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# RECYCLING PROGRAM

AP 2810

Effective Date: December 16, 2024

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- I. **PURPOSE:** To provide the process for staff, students, and others to recycle solid waste at all Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) schools and facilities and develop a Waste Reduction Plan for each PGCPS school and facility.
- II. **POLICY:** The Prince George’s County Board of Education (Board) recognizes the need to reduce the school system’s environmental impact by building and operating its schools and facilities in an environmentally responsible manner to create healthy places to learn and work and to preserve the environment for future generations. (Board Policy 0111)
- III. **BACKGROUND:**
- A. All PGCPS schools and facilities are required by the Maryland Annotated Code, Education Article § 4-127 to develop and implement a recycling program to recycle solid waste.
- B. The Board is also committed to establishing and implementing a sustainability plan for PGCPS, which is in alignment with the Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP), and which addresses conserving natural resources, protecting the environment, reducing waste, fostering energy cost containment, increasing the use of renewable energy in meeting the school system’s energy needs and promoting environmental literacy systemwide in accordance with applicable federal, State, and local laws and regulations.
- C. PGCPS recycling program information, materials, and resources are available at [www.pgcps.org/recycling](http://www.pgcps.org/recycling).
- IV. **DEFINITIONS:**
- A. Building Supervisor – The individual within the Building Services department assigned as the supervisor of custodial staff at a facility.

- B. *Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP)* – A plan, created by a workgroup made of environmental experts, lawmakers, Board members, staff and students that reviews how PGcps can make different decisions that will lessen the school system’s impact on the environment and be more resilient to the negative effects of climate change. The CCAP documents progress to date in advancing climate action across three (3) important broad topic areas: advancing internal systems in PGcps operations so that its systems and processes are as climate-friendly as possible; reducing PGcps contributions to greenhouse gas emissions; and preparing PGcps and the community for resiliency through impacts of a changing climate. For additional information, please visit <https://www.pgcps.org/about-pgcps/climate-change-action-plan>.
- C. *Composting* – the process of recycling materials such as food scraps, plant trimmings, and/or other natural materials via biological decomposition into an amendment (compost) that can be used to enrich soil. Composting is a waste reduction strategy to divert materials from the landfill.
- D. *Designated Building Administrator* – An administrator in a non-school setting who has been identified as the administrator in charge of the building.
- E. *Education staff* – Staff involved in the direct education of students, including instructional staff, classroom teachers, para-professionals, counselors, ESOL teachers, lunch duty staff, etc.
- F. *Landfill* - a place to dispose of refuse and other waste material by burying it and covering it over with soil. A landfill is the least preferred waste disposal method.
- G. *Recycling* – The collecting, sorting, and processing of materials that would otherwise be sent to a waste disposal facility (such as a landfill) and turning them into new products. Through the process of *recycling*, the physical form of the material is altered. Composting is also a form of *recycling*.
- H. *Recycling Coordinator* – The staff member designated by the Principal or Designated Building Administrator to help coordinate the recycling and waste reduction program at the site. At schools, the *Recycling Coordinator* must be from the education staff.
- I. *Recycling Symbol*  – A symbol consisting of three “chasing arrows” to represent the three steps of the closed loop recycling process: material

collection, manufacturing of new products, and the purchase and use of products made with recyclable materials. This symbol may be placed on products to encourage recycling, identify the type(s) of materials used (ex: the number inside of the symbol identifies the type of plastic), and/or indicate the item *could* be recycled if it is accepted by the local recycling facility/program. Details on the specific items accepted in the PGCPs Recycling Program are listed in Section V.A. – General Recycling Procedures.

- J. Recycling Technician – The individual within the Building Services department assisting PGCPs schools and school district facilities to recycle and reduce solid waste.
- K. Facilities – Facilities or grounds that are owned by the Board but are not schools, such as: Oxon Hill Development Center, the Bonnie F. Johns Educational Media Center, etc.
- L. Waste reduction – The net reduction in solid waste material, or garbage, sent to a landfill (or other disposal facility) via actions taken to reduce, reuse, compost, recycle, or completely prevent the generation of solid waste materials.
- M. Waste Reduction Plan – describes a program for solid waste reduction. It must include details on:
  - 1. Actions the site will implement to reduce, reuse, and recycle solid waste items;
  - 2. Communicating program procedures, best practices, and updates on the site’s progress;
  - 3. Classroom, cafeteria, and office recycling;
  - 4. Staff and student involvement; and
  - 5. Bin monitoring and/or checkups.


