

# Schools in Action – Elevating and Sustaining School Wide Programs



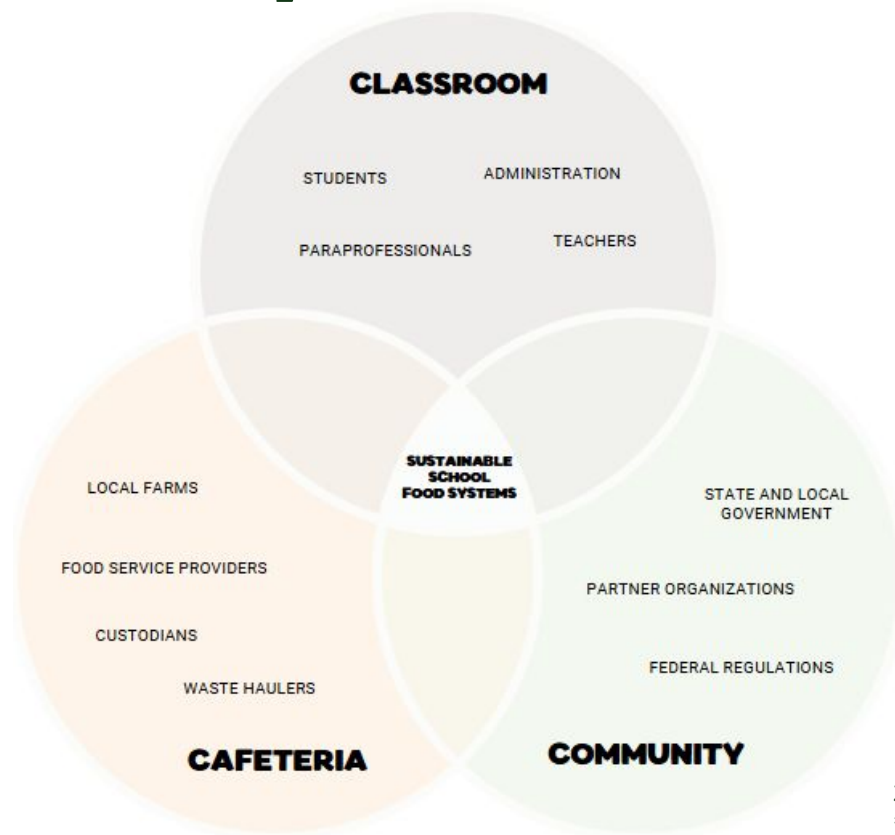
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# Who is part of the work?



3 C's Model of Change

\*Developed by Vermont FEED

# Current Legislation

As of January 1, 2023, all schools in Rhode Island will be required to adhere to regulations described in the **Food Waste Ban** as stated in R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-18.9-17

The Food Waste Ban states that each educational entity that generates at least 30 tons per year of organic- waste material shall ensure the organic-waste materials are recycled at an authorized composting facility or anaerobic digestion facility or by another authorized recycling method if the educational entity is not located more than 15 miles from an authorized composting facility or anaerobic digestion facility with available capacity to accept such material.

- **House Bill 5422**

As of September 1, 2021, all schools in Rhode Island will be required to adhere to regulations described in R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-111-5; **Food Donations by Food Service Companies**.

R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-111-5 states that any educational entity in Rhode Island that uses a food service company (vendor) shall require the vendor to donate any unserved nonperishable or unspoiled perishable food to local food banks or the RI Food Bank, will be required to adhere to regulations. Alternatively, your district may employ the use of share tables in your schools.

As of January 1, 2025 all schools in Rhode Island will no longer be permitted to use **Styrofoam materials** in their food service operation as outlined in R.I. Gen. Laws § 21-27.3-2. This includes trays, cups, takeout containers etc.

