MPS Goes Green

Organics Coordinator Handbook

August, 2012

http://mpsgoesgreen.mpls.k12.mn.us/
August 20, 2012

MPS School Organics Coordinator,

Thank you for your leadership of organics recycling at your school. As you are already aware, this program provides numerous environmental and financial benefits to Minneapolis Public Schools and its students. The success of this program hinges on your active participation as well as your engagement with key members of your school community such as students, school leadership, teachers, school staff, and parents. This handbook will provide you with a step-by-step guide for getting organics recycling successfully implemented at your school.

In the following pages, you will find:
- A program roll-out timeline, with suggestions for how and when to make contact with MPS staff, parents, students, and volunteers;
- Sample language for communication with each of these groups;
- Answers to frequently asked questions;
- Tips for setting up your lunchroom;
- Information about the new organics recycling signage; and
- Ideas for delivering organics training to K-8 students and considerations for implementing organics training at the high school level.
(Please note that these materials are primarily oriented towards a K-8 audience, so please make adjustments for your school accordingly.)

We worked hard to provide you with these resources. It is now up to you to take the program and run with it. Your enthusiasm, diligence, and creativity will be the foundation of a successful organics recycling program at your school. We are here to provide as much support as possible throughout this process and welcome your feedback. Thank you and good luck!

Sincerely,
Meredith Fox
Formerly, the Special Assistant to the Chief of Policy & Operations

IMPORTANT NOTE: A number of people have been enormously helpful in the planning for organics recycling at Minneapolis Public Schools. MPS Goes Green wishes to acknowledge the contribution of the following individuals:

- **Pam Blackamoore**, MPS Plant Operations/Transportation
- **Chris Carver**, MPS Policy & Operations
- **Diane Don**, MPS Plant Operations
- **Ann Herrmann**, MPS parent
- **Bill Hill**, MPS Plant Operations
- **John Jaimez**, Hennepin County
- **Casey McGuire**, MPS parent
- **Tom McQuaig**, MPS Plant Operations (formerly)
- **Dawn Miller**, MPS Plant Operations
- **Louise Miller**, Hopkins Schools
- **Ron Monson**, MPS IT Services
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- **Keren Price**, MPS parent
- **Aaron Rosenberger**, MPS Green Schools Intern
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- **John Sauer**, MPS parent/illustrator
- **Sarah Sponheim**, MPS parent
- **Wendi St. Sauver**, Be Complete Design
- **Jim Tschida**, MPS Plant Operations
- **Xuan Vu**, MPS Communications
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COORDINATOR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ’s)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROGRAM ROLL-OUT TIMELINE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUNCHROOM SET-UP TIPS</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAMPLE COMMUNICATION MATERIALS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGNAGE INFORMATION</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDENT TRAINING RESOURCES</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **As Coordinator, what is my role in organics recycling?**
   You are the engine that drives organics recycling at your site. You will be responsible for scheduling and coordinating student training, communication with your principal and head building engineer, and recruitment and management of lunchroom volunteers. Additionally, you will act as the eyes and ears of the district for this project. As the organics program is still in its infant stages, it will be essential that you document your processes not only for expansion to future sites, but also for the program’s continued success at your own site.

2. **Who do I contact with questions or feedback about the program?**
   Contact [mpsgoesgreen@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:mpsgoesgreen@mpls.k12.mn.us). A meeting of all MPS organics coordinators will be held semi-annually to answer questions and get your feedback.

3. **How do I publicize the program? Are there materials available from District headquarters?**
   The District invested a great deal of time and money designing and printing compelling and informational signage and handouts for you to use in the roll-out of organics recycling at your school. These include a fun “Let’s R.O.T – reduce our trash” poster with cartoon characters, a Let’s R.O.T. postcard to send home with kids, and other informational signage that is described in the signage section. You can download all the materials from our website at: [http://mpsgoesgreen.mpls.k12.mn.us/Home](http://mpsgoesgreen.mpls.k12.mn.us/Home)

4. **How do we get supplies for the program?**
   a) **Compostable bags:** Your building head engineer will order compostable bags from their supply vendor. However, at $.70/bag, we ask that you be extremely judicious with this resource. Please only toss full bags in the dumpster.
   b) **Barrels – green, blue, and red:** These can be ordered through Plant Operations at 612-668-2400. We want to brand the color blue for mixed recycling and green for organics.
   c) **Milk strainer tops:** Again you can order by contacting Plant Operations. We do not order the bucket as schools should have plenty of these around the building.
   d) **Signage:** You can download posters, and flyers in multiple languages from the MPS Goes Green web site. We also have a limited number of posters and postcards at Plant Operations.
   e) **Foam-core for lunchroom posters:** These are on hand at Plant Operations.
   f) **Plunger, tongs, and gloves:** Plant Operations can provide Nifty Nabbers if you would like them.