## **V. PROCEDURES:**


### **A. General Recycling Procedures**

- 1. Each school and PGCPs facility must place labeled recycling bins and recycling posters in collection areas throughout the building. Every classroom, office, cafeteria, printer/copier area, break rooms, and all meal

areas must have appropriately sized recycling bins. All recycling bins and trash cans will be paired together. All recycling bins will be blue or have blue recycling labels attached to the sides of the bin for easy identification. Printable recycling posters and recycling bin information is available at [www.pgcps.org/recycling](http://www.pgcps.org/recycling).

2. Recycling dumpsters will be located near trash dumpsters, or an alternate location approved by the Recycling Technician and Building Supervisor, to ensure convenient access. Recycling dumpsters must be kept locked to prevent trash contamination and non-PGCPS usage. All custodial staff and Recycling Coordinators will have key access to the recycling dumpster lock.
3. The following items\* (without food contamination) are acceptable in PGCPS recycling bins and recycling dumpsters:

Cardboard (flattened)	Empty Plastic Containers with #1, 2, 3, 5, or 7
Mixed Paper	inside the recycling symbol 
Office/Classroom Paper	Empty Plastic Bottles and Caps
Printer/Computer Paper	Empty Plastic Jars and Tubs
Paper Envelopes	Empty Drink Cartons
Newspapers and Magazines	Empty Metal Cans (Aluminum, Steel, Tin)
Clean Paper Bags	Empty Glass Bottles and Jars

- a. \*A complete list of acceptable items is available at [www.pgcps.org/recycling](http://www.pgcps.org/recycling). All food containers must be empty.
  - b. Paper must be free of food residue and all acceptable food containers must be empty before being placed into recycling bins.
  - c. All cardboard must be flattened to reduce space used in recycling bins and recycling dumpsters.
4. The following items are NOT allowed in recycling bins or recycling dumpsters:
    - a. Food, food soiled paper, and liquids.
    - b. Plastics with #4 or #6 inside of the recycling symbol .
    - c. Chip bags, candy or cookie wrappers, granola or energy bar wrappers, etc.
    - d. Sauce or condiment packets.

- e. Plastic utensils, plastic straws, and plastic stirrers.
- f. Drink pouches and food pouches.
- g. Plastic bags and plastic wrap.
- h. Bags of recyclable items (recyclable items must be loose in recycling dumpsters).
- i. Tissues and napkins.
- j. Expanded polystyrene, also known as “Styrofoam,” polystyrene foam products and polystyrene loose fill packaging.
- k. Ink cartridges and toner tubes. Collect ink cartridges and toner tubes separately for reuse or recycling; do not place these items in recycling bins or dumpsters. Visit [www.pgcps.org/recycling](http://www.pgcps.org/recycling) for procedures and additional information.
- l. Lightbulbs containing mercury (fluorescent, compact fluorescent, black lights, ultraviolet bulbs, etc.). Custodial staff will collect lightbulbs containing mercury and contact Plant Operations for a recycling pickup. Do not place these lightbulbs in recycling bins, trashcans, or dumpsters. Visit [www.pgcps.org/recycling](http://www.pgcps.org/recycling) for procedures and additional information.
- m. Batteries. Collect batteries separately for recycling; do not place batteries in recycling bins, trash cans, or dumpsters. Visit [www.pgcps.org/recycling](http://www.pgcps.org/recycling) for procedures and additional information.
- n. Hazardous materials such as broken glass, motor oil, chemicals, etc.
- o. Leaves, grass, branches, stumps, and other plant material.
- p. Textbook, furniture, electronic equipment and accessories. The Instructional Support Services Center (ISSC) Warehouse collects textbooks, furniture, electronic equipment and accessories for reuse or recycling when possible. Do not place these items in recycling bins or dumpsters. (For collection procedures and additional information, refer to Administrative Procedure 3260.)