# Support from RIDE: Get the Foam Out!

Grant was open from February 2024 - April 2024

Funded by RIDE's School Building Authority

- Goal to help schools comply with Styrofoam ban
- **Awarded \$2,661,793** across 26 Local Education Agencies

103 Schools with every food service provider (Chartwells, Sodexo, Aramark) are participating

18 schools mentioned RISRP/local composting company as a grant partner

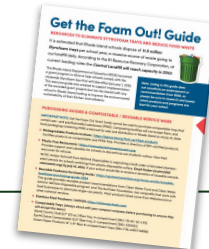
50/50 split between Compostable Serviceware and Infrastructure Improvement projects

Estimated lbs food diverted from the landfill **1,782,943 lbs.**  
Eliminates **11.5 million** styrofoam trays

A [Get the Foam Out Resource Guide](#) was created to support implementation



*"It is estimated that Rhode Island schools dispose of **11.5 million Styrofoam trays per school year**, a massive source of waste going to our landfill daily. According to the RI Resource Recovery Corporation, at current loading rates the Central Landfill will reach capacity in 2043" **There is no plan B!***



# Other Support from RIDE



## Child Nutrition Program Team

- ❑ Site Reviews
- ❑ Food Waste Survey
- ❑ Trainings



## School Building Authority

- ❑ New School Buildings
- ❑ Green Ribbon Schools
- ❑ HEAL Program



## RI Farm & Sea to School Network

- ❑ FTS Action Plans
- ❑ Connections to Community Orgs

# Best Practices

## Source Reductions

- Offer Vs. Serve
- <https://www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste/schools>

## Feeding Hungry People

- Circulating food back into the school community
  - Share Table
  - Nurse
  - Classroom Snacks
  - Backpack program
- Donating excess food during breaks
  - Winter, Spring, Summer

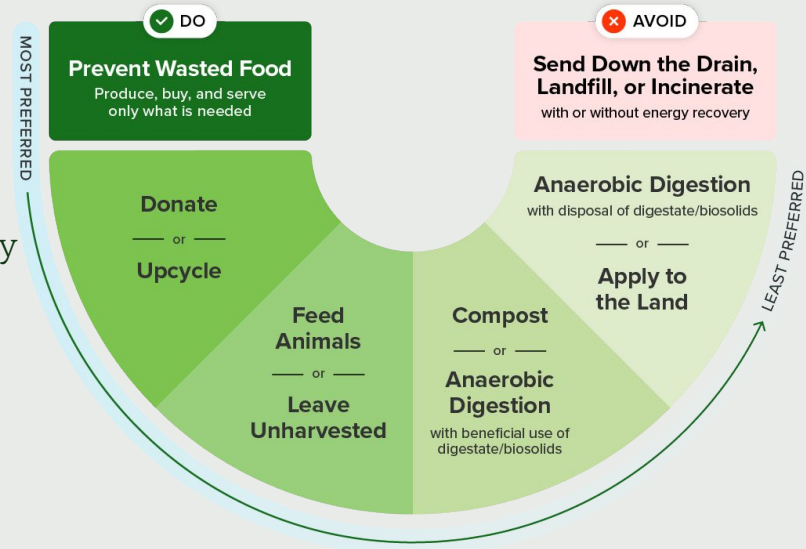
## Composting

- Partner Organizations!
- Nonprofit Food Service Surplus Funds Account may be used