5. **When will hauling start for my school?**
   We can schedule your first organics pick-up for the date that you request. Please contact your building engineer to find out what works best for your school. Allied Waste will drop off an organics dumpster one week prior to your start date. They will begin by picking up your organics one time per week. If it becomes apparent that you need a different pick-up schedule or your dumpster size is not working for your site, please have your head building engineer contact Allied Waste to make changes.

6. **What is the role of the building engineers in the organics recycling program?**
   Your building engineers are critical stakeholders regarding the placement of organics bins and the collection of organic materials from restrooms. The engineer will also store the compostable bags and monitor their usage. As you need more, your building engineer should order them through their supply vendor. It is essential that you have a working relationship with your engineer, as these operational decisions will have a great influence on the success of the program. Please make contact with your head engineer to discuss implementation of the program.

7. **What role will Nutrition Services staff have in the program?**
Nutrition Services staff will play a minimal role in the implementation of the program as they do not generally deal with waste streams. However, it is important that they are aware of the program and its processes. They should also have the opportunity to provide feedback.

8. **How can I prepare for next year and beyond?**

   It is the goal of the district that the organics recycling program become self-sustaining. The work that you do to lay the foundation this year in terms of student and staff training will pay off as organics recycling becomes a natural part of the school day. You will need to plan for a student training during the first week of school next year to account for new students and remind returning students of the process. It will also be extraordinarily helpful to the district if you document your successes, challenges, and other findings to facilitate the program's expansion and continued success next year.

9. **Where can I find additional resources/information for organics recycling?**

   We will update the MPS Goes Green web site (mpsgoesgreen.k12.mn.us) frequently with tips and resources for organics recycling participants. All of the materials in this packet will be posted on the website.

10. **What if I can no longer fulfill my commitment to the program?**

    In the unfortunate event that you are unable to continue coordinating the program for any reason, please contact Plant Operations immediately. Each school must have an active designated coordinator in order for the program to thrive. If you are unable to continue in this position, we must work to find another coordinator as quickly as possible.

11. **What happens if regular trash gets into the organics container?**

    Please make every effort to ensure that students separate waste materials correctly. However, the organics facility will accept contamination of up to 10 percent by volume. Please guard this information carefully. We don’t want students throwing trash in the organics bin because they think contamination is okay. On the other hand, don’t make yourself crazy ensuring a 100% clean bag of organics. If a bag is significantly contaminated, throw it in the trash.

12. **How much leeway do I have to operate the program?**

    With regard to communication and process, you may use the resources in this packet as guidelines to be adjusted to fit your individual site. Materials such as containers, bags, informational and promotional posters must be standardized throughout the district. Please do not deviate from the signage and containers provided to you.

13. **How can I find volunteers for the program?**

    We know that some schools have more developed networks for volunteers than others. You may need to look outside of your school community in order to find the help that you need to implement the program. Please contact Janine Freij at MPS Volunteer Services if you are not having any luck securing volunteers. She can give you some tips and resources for finding volunteers. Janine can be reached at: # 612-668-3990 / Janine.Freij@mpls.k12.mn.us.

14. **Are there guidelines for working with volunteers?**

    Yes! The district has strict guidelines regarding volunteers. If the volunteers will be directly supervised by district staff 100% of the time, they simply need to complete an online volunteer registration form (http://commed.mpls.k12.mn.us/Volunteer_Application) and be notified of their approval by Volunteer Services prior to the start of work. If the volunteers will not be supervised 100 percent of the time, the district requires a criminal background check. If your school cannot guarantee direct supervision of lunchroom volunteers, please contact your school leadership for assistance with this issue.