- q. Confidential student or employee records. (Refer to Administrative Procedure 2600 regarding confidential document destruction).
  - r. Visit [www.pgcps.org/recycling](http://www.pgcps.org/recycling) for procedures and additional information.
5. All PGCPs schools, offices, and other facilities are prohibited from purchasing, utilizing, or distributing the following items within PGCPs facilities and at PGCPs sponsored events:
- a. Expanded Polystyrene, also known as “Styrofoam.” Polystyrene foam products and polystyrene loose fill packaging, also known as "packing peanuts," are not permitted for sale or use in Prince George's County (CB-5-2015) or the state of Maryland (Environment Article, Annotated Code of Maryland Chapter 579, Sections 9-2201 through 9-2207). Some exceptions apply to items packaged outside of the county. For additional details visit:
    - 1. [www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/departments-offices/environment/laws-regulations/legislative-updates/foam-ban](http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/departments-offices/environment/laws-regulations/legislative-updates/foam-ban)
    - 2. [mde.maryland.gov/programs/Land/RecyclingandOperationsprogram/Pages/Expanded-Polystyrene-Food-Service-Products-Ban.aspx](http://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Land/RecyclingandOperationsprogram/Pages/Expanded-Polystyrene-Food-Service-Products-Ban.aspx)
  - b. Non-Compostable straws and stirrers. With the passing of CB-52-2019, PGCPs can no longer sell, distribute or otherwise provide a straw or stirrer with food or beverages unless the straw or stirrer is compostable; exceptions are allowed in the case of pre-packaged beverages or where it would interfere with accommodation of any individual’s physical or medical needs. Some exceptions apply to items packaged outside of the county. For additional details visit [www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/departments-offices/environment/laws-regulations/legislative-updates/plastic-straw-ban](http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/departments-offices/environment/laws-regulations/legislative-updates/plastic-straw-ban)

**B. Responsibilities for Staff, Students and Other Users of PGCPs Facilities**

- 1. All Staff, Students, and Other Users of PGCPs schools and facilities shall:
  - a. Be responsible for correctly sorting their own waste, including placing acceptable recyclable items into recycling bins, emptying

recyclable food containers before placing them in the recycling bins, and flattening cardboard before placing it into recycling bins.

- b. Park vehicles away from dumpsters to ensure dumpsters are not blocked and dumpster service is not inhibited.
2. Instructional staff is encouraged to connect recycling and waste reduction with classroom curriculum, school events, student service learning and leadership, and to document student recycling and waste reduction activities to include in the school's application for Maryland Green School certification or other similar programs.
3. Building Services Staff Responsibilities
- a. The Director of Building Services is responsible for informing Building Services staff of their responsibilities and ensuring custodial, maintenance, and all other Building Services staff follow correct recycling procedures.
  - b. The Department of Building Services will provide guidance and feedback for sites to implement, maintain, and improve recycling and waste reduction programs.
  - c. The Recycling Technician will assist Recycling Coordinators, custodial staff, and other PGCPs personnel with reducing solid waste sent to a disposal facility such as a landfill. PGCPs recycling program information, materials, and resources are available at [www.pgcp.s.org/recycling](http://www.pgcp.s.org/recycling).
  - d. Building Supervisors and Custodial Staff Responsibilities
    - 1) Building Supervisors and custodial staff will not serve as the Recycling Coordinator, but will work with the Recycling Coordinator and others to recycle at the school or facility.
    - 2) Building Supervisors will:
      - a) Be responsible for informing custodial staff of their responsibilities and ensuring the custodial staff follow correct recycling procedures.
      - b) In partnership with the Recycling Coordinator and Principal/Designated Building Administrator, develop an annual Waste Reduction Plan, present the plan to staff, and

update and inform staff on recycling procedures and the progress of the site's program in order to involve staff in the process. See section V.C. Waste Reduction Plan.

- c) Ensure all areas of the school/facility have appropriately sized recycling bins, recycling bins and trash cans are paired together, and trash and recycling posters are displayed above bins.
  - d) Ensure that recycling bins are emptied daily and recyclable items are collected and placed in recycling dumpsters.
  - e) Ensure that recyclable items are kept separate from trash items during collection and transport to the recycling dumpster.
  - f) Regularly communicate with, and provide feedback to, the Designated Building Administrator/Principal, Recycling Coordinator, and Recycling Technician regarding the school's/facility's recycling program, waste reduction efforts, and ways to improve the program.
  - g) Contact the Recycling Technician about recycling dumpster repairs, contamination, missed collections or other recycling issues.
  - h) Identify a collection area for kitchen recyclables, in coordination with the Cafeteria Manager, and display recycling posters in this area.
- 3) Custodial Staff responsibilities include:
- a) Emptying recycling bins, collecting recyclable materials, and transferring recyclable materials into recycling dumpsters.
  - b) Ensuring that recyclable items are kept separate from trash items during collection and transport to the recycling dumpster;
  - c) Removing all recyclable food containers (including milk bottles/cartons) from the school/facility daily;