## Wasted Food Scale

How to reduce the environmental impacts of wasted food



October 2023





# The Problem with Food Waste in Rhode Island

Americans waste **35- 40%** of food

In RI, **2,500 Tons** of food wasted in schools per year

**388 Tons** of perfectly good food

## Hunger Problem

2 in 5 families in RI are food insecure

## Environmental Problem

Greenhouse Gases and Wasted Resources

## Taxpayer Problem \$\$\$

RI Central Landfill is approaching capacity

CT Pays **\$93 Million** to ship trash to PA



# Get Food Smart Program Makes it Easy for Schools

Reduce

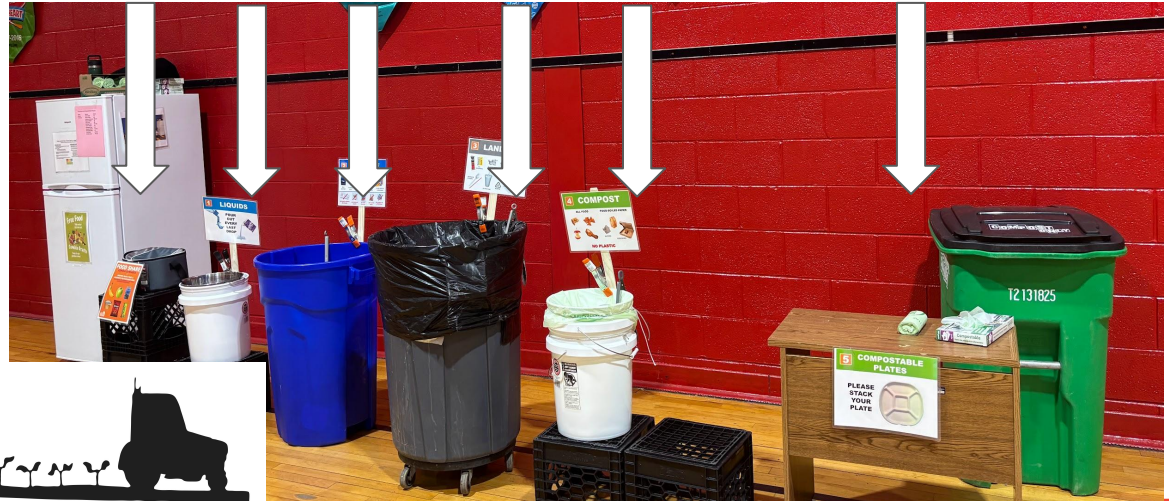
Reuse

Recycle

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL  
**RECYCLING PROJECT**

- Simple Setup
- Proven Process
- Training
- Implementation
- Collaboration
- Field Trips
- Learning Activities

Recover healthy food  
Separate liquids  
Recycle properly  
Reduce trash  
Compost food scraps  
Stack trays



**BOOTSTRAP  
COMPOST**

**ReMIX**  
ORGANICS  
COMPANY

**BLACK EARTH COMPOST**



# We Empower Students through Project Based Learning

Student Rangers Gain  
21st Century Skills:

Responsibility

Leadership

Communication

Community Service

Interpersonal Skills

Weights and Measurements

Graphing

Trends



In Coordination with:

District administrators

Principals

Custodians

Paraprofessionals

Food Service Staff

Compost Hauler

# Success in Food Smart Schools

## Program Impact

- Active in **42 schools** across **16 districts**
- Reduce Lunchroom Waste to the Landfill by **87%**
- Diverted **258.6 Tons** of Food Waste from Landfill
- Recovered **27.8 Tons** of Good Food
  - Created **46,314\* Meals**
- Reduced Food Waste per Student by **22%**
  - Towards goal of 50% 2030

## Environmental Impact



Reduced Carbon Footprint by **205.4 MTCO2**



GHG emissions of **48 gasoline powered vehicles** for one year



Carbon sequestered by **206 acres of forest**

# Our Organization



## 501c3 Nonprofit

- Board of Directors
- Organizing Director
- Program Director
- Operations Director
- Zone Leaders
- Facilitators
- Coordinators
- Paid Employees and Volunteers

# How are We Funded?

## Federal and State Grants

EPA, USDA

RIDE Get the Foam Out

In Partnership with

RI DEM

Providence Office of  
Sustainability

RI Food Policy Council



## Private Funding

11th Hour Racing

RI Foundation



## District Budgets

School Nutrition Fund

Food Service

Shifting Waste Costs

# How Can We Sustain the Momentum?

- School and District Champions
- Collaboration with Local Vendors
- Supportive School Community
- Ongoing Measurement
- Program Expansion
- Advocacy
  - RI House Bill H5422
  - Certified Environmental Custodian







## North Kingstown School Department: *Student Compost & Recycling Program!*



- North Kingstown is the only school district in the state to independently run their Child Nutrition Services program!
- Received RIDE's "Get the Foam Out" grant award for all eight schools in the district — \$165,662
  - ◆ Five elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school



# North Kingstown School Department: *Student Compost & Recycling Program!*

## **NKSD Sustainability Specialist Roles & Responsibilities:**

- Coordinate compost hauler logistics & communications
- Program design, implementation and evaluation
- Communicating with stakeholders across schools
- Performing educational trainings to students, staff, and faculty

## **Typical Program Launch (2-3 weeks):**

1. Stakeholder Meeting for each school; includes principal, TA's, custodian, faculty champion
2. Student Leader Training
3. Informational Presentation to student body
4. Setup up waste station & switch to compostable/recyclable serviceware
5. Program Launch! With onsite assistance for 1-2 weeks



# North Kingstown School Department: *Student Compost & Recycling Program!*

Forest Park Elementary  
School **Compost Crew!**



Zero Waste Sorting  
Stations:





# North Kingstown School Department: *Student Compost & Recycling Program!*

## Share Cart



## Share Fridge



**WELCOME TO THE SHARE FRIDGE!**

**What will you find here?**

Unopened and untouched food leftover from school purchased lunch or breakfast!