    MPS Volunteer Services will work as quickly as possible to get volunteer applications processed. When a volunteer is approved, they and the school’s organics coordinator will be notified via email. Remember, a volunteer may not begin work until they have been approved. Volunteers can help speed up the process
by listing references that are available to answer the reference call during school hours. Also, volunteers should notify their references that the call is coming.

15. **Are there additional funds available for organics recycling?**
   The organics program is partially funded by a grant from Hennepin County. All of the funds are accounted for through hauling costs, purchase of equipment, and printing of materials. You are welcome to secure additional funds through community groups or the parent community at your school if you would like to host a special organics recycling event, print supplemental handouts, or engage in other special programming around the organics recycling program.

16. **Is organics recycling fun?**
   Yes! We anticipate that this project will be work-intensive at first, but fun and rewarding. This is your opportunity to put in place a program that will have a long-lasting impact on your students, future MPS students, and our environment. Enjoy your interactions with staff, students, and parents as you all work together to make Minneapolis Public Schools a greener place!

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**ORGANICS RECYCLING ROLL-OUT TIMELINE**

The success of the organics recycling program rests on the cooperation of several groups of stakeholders. Consistent and thorough communication with each of these groups will ensure that the program gets off the ground successfully. The following is a recommended timeline for working with the essential groups.

**Three weeks before first pick-up:**
- Meet with your principal. It is important that your principal be aware of the organics program and its processes. At this time, it may be helpful to lay out your plan for volunteer participation, student training, and communication to parents. Please see the sample introductory letter to principals in this packet for suggestions as to how to set up this meeting.

**Two weeks before first pick-up:**
- Meet with your building's head engineer. The engineer is an important stakeholder regarding placement of organics containers, frequency of bag changes, and the collection of organics materials from restrooms. See sample communication to staff for more information.
- Start recruiting lunchroom volunteers if you haven't already. You will need adults dedicated to monitoring organics recycling in the lunchroom every day for at least the first few months of the program. Some schools have even found that volunteers are needed all year. (Communication materials for contacting, training, and working with volunteers is included later in this packet.) Remember: all volunteers who are not MPS employees must complete the volunteer application form and be approved by MPS Volunteer Service prior to beginning work.

**One week before first pick-up:**
- Hold a training meeting with parent volunteers and lunchroom support staff. If possible, meet in your school's lunchroom and place organics barrels in their correct location prior to the meeting. It may be helpful to stage a walk-through of organics recycling procedures at this meeting. (A general overview of the program is outlined in the Organics Recycling Volunteer Training PowerPoint.
- Hang the “Let’s ROT” posters around the school building and make sure the organics recycling informational flyers are hung by the restroom waste containers. (More information about these printed pieces is provided in the signage section.)
• Work with students to put together the green, blue, and red foam-core posters for the lunchroom. (Pictures of what these displays should look like are provided in the lunchroom set-up section.)
• It is helpful to laminate your “how to” posters with cut outs from magazines because they last longer.
• Distribute postcards to classroom teachers and ask them to briefly explain organics recycling to their class. They should send the postcards home with students once they’ve gone through the content with their students. MPS will provide enough printed copies of this postcard for each student at your school. (See communication to classroom teachers in this packet. Information about the postcard is provided in the signage section.)
• Hold training for students. This packet contains suggested training techniques. Please discuss possible training times, methods, and strategies with your principal ahead of time.

Week of First Pick-Up:
• Send a final reminder to parent volunteers, engineers, and lunchroom personnel via email or other established method of communication. Arrive early to check on organics stations and prepare for students to arrive at lunch. Have fun!
• Consider using weekly PA announcements to remind students about the organics recycling program.

One month after first pick-up:
• Check in with your principal and chief building engineer. How is the program working? What adjustments could improve the program's efficiency?
• Seek feedback from parent volunteers and other lunchroom monitors.

**NOTE: If you have questions or concerns at any point in this process, please contact your Plant Operations.
LUNCHROOM SET-UP

Each school will need to set-up their lunchroom for organics recycling in a way that works for their physical layout, the number of lunch periods, the existing lunchtime protocols, and the age of students. Some considerations:

- Have the students dump their milk and other liquids in a bucket before getting to the bins. Liquid is not allowed in the organics or trash bins. The building engineer will need to dump this liquid periodically.
- Set up the three colored bins as a set (green, blue, and red).
- Display large foam-core posters behind each bin showing what goes in that particular bin. Use students to help design the posters. Encourage them to use actual materials from your waste streams (cleaned of course!).
- Check school lunches for content when you arrive. This will help you prepare for sorting materials at the end of the lunch period.
- Remember that school lunch trays are now compostable (green barrel)
- Milk cartons should be emptied and put into mixed recycling (blue barrel).
- During the first five minutes of each lunch period, walk around to the tables and remind students: paper bags must be emptied of all plastic and other non-organics.
• Have an adult volunteer or school staff person in front of your waste bins to assist students with sorting until they are comfortable with sorting themselves.
• Make sure that students form an orderly line around the containers. This will help you ensure that they are sorting correctly.
• When students place paper bags in the green organics barrels, try to confirm that there is no non-organics material in the bags.
• Diagram your lunchroom set-up and develop a set of tips related to your program. Attach this to the back of one of the foam-core posters so volunteers know what to do even if you are not there.
• Diagrams of organics recycling programs at other Hennepin County schools are available on the MPS Goes Green website.

COMMUNICATION MATERIALS

Sample Introductory Communication to Principals
You may use this language to set up an initial meeting with your principal if you have not done so already.

Dear Principal ____________,

My name is ____________, and I am the organics recycling coordinator for ________ School. We are excited to bring the organics composting program to our school. Along with the other “green” changes being implemented such as mixed recycling and green cleaning products, organics recycling provides our school with an innovative way to save money, save world resources, and the opportunity to teach our students to practice sustainability.

The success of this program in our school depends on several factors, your commitment to the program being among the most important. I will lead the implementation of the program. I am writing to request a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss the details of the program. At this meeting, I hope to achieve the following:

1. Identify how and when the training of students will happen. Training materials will be provided.

2. Identify staff members who need to be involved and in what capacity. It is very important to communicate with staff members about their role in the program. Sending a united message of support to the students is essential.

The organics composting will begin at our school during the week of ________.

I look forward to working with you to make this new way of processing our lunchroom waste a positive experience for everyone involved. Thank you for your time and support.

Sample Columns for School Newsletter
The following language can be used in a newsletter to announce the program and/or provide some interesting facts about organics recycling.
Earth Matters: Liftoff!
[Your school’s name] has launched its Organics Recycling program in the cafeteria, and the kids are doing a great job learning to separate their lunch waste into organics, mixed recycling, and trash. Our school’s engineers will also collect and recycle compostable materials such as paper towels from the restrooms. Check your child’s backpack for a handout describing the program. We encourage you to save the postcard and discuss it with your family.

We also have a few important people to thank:
[insert volunteer names here]

Earth Matters: Why Are We Recycling Organic Material?
Sending food and other organic waste to an incinerator is not good for our environment. Food scraps and plant matter are wet and don’t burn well. In landfills they release methane – a greenhouse gas 23 times worse than carbon dioxide! Recycling our organic waste creates a nutrient-rich fertilizer that helps store carbon in the soil and reduces emissions into the atmosphere.

Organics recycling will be coming to [your school’s name]! In the coming weeks your child will be learning how to separate their lunch waste for composting. Please check this space in future issues for more information about this exciting new program, and for tips on how to reduce waste and protect our environment. If you have any questions or would like to help with the program, please contact [your name and contact information here].

Thank you all for helping us go green!

Sample Public Announcements about Organics Recycling
Use these loud-speaker announcements to remind students about the new organics recycling program. They are designed to be used every day for a week.

(1) ORGANICS Program Kickoff
Starting today, [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] will begin a new kind of recycling program in the lunchroom and restrooms. As of today, the compostable part of our trash, called ORGANICS, will be collected in separate green containers, picked up by an organics recycling truck, and recycled into high quality compost that can be used to grow flowers. Compostable items that should be placed in the green ORGANICS containers include all food scraps and paper waste items that cannot go into our blue recycling containers such as napkins, and paper bags. If it can ROT, it goes in the ORGANICS container. Look for the new green ORGANICS containers and put ORGANICS in their place!