- d) Placing labeled recycling bins next to trash cans before each meal time in the cafeteria and empty recycling bins when full.
- e) Working with staff and students to recycle in the cafeteria.
- f) Working with the Recycling Coordinator to ensure:
  - i. Recycling bins and trash cans are paired together;
  - ii. Recycling bins and trash cans are clearly marked;
  - iii. Recycling and trash posters are displayed above bins; and
  - iv. Recycling bins and trash cans are returned to their designated locations if moved.
- g) Locking recycling dumpsters daily.
- h) Cleaning and maintaining recycling bins as needed.
- i) Regularly communicating with, and providing feedback to, the Building Supervisor or immediate supervisor regarding the school's /facility's recycling program, waste reduction efforts, and ways for improvement.

#### 4. Food and Nutrition Staff Responsibilities

- a. The Director of Food and Nutrition Services is responsible for informing Food and Nutrition Services staff of their responsibilities and ensuring cafeteria staff and all other Food and Nutrition Services staff follow correct recycling procedures.
- b. The Cafeteria Manager will work with the Building Supervisor to identify a collection area for kitchen recyclables, and display recycling posters in this area.
- c. Cafeteria staff will be responsible for correctly sorting waste in the kitchen, including emptying and rinsing recyclable food containers, flattening cardboard boxes, and placing recyclable items in designated collection area.

#### 5. Principal/Designated Building Administrator Responsibilities

- a. The Principal/Designated Building Administrator is responsible for informing staff at their facility of their responsibilities and

ensuring that all staff (educational, custodial, cafeteria duty, etc.) follow correct recycling procedures.

- b. Each school year, the Principal/Designated Building Administrator will select a member of the staff to serve as the site's Recycling Coordinator. At schools, the Recycling Coordinator must be someone from the education staff.
  - c. In partnership with the Building Supervisor and Recycling Coordinator, the Principal/Designated Building Administrator will develop an annual Waste Reduction Plan, present the plan to staff, and update and inform staff on recycling procedures and the progress of the site's program. Additional staff are encouraged to participate in the development of the Waste Reduction Plan and its implementation. See section V.C. Waste Reduction Plan.
  - d. Prior to September 30<sup>th</sup> of each school year, the Principal/Designated Building Administrator will submit a copy of the Waste Reduction Plan to the Recycling Technician.
  - e. Principals will work with staff assigned to cafeteria duty to ensure students are recycling correctly.
  - f. Regularly communicate with the Building Supervisor and Recycling Coordinator on the school's recycling program, waste reduction efforts, and ways for improvement.
6. Recycling Coordinator Responsibilities
- a. Each school year the Principal/Designated Building Administrator will select a Recycling Coordinator from the education staff
  - b. In partnership with the Building Supervisor and Principal/Designated Building Administrator, develop an annual Waste Reduction Plan, present the plan to staff, and update and inform staff on recycling procedures and the progress of implementing the waste reduction plan in order to involve staff in the process. See section V.C. Waste Reduction Plan.
  - c. Form a team of employees and students that will help educate the school community on the need to recycle and reduce waste, how to recycle correctly in school, build school community support for the program, and participate in implementing the Waste Reduction Plan.

- d. Involve students, when possible, in activities such as educating the school community, creating posters, monitoring recycling bins to ensure correct sorting of items, and other activities.
- e. Regularly communicate with students and staff regarding recycling procedures, updates, program successes and improvements. At least once per quarter, these communications in schools should include actions such as presentations at staff meetings and school assemblies, morning announcements, student lessons and/or emails to all staff and emails to all staff in facilities. Additional creative ways to engage and educate the school community and office/facility staff are encouraged.
- f. Regularly communicate with the Recycling Technician about the school's/facility's recycling and waste reduction programs.
- g. Work with teachers, school administrators, and Designated Facility Administrators to ensure students and staff correctly sort waste items.
- h. Work with custodial staff to ensure:
  - 1) Recycling bins and trash cans are paired together;
  - 2) Recycling bins and trash cans are clearly marked;
  - 3) Recycling and trash posters are displayed above bins; and
  - 4) Recycling bins and trash cans are returned to their designated locations if moved.
- i. Work with staff assigned to cafeteria duty to ensure students correctly sort their waste at meal times.

