. 5th graders in an elementary school.
 - ✓ This program is most successful when it is predominantly student-run.
 - ✓ Monitoring consists of assisting with lunchroom composting and teaching other students which waste material is disposed of as garbage or mixed recycling or composting.

- **Custodians and Food Service Staff**
 - ✓ Be involved in planning and decision making process for dumpster and logistics.
 - ✓ Composting program should NOT include additional duties or daily involvement of custodians and food service staff. Any assistance from custodians and food service staff should be voluntary.
 - ✓ Gloves, biodegradable bags, and other program costs should be purchased for the program by the school and not be custodial/food service supplies.

- **Cedar Grove Composting Representative**
 - ✓ Provide initial program description, training, site analysis, and signage.
 - ✓ Attend planning meetings, student and staff training sessions, follow-up observations.
 - ✓ Through Seattle Public Utilities/ Resource Venture incentive program, Cedar Grove will provide 3 boxes of biodegradable bags at no cost.
 - ✓ Verify dumpster size and placement with Cedar Grove Operations expert and communicate estimated container delivery.

- **District Facilitation (for public schools)**
 - ✓ A District Resource Conservation Specialist attends meetings, trainings, answers questions, promotes recycling in conjunction with composting; orders and changes dumpsters- garbage, mixed recycling and composting.
 - ✓ Consult on program decisions and direction. Will consult with the Cedar Grove Representative at key stages throughout the program implementation.
 - ✓ Orders and schedules container delivery with Cedar Grove Compost
 - ✓ When the Resource Conservation Specialist orders the compost dumpster- it is considered the “go ahead” for the compost program.

Other helpful information:

Indoor Compost Containers: Seattle School District uses **RED** indoor compost containers/ barrels. The 32 gallon container is the preferred consistent selection. Use of a lid is not necessary. Use of a dolly is strongly recommended. Compost containers for indoor use must be ordered and paid for by each school. Blue mixed recycle containers are usually provided by the school district. For suppliers, please contact Nicole Riss at 206-252-0599 or nariss@seattleschools.org.

Compost Dumpster: The appropriate sizing of the dumpster will be decided by consulting with Cedar Grove, The School District Resource Conservation staff, and the school. Factors that must be considered are: number of students, type of lunch program, current mixed recycling and garbage sizes and frequency of pick-ups, location of dumpster, and access.

The rental and weekly pick-up service is usually the individual school’s responsibility, and must be paid for with an Open Purchase Order (see “Total Estimated Cost” below). The goal of the program is that once established, composting will be cost neutral through reducing the garbage dumpster size, number of pick-ups and related costs. (The Seattle Public School District has agreed to pay for the rental and pick-up fees for the compost dumpster once the school has reduced the size of their garbage container, provided that the reduction in garbage cost is greater than or equal to the cost compost pick-up and dumpster rental.) Please refer to the following chart for pricing.



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Cedar Grove Composting Inc. **Commercial Compost Dumpster Rates**

Non-compacted Material

<u>Container Size</u>	<u>Special p/u*</u>	<u>Monthly cost for 1 pickup/weekly.</u>
• 96 gallon	\$7.80	\$ 30.25
• 1 cu. yd.	\$22.28	\$ 68.75
• 2 cu. yd.	\$33.16	\$ 118.20

*A special p/u is a request for an extra pick-up during any given week.

Delivery Fee (1yd container or larger) = \$20

Delivery Fee (96-gallon toter) = \$10

Biodegradable Bags: Cedar Grove Composting provides 3 boxes of biodegradable bags for the school through a Seattle Public Utilities/Resource Venture incentive program. After this initial period, the school is responsible for purchasing the bags. The bags used must be Cedar Grove tested and approved (a list of approved bags is posted on the web site: cgcompost.com).

- Biodegradable bags may be purchased from Cedar Grove using an Open Purchase Order (see “Total Estimated Cost” below). As of 10/31/2008, biodegradable bags purchased through Cedar Grove cost \$66.15 per case of 135 bags, about \$0.49 per bag, plus \$15 delivery fee per trip (multiple boxes may be delivered per trip). Note: these prices are an example only and are subject to change without notice. Prices and suppliers fluctuate depending on a variety of factors.

Gloves: Due to the “ick factor” associated with sorting food waste, all students monitoring the lunchroom composting program should wear gloves. These are the responsibility of the school and should be purchased specifically for this program. Custodial and food service gloves should not be used.

Total Estimated Cost: Costs will include purchase of indoor compost containers and dolly, biodegradable, gloves for lunchroom monitors, monthly dumpster fees, and dumpster delivery/exchange fees. Compost dumpster pickup cost is the responsibility of the school and must be paid for with an Open Purchase Order. For instructions on setting up an Open Purchase Order, please contact Nicole Riss (see pg. 6)

The approximate cost to the school for this program is typically \$1,000 to \$1,800 per year for an elementary school. If/when the school is successful in making the program cost neutral, the District agrees to pay for the cost of the compost dumpster service, provided that the program remains cost neutral. Schools are encouraged to explore creative methods and fund raising efforts in order to cover the cost of the program.

Start-Up Period: It is effective for schools to collect compost using fully implemented procedures for one week, however, disposing it as garbage. This is to ensure that the program is up and running with no contamination before the compost is sent to Cedar Grove. Cedar Grove and/or District representatives are available to observe the compost collection process before a composting dumpster is ordered. (Also see “District Facilitation”)

Parental Permission: Please be aware that not all students and parents appreciate the idea of composting and sorting through garbage. It is advisable to provide the monitoring students with gloves and acquire parental permission if appropriate.

Compost Project Agreement: The following is the agreement used by the Seattle School District and Schools wanting to initiate a composting program.



Compost Project Plan Agreement

I/we at _____ School are committed to running a Composting Program at our school. This program is intended for off-site composting of food waste and other compostable materials. We will work towards completing the initial checklist below to establish a compost program at the school.

- View Lawton composting video (available from Peter Hubbard, 2-2166, pchubbard@seattleschools.org).
- Establish at least one full time teacher to coordinate effort. If multiple teachers or staff members are heading the program, hold a meeting to assign responsibilities and schedule duties.
- Contact SPS Resource Conservation Specialist **Nicole Riss**, 2-0599, nariss@seattleschools.org for an initial visit *before* completing the following items.
- Order indoor collection bins (1-4 recommended per school).
- Order compostable, biodegradable bags (first 400 bags provided free by Cedar Grove Composting) and gloves for lunchroom student monitors.
- Get training for teachers and students that are running the program from Cedar Grove or Cedar Grove trained persons. **Robert Cavness**, 206-832-3238, robertc@emeraldncw.com
- Train and educate school about what can and can not be put in the indoor collection bins. Get signage and post it around school.
- Practice composting for at least 1 week.
- Schedule final walk-through with SPS Resource Conservation Specialist and Cedar Grove representative to set up dumpster delivery day and pick up schedule.

The school is prepared to fund or find funding for this project. It is the goal of this project that, once well established, composting will pay for itself through reducing the garbage dumpster size or number of pick ups. When the project becomes cost neutral for the school district, the district agrees to pay for the rental and pick-up fee for the compost dumpster. I/we understand this will be an on-going and potentially long-term effort.

Teacher Name(s)

Principal Name

Team Leader(s) if different from above