(2) Recyclables & Plastics
Remember that we have begun collecting ORGANICS separately in the lunchroom. Remember to put the compostable part of your trash in our new green ORGANICS containers. If it can ROT, it goes in the green containers. Compostable items that should be placed in the ORGANICS containers include all food scraps and paper waste items that cannot be recycled. Plastic items, such as Styrofoam trays, plastic cups, and chip bags, should go in the trash. All office paper, plastic bottles, and aluminum cans should be placed in a blue recycling container, so they can be recycled. Keep recycling and look for the new green ORGANICS containers. Let’s R.O.T .– reduce our trash!
(3) The Bags Used to Collect ORGANICS Are Really Compostable!
Remember to put the compostable part of your trash in our new green ORGANICS containers. Compostable trash items that should be placed in the ORGANICS containers include all food scraps and waste items made out of paper that cannot be recycled in the blue containers. If you have been wondering about the bags used to line the ORGANICS containers, they are a special kind of degradable plastic. The bags used in our ORGANICS containers are designed to decompose quickly at the site where our ORGANICS are composted. However, the regular plastic items from our cafeteria, like forks, juice cups, and chip bags do not degrade quickly, so remember to throw those in the trash. Look for the new green ORGANICS containers, and put your ORGANICS in the compostable bags! Let’s R.O.T. – reduce our trash!

(4) What Happens to the ORGANICS?
The compostable parts of our trash are now being recycled into high quality compost. The ORGANICS are picked up from our school and taken to large-scale composting facilities in Empire Township, near Rosemount. The full composting process takes about 12 to 18 months to complete, and the finished compost is used throughout the Twin Cities metro area by landscapers for healthy lawns and gardens and in road projects to reduce erosion on steep slopes. Look for the new green ORGANICS containers and keep on composting! Let’s R.O.T. – reduce our trash!

(5) Are We the Only School Recycling ORGANICS? & Fighting Global Warming
Remember to put the compostable part of your trash in our new green ORGANICS containers. Our school is one of almost 100 K-12 schools in Hennepin County making a special effort to separate and recycle its ORGANICS. But our school is one of very few in the whole country recycling its ORGANICS. Our work recycling ORGANICS is helping to fight global warming. Food scraps and plant matter are wet and do not burn well. And when they go to landfills, they release methane, a greenhouse gas 23 times worse than carbon dioxide. Please help us make this program successful by putting your ORGANICS in the proper green container. Help our school be an environmental leader and role model for other schools to follow. Let’s R.O.T. – reduce our trash!

Sample Communication to School Staff
Send to staff via email or newsletter at the beginning of the school year.

Organics Recycling is coming to our school this fall! We will join over 35 other schools in the district, working together to educate ourselves and our students on the importance of doing our part to protect the environment. By participating in the Organics Recycling program, our school will reduce the amount of garbage we send to the Hennepin County incinerator and the amount of money that we spend on garbage collection. It will cost our school less to pick up the organics recycling than the regular “garbage”.

To do this, we will:
1) Teach ourselves and our students to sort our breakfast and lunchroom waste into either organics recycling (compostable items), mixed recycling, or trash.
2) Compact what we put in each bin as much as possible, by flattening our milk cartons after they are emptied, and by stacking the lunch trays so that they take up less space in the trash bin. Our trash bags will take up less space in the dumpster and therefore require less frequent pick-ups by our hauler.
3) Only throw paper towels and other organically recyclable materials in the bathroom garbage bins. These will be emptied into the special organics bags and recycled with our lunchroom organic recycling materials.
If you are:

- A principal: be your building’s cheerleader in this process! Please provide time for your staff and students to be trained in organics recycling, and help oversee the process in the lunchroom.
- A lunchroom monitor: you will guide your students as they gain confidence with the new sorting system. They might need frequent reminders on how to sort their “garbage” at the sorting station. Please be patient with them!
- An engineer: please focus on conserving space and resources as much as possible. The organics recycling bags are very expensive. Instead of emptying each bin after each lunch, consider only emptying them after they are full. Also, please check for organics recycling bags that are significantly contaminated with non-organic material. If it looks like bags are regularly contaminated, let your organics coordinator know immediately. More student training and monitoring may be needed.
- A Nutrition Services staff member: please familiarize yourself with the program. Your feedback will provide us with valuable information and help us to refine the program as we move forward.
- A classroom teacher: you can take advantage of this opportunity to educate your students about how to do their part to preserve the planet’s resources. We will provide you with copies of an organics recycling flyer that we would like you to review with your students and then send home. Your support and encouragement of students is critical.

I am our school’s organics recycling contact. I will coordinate training for staff and students in the first few weeks of school. We will “go live” with our participation in the program on __________. Please feel free to ask questions and give feedback during this process. This is a new direction for our school and our district, and our enthusiasm will make all the difference in how this process unfolds in the weeks ahead!

(Name of contact)
(Contact information)

WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

We know that some schools have more developed networks for volunteers than others. You may need to look outside of your school community in order to find the help that you need to implement the program. Please contact Janine Freij at MPS Volunteer Services if you are not having any luck securing volunteers. She can give you some tips and resources for finding volunteers. Janine can be reached at: # 612-668-3990 / Janine.Freij@mpls.k12.mn.us.

Also, please note that the district has strict guidelines regarding volunteers. If the volunteers will be directly supervised by district staff 100% of the time, they simply need to complete an online volunteer registration form (http://commed.mpls.k12.mn.us/Volunteer_Application) and be notified of their approval by Volunteer Services prior to the start of work. If the volunteers will not be supervised 100 percent of the time, the district requires a criminal background check. If your school cannot guarantee direct supervision of lunchroom volunteers, please contact your building leadership to develop a plan for appropriately addressing this issue.

MPS Volunteer Services will work as quickly as possible to get volunteer applications processed. When a volunteer is approved, they and the school’s organics coordinator will be notified via email. Remember, a volunteer may not begin work until they have been approved. Volunteers can help speed up the process by
listing references that are available to answer the reference call during school hours. Also, volunteers should notify their references that the call is coming.

**Sample Volunteer Recruitment Communication**
The following language should be used as an initial announcement to recruit volunteers for the program. It could be included in a school newsletter or emailed to a parent list-serve.

**Help make our school green!**
Organics recycling is coming to [your school’s name]! We need volunteers in the cafeteria to help the students as they learn to separate organics (food scraps and other compostable material) and mixed recycling from the rest of their lunch trash. The time commitment is two lunch shifts per month (xx:xx – xx:xx) If you can help, please contact [your name and contact information]. This will be a fun and easy project that will have a real impact -- on our kids and on our planet!

**Sample Introductory Communication with Potential Volunteer**
After you compile a list of potential volunteers, this communication can initiate the scheduling process.

Hello [volunteer name],

Thank you for your interest in helping with the new organics recycling program at [school’s name], which is scheduled to start on [date]. Our greatest need is for help in the cafeteria as the kids learn how to separate food scraps and other compostable material (napkins, wax paper, paper plates, etc) from their lunch trash. I am envisioning that each volunteer will help in the cafeteria twice each month (xx:xx - xx:xx).
Please let me know if this sounds like something you can help with, and if there are any days of the week that would not work for you.

Again, thanks for your interest.
[Your name]

P.S. Every ‘non-MPS staff’ lunchroom volunteer must complete a Volunteer Registration Form before working with students. Please complete the attached form immediately and send it to MPS Volunteer Services – ATTN: Janine Freij, 1006 W Lake Street, Mpls, MN 55408. You will be notified once your application has been approved.

**Ideas for Volunteer Training**
Prior to the start of your program, arrange a volunteer meeting and review the program. If a meeting is not possible, send the following materials to your volunteers via email. Volunteer training materials should include:

- “Organics Recycling @ MPS: A Guide for Lunchroom Volunteers” PowerPoint located on the MPS Goes Green website. This document explains why we are doing organics recycling and the responsibilities of volunteer lunchroom monitors.
- Video developed about organics recycling at Burroughs Community School (go to [http://mgsogesgreen.mpls.k12.mn.us/](http://mgsogesgreen.mpls.k12.mn.us/) and click “Video: Organics Recycling at Burroughs Elementary” in the sidebar on the right). This provides a good sense of what to expect.
• A diagram and description of how organics recycling will be set-up in your lunchroom. (You will need to create this for your school.) You should also post this diagram and notes about your program on the back of your organics recycling posters. This will answer questions volunteers might have even if you are not present.
Sample Volunteer Scheduling Communication
Below is a series of communications intended to maintain contact with volunteers and remind them of the schedule after it is complete.