#### 7. Cafeteria Duty Staff Responsibilities

- a. Work with the Recycling Coordinator and students to ensure students correctly sort their waste, including placing acceptable recyclable items into recycling bins and emptying recyclable food containers before placing them in the recycling bins.
- b. Work with student leaders who will help monitor bins and remind participants how to sort waste items correctly at meal times.

## 8. Student Responsibilities and Leadership

- a. Students shall assist the Recycling Coordinator, custodial staff, and others with implementing the school's Waste Reduction Plan.
  - 1) Students are expected to follow all recycling procedures including:
    - a) Correctly sort their own waste and place acceptable recyclable items into recycling bins;
    - b) Empty all recyclable food containers; and
    - c) Flatten cardboard before placing it into recycling bins.
  - 2) Students are expected to participate in recycling and waste reduction activities and are encouraged to join their school's Green Team or environmental club to further support school waste reduction efforts.
- b. Students shall have opportunities to serve as student leaders and role models by taking actions to support school recycling and waste reduction efforts such as:
  - 1) Educating the school community on the importance of recycling and waste reduction, correct procedures, and increasing recycling participation by creating posters, videos, presentations to students and staff, morning announcements and other creative actions;
  - 2) Serving as Student Monitors to help ensure the correct sorting of waste items into collection bins by monitoring bins and reminding participants how to correctly sort waste items; and
  - 3) Developing and implementing additional creative strategies to improve recycling and waste reduction efforts; for example, waste-free lunches, scrap paper reuse bins, a double-sided printing policy, waste audits, and other actions to reduce and/or reuse items.
- c. Teachers should encourage students to teach their families how to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste at home. Many of the same

actions taken at school to reduce and recycle waste can be implemented at home.

C. Waste Reduction Plan

1. The Principal/Designated Building Administrator, Building Supervisor, and Recycling Coordinator will work together to develop an annual Waste Reduction Plan, present the plan to staff, and update and inform staff on recycling procedures and the progress of the site's program in order to involve staff in the process. Additional staff are encouraged to participate in the development of the Waste Reduction Plan and its implementation.
2. A Waste Reduction Plan template is available at [www.pgcps.org/recycling-template](http://www.pgcps.org/recycling-template).
3. Prior to September 30th of each school year, the Principal/Designated Building Administrator will submit a copy of the Waste Reduction Plan to the Recycling Technician.

VI. **MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE:**

- A. In coordination with Principals, the Director of Food and Nutrition Services is responsible for ensuring cafeteria staff implement and follow correct recycling procedures.
- B. The Director of Building Services is responsible for ensuring custodial, maintenance, and all other Building Services staff follow correct recycling procedures.
- C. The Recycling Technician will provide feedback and guidance for school and facilities to improve their recycling programs and reduce waste sent to a disposal facility.

VII. **RELATED ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND DOCUMENTS:**

Administrative Procedure 3260 – Property Disposal

Administrative Procedure 2600 – Records and Documents Management Program

VIII. **LEGAL REFERENCE:**

Maryland Code Ann., Educ. Art. § 4-127

Maryland Code Ann., Env. Art. §§ 9-2201 – 9-2207

<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Land/RecyclingandOperationsprogram/Pages/Expanded-Polystyrene-Food-Service-Products-Ban.aspx>

Prince George's County CB-52-2019

<https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/departments-offices/environment/laws-regulations/legislative-updates/plastic-straw-ban>

Prince George's County CB-5-2015

<https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/departments-offices/environment/laws-regulations/legislative-updates/foam-ban>

- IX. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THIS ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE:** The Department of Building Services and the Recycling Technician will be responsible for updating this administrative procedure as needed.
- X. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDURES:** This administrative procedure cancels and supersedes Administrative Procedure 2810, dated April 1, 2016.
- XI. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** December 16, 2024

Attachments: