
Trash Talking:

**Strategies to reduce waste, enhance recycling,
and engage students in sustainability efforts.**

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Introduction

History:

- Formed in 2001
- Finance Centers in each EPA district
- Assist organizations access funding
- Support communities with capacity building

Programs:

- BetterBev
- Southeast New England Program
- New England Water Infrastructure Network
- Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center



Background Information of Target School District

School District:

Portland
Public
Schools



Population:

- ~6,500 students served
- 3,105 Elementary Students
- 1,279 Middle School Students
- 2,114 High School Students

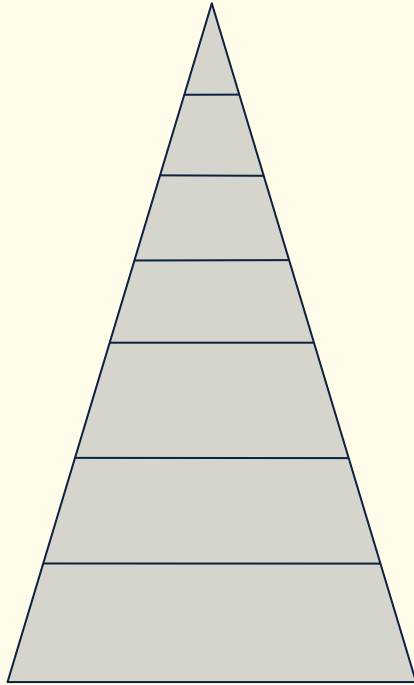
Schools:

- 2 Island
- 8 Elementary
- 3 Middle
- 4 High
- Adult Education
- Parent University
- Central Kitchen

Fun Facts:

- 59 Languages Spoken
- 1,445 Employees
- Portland Adult Education serves 3,000 students +
- As of this month, Portland offers Halal lunch options

Background Information of the Project



A. Reduce

B. Reuse

C. Recycle

D. Compost

E. Incinerate

F. Landfill

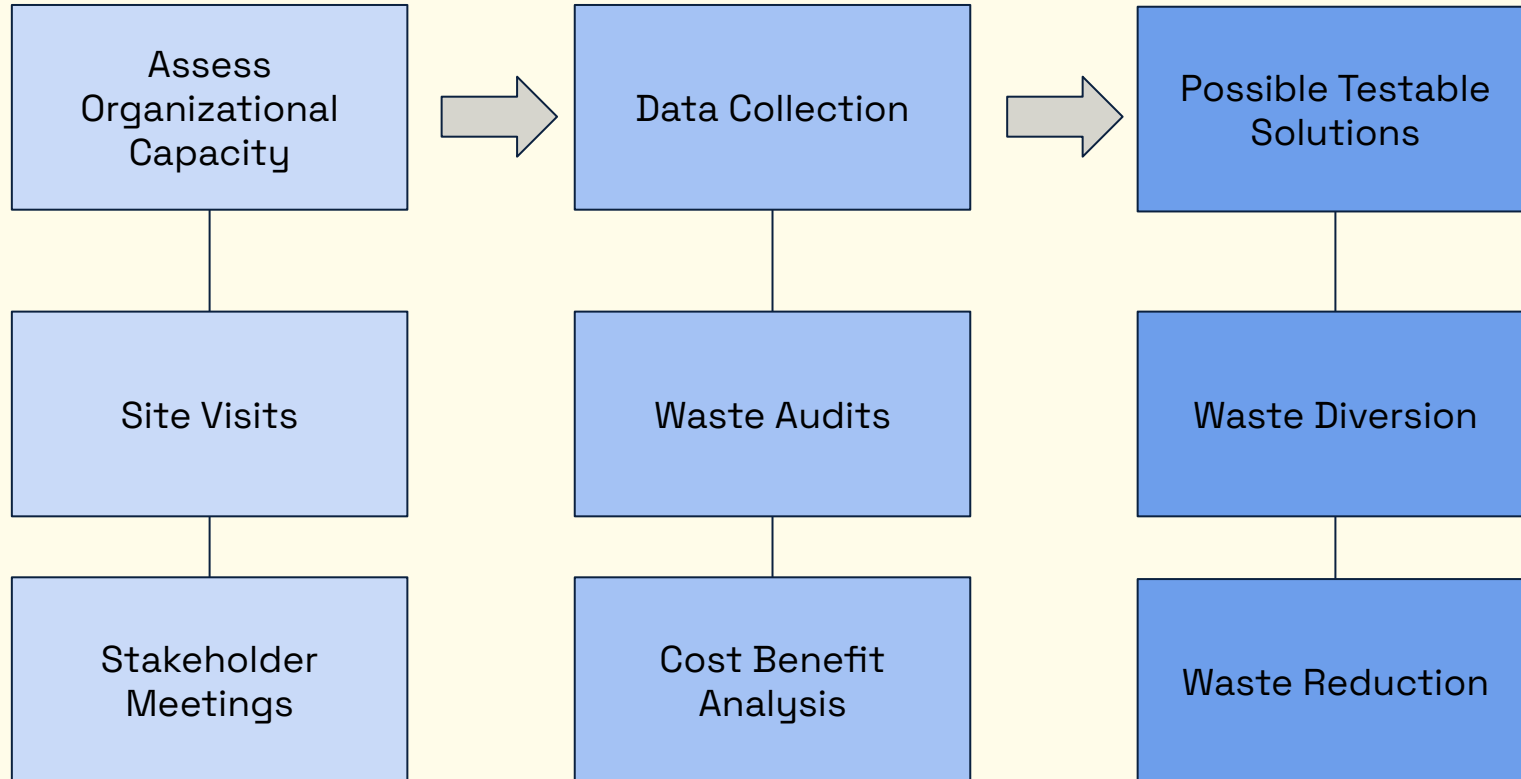
Goal:

Build a combined blueprint for waste diversion in school cafeterias for the Portland Public school district.

Background Research Highlights:

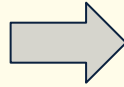
- Always Cost Savings
- Tied Strongly with School Nutrition
- Anticipated First Year Loss of Reusables
- Organizational Capacity had Few Papers
- Local Programs to Cover Recycling and Compost

Plan Overview

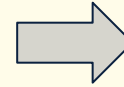


Closer Look

Assess
Organizational
Capacity



Data Collection



Possible Testable
Solutions



WASTE AUDIT FORM

Name of Organization/Site: King Middle Date: 2/25/25
 Auditors: Bridget, Bob, Landon, Mike

Where did this waste come from? (circle one)
 Cafeteria/Kitchen Office Lounge/Living Area Other (please specify): _____

What bin did this waste come from? (circle one)
 Garbage bin Recycling bin Compost bin

Total Weight: 14.82

Waste Type	Weight (Pounds)	% of total weight
Single-Sort Recycling: Mixed paper, newspaper, magazines, cardboard; Aluminum and tin (cans, foil); Glass jars and bottles; Plastic containers	.4	2%
Organics: Napkins and Paper Towels; Fruits and Vegetables; Meat and Dairy; Food-Soiled Paper	4.3	29%
Reusable Items: Unopened food; Writing Utensils; Other (list)		
Non-Recyclables (trash): Plastic (bags, wrappers, straws, etc.)	9.7	66.2%
Other (list): <u>Returnable</u>	.26	1.77%
TOTAL:	14.66	



King Middle Waste Audit (Before)



Compostable Trays



**Liquids Bucket and
Recovered Food**



Waste Station

King Middle Waste Audit



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Mixed Material Revelation



Yogurt parfaits include a mixture of #1 (PET) and #7 Greenware compostable plastic (PLA).

Central Kitchen



Recycling Bin



Large Dishwasher and Washable Trays

Approach District Wide

School Waste Diversion Plan:

- Observe and map each school
- Capacity building:
 - Taking a Leap after COVID
 - Team Oriented Solutions
 - Students
 - Teachers
 - Staff
- Marketing and information sharing:
 - Promotional Video
 - Based on an elementary school doing an amazing job
 - Reaching Parents
- Consistent support



Lessons Learned to Date

Observations:

- Each school is unique, but there is a lot of crossover
- There are opportunities for large and incremental changes
- Students, teachers, and staff want to see improvements
- It's critical to celebrate the wins, however small

Added Benefits:

- Less exposure of students to toxic substances (PFAS)
- Less material handling over all
- Measurable financial savings (\$4,000 a year)
- Student empowerment
- More recovered food

Next Steps

Approach in Schools:

- Maximize buy-in and focus on systemic approach
- Expand community support
- Engage all parties involved
- Jump on big opportunities, but expect incremental changes
- Focus on root problems, added benefits, and achievable goals

Approach at Central Kitchen:

- Bale cardboard
- Take plastic film to Hannaford
- Transition to metal lunch trays and easier to manage caddies
- Streamline packaging
- Increase compost capacity

It Takes a Village

Collaborators (to date):



South Portland School Department

reuse
MAINE



PORTLAND
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
prepared & empowered

Thank you for listening!

Questions? Concerns? Interpretive Dances?

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