1) Message sent about 20 days before the new month

Before I put together a volunteer schedule for the coming month, I wanted to check in to confirm your availability. Please find your name in the following list and let me know by [date] if there have been any changes in the information I’ve listed. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

2) Message sent about 15 days before the new month

Below is a cafeteria volunteer schedule for [month]. I am also including a list of everyone’s contact info and availability. If you find that you cannot be there for the date you are assigned, please trade with someone else and let me know about the trade.

3) Message sent each Thursday to volunteers working the next week

Just a reminder that you are signed up to help in the cafeteria next week. [attach schedule] Thanks!
Four pieces of signage have been created to support the MPS organics recycling program. A significant investment of time and money has been made to create and print these pieces for the program. Please use them! If you require additional copies of anything, please email your plant operations supervisor or download them from the MPS Goes Green website.

1) Let’s R.O.T. (reduce our trash) posters – The posters will be sent to your school’s head building engineer with your name on them. Please work with your school principal and head building engineer to hang these posters in the lunchroom and other common spaces around your building. These posters were expensive to print, so guard them carefully.

2) Our School is Recycling Organics postcards (8 ½ x 5 ½) – This postcard is meant to be a fun classroom and take-home piece to reinforce the Let’s ROT message and the cartoon characters. The back of the postcard will announce that your school is doing organics recycling, why it is a good thing, and what can go in the bin. Your school will receive enough postcards for each student at your school. They will be delivered to your school’s head building engineer. Please distribute these postcards to each classroom teacher and ask them to review
the materials with their students and then send it home in the students’ backpacks. This is an important training tool for the kids and an opportunity to inform parents about the program.

3) Organics and mixed recycling informational signage (8 ½ x 11) – these signs provide additional details about what can go in the green (organics) and blue (mixed recycling) bins. These will be sent to your school’s principal who will be asked to distribute these to teachers and building engineers who will hang them throughout the building. Each major space should have at least one of each. Work with your school principal to make sure these signs are displayed appropriately.
4) Organics, mixed recycling, and trash character PDF’s (8 ½ x 11) – These flyers are meant to reinforce the cartoon characters on the Let’s ROT posters and provide more detail than the posters. These are meant to be printed on green paper for the organics characters (apple, sandwich, bag) and blue for the mixed recycling characters (bottle, newspaper, can) and pink or red for the trash characters (trash bag man). You will not receive printed copies of these flyers, rather, we will provide these as pdf’s on the MPS Goes Green website and you can choose to make copies if it is helpful for rolling out your program. These flyers could be hung in classrooms or used for a coloring contest or other creative project.
STUDENT TRAINING

Training for students will vary across age levels and from school to school. In the following section, we provide some suggested methods for delivering this training to elementary and middle school students, along with important considerations for implementing organics recycling at the high school level.

(1) ‘LET’S ROT’ Training

Suggested Materials
- Overhead projector with two pictures - one a happy earth and the other a sad earth
- Compost in aquarium w/ food scraps on top - place blanket over during presentation
- Compost in aquarium with flowers on top - place blanket over during presentation
- Green, red, and blue bins with foam-core signage behind the bins
- Trash and food collected from the previous day's lunch period

Purpose
To teach students about the importance of organics recycling as well knowing what to sort. Instead of the 3 R's we use the 4 R’s: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot.

The script
Reduce, reuse, recycle...... What is rot??
“Rot is composting. It is what happens to our food when it breaks down. (Give example of fruit left in a lunch box over the weekend, explaining smell and color.) When we separate our food from other waste, we can use the rot to save the environment. It reduces the amount of refuse going to landfills and eliminates the need for artificial, store bought fertilizer.”
(Unveil the aquariums to show kids that food waste becomes compost which later can be used to help grow flowers.)

What happens to our food when we throw it in the trash????
“Food scraps and plant matter are wet and do not burn well. And when it goes to landfills, it decomposes at a much slower rate when it gets mixed in with other trash. When food decomposes it gives off a gas (the smell from the lunch box). That smell from the fruit rotting creates methane gas which contributes to greenhouse gases. So, a lot of food mixed with a lot of trash makes a lot of greenhouse gases which contributes to global warming.”