**Who can eat this food?**

Any **STUDENT** can eat this food with permission from school staff.

**ALLERGY NOTICE** - Food here may contain milk, eggs, wheat, & soybeans; see the Clinic for student information.

**How does this fridge help the environment?**

Edible food is not being thrown away and we are feeding these nutrients back into our bodies!





# North Kingstown School Department: *Student Compost & Recycling Program!*

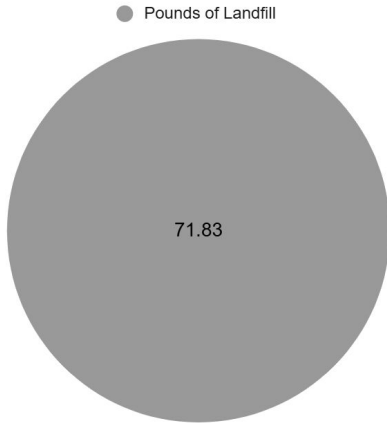
School	Number of Students	Estimated Pounds of Wasted Food per Year
Forest Park Elementary	260	12,220
Stony Lane Elementary	410	19,270
Hamilton Elementary	423	19,881
Fishing Cove Elementary	325	15,275
Quidnessett Elementary	230	10,810
Davisville Middle	550	21,615
Wickford Middle	360	14,148
North Kingstown High	1,375	21,450
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,933</b>	<b>134,669 pounds or 67.3 tons</b>





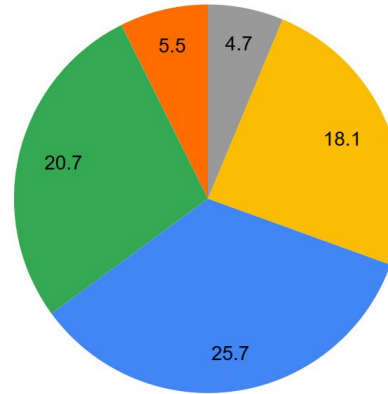
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Forest Park Elementary School Pre-Audit: 10/18/2024

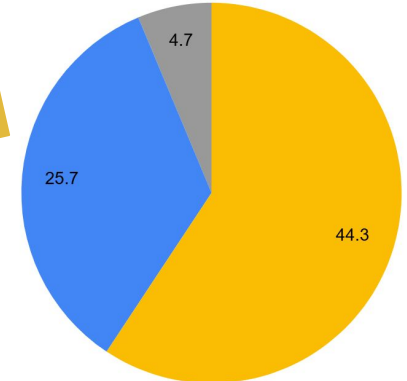


Forest Park Elementary School Waste Audit: 1/3/2025

● Landfill ● Compost ● Recycle ● Liquid ● Share Cart



● Wasted Food ● Recycling ● Landfill



**70 pounds of waste diverted, 94%  
waste diversion!**



# North Kingstown School Department: *Student Compost & Recycling Program!*

## Program Wins!

- Overcoming language barriers with custodial staff
- Getting funding approved for individual school sustainability champions for 25-26 school year
- Student involvement → student leadership
- Working with RI Schools Recycling Project for program execution support
- In-house Child Nutrition program allows for flexibility, program leadership & support, and quick changes re. serviceware changes
- Support from NK School Committee
- Customizing program to tailor the needs of schools & age groups

# Contact Us!



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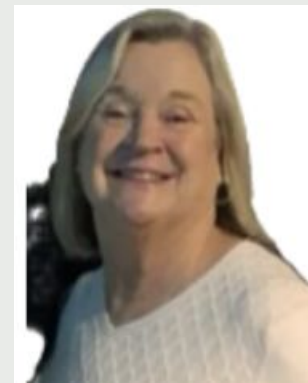
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