How do we get there???
“We can rot our way to rich soil that feeds the earth, to grow more food, so we can eat. It is your responsibility to separate your food. Your plastics and aluminum containers go in the blue bin. Your food goes in the green bin. If you wonder what goes into the green bin, ask yourself if a worm would eat it or if it was once living. If a worm eats it—put it in a green bin. If it was once alive-put it in the green bin. Paper bags and wooden food sticks come from trees—so put it in the green bin. Everything else left on your tray belongs in the red bin.”

Get kids to participate

• Hold up various trash and food items and for each ask which colored bin it goes in – green, blue, or red.
• Pick some hard examples (like a milk carton or a frozen food box) and have them figure out that it goes in the green bin
• When an item goes in green, have the kids yell: “Let’s Rot!”
• If they get an answer wrong, flash the sad earth. When they get the answer right, flash the happy earth.
• End the presentation with a rousing: “Let’s ROT” all together!

(2) Organics Recycling Training Script

The following script should be used to introduce organics recycling to K-5 students. It can be used at an assembly or before the lunch period begins.

Hello everyone! I am here today to share an exciting new change you get to be a part of at (your school name)! (your school name) is one of a few Minneapolis schools chosen to do not only recycling, but to do an extra special part called organics recycling.

"Organic" just is a fancy word that means something came from the earth and will breakdown or "rot" and turn back into dirt if it is put back in the earth. The things that can be put in the compost bin will go to a place where they will be turned back into wonderful dirt- called compost that is full of all the great stuff that helps plants grow.

When we come together to eat our lunch, some of you have lunch from home and others have school lunch. Wherever your lunch comes from, some parts are "organic" and can be composted and some are not.

(Show visual examples of organics, mixed recycling items, and a couple trash items. Have the kids tell you where they think each one would go. Have the kids hold up things from their lunch that they believe can go in the organic composting bin, recycling bin, and trash. Make it fun by throwing in some ridiculous items such as a tree, a car, other big things that would never be in the lunch room.)

Each time you finish eating your meal, when you throw out your trash, we want you to use your noggin and think about which pieces could go in the organics bin. If there are containers that can be recycled, like plastic bottles, they go in the blue recycling bin. The rest is trash for the red bin.

Reducing the "trash" part of what we throw away is really important because it helps our school save money and it helps make the earth a cleaner better place for all of us.

These are the new bins we are going to use, one is for mixed recycling, like glass, plastic and cans. (Show the recycling poster and introduce the characters.) The second one is the new organic bin, for extra food, paper napkins and other items that came from nature. (Show the organics poster and introduce the characters.) Lastly we have the red trash bin, for whatever is left over.
There will be extra helpers here during lunch time to help you get the hang of this new program, but we are confident you will find it very easy! There will be information going home with you to show your parent what you are doing here in the lunchroom to save the planet.

This is where the bins will go (show location). And this is how we would like you to get to them (show them the way you want them to approach the bins, this should have been agreed upon by the principal, engineering staff and the program coordinator)

Take a couple quick questions, then let the kids eat their lunch. Tell them that you are starting today and stay to help, or introduce the helpers. Let the kids know that it's all about practice and that we are all learning together, there are no mistakes, just opportunities to learn!

(3) Considerations for high school organics recycling

Successful organics recycling at the high school level will require a different approach than with a K-8 audience. Strong-willed and independent, the average high school student will likely ignore instructions and procedures unless presented with a compelling reason to follow them. Student involvement early and often in the process, from the initial planning stages through program maintenance and oversight, will encourage an understanding and enthusiasm for organics recycling.

A recent study of Orono High School students illustrates the importance of student involvement in the organics recycling process. According to the report, Orono began the organics recycling program in the 2007-2008 school year and experienced successful participation throughout the district. The major exception was the high school. Many Orono students were apathetic about the organics recycling program; the study group attempted to find a remedy for this problem. They arrived at the following suggestions:

- Involve student government in the implementation of the program. This will ensure student buy-in.
- Create awareness for the program through a “Green Week” or recycling competitions between classrooms or lunch periods.
- Make an informational presentation to incoming students at new student orientation sessions.
- Clearly mark the areas near recycling containers with informational posters.

We are committed to carefully documenting the strategies and results at this site in an effort to provide future high school sites with a comprehensive approach to organics recycling.