



**MASSACHUSETTS
FARM TO SCHOOL**

School-wide Composting: Strategies to Launch a Successful Composting Program

November 5, 2025

IMPETUS

1. Community demand
2. Brookline **Climate Action Plan** (2018)
3. Brookline's development of **Zero Waste Framework** (Jan 2022)
4. Statewide waste diversion **legislation** and food waste ban (Oct 2021, Nov 2022)
5. Brookline DPW Recycling Dividend Fund by MassDEP
6. Food Service Sustainability Coordinator position funded by private donor (2022-ongoing)



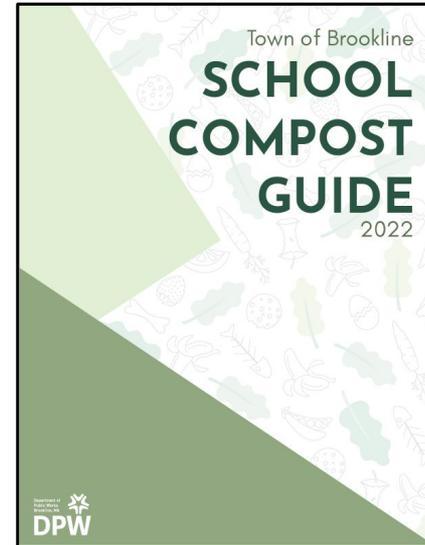
DISTRICT COLLABORATION

1. DPW

- a. Meeting with stakeholders
- b. Funding the necessary infrastructure and compost pickups needed at the schools
- c. Creating and distributing educational materials
- d. Creating the "School Compost Guide"

2. Food Services

- a. Sustainability Coordinator position funded by private donor (2022-ongoing) to oversee zero-waste initiatives and to lead transition towards more sustainable procedures



[Download School Compost Guide here](#)

BUY IN

1. School's **Composting Steering Committee**
 - a. Bring custodial staff into discussions
 - b. Open communications with school administrators, teachers and paras about the program
 - c. Pinpoint group of students to act as preliminary advocates/monitors
2. Schedule trainings for different stakeholder groups
3. Streamline processes in the kitchen



SCHOOL OWNERSHIP



- **School steering committee is ultimately making their own program decisions, with guidance from DPW and Food Services:**
 - Types of monitoring
 - Education / Training
 - Parent involvement
 - Bin Infrastructure (input from custodial staff)
 - Service ware (food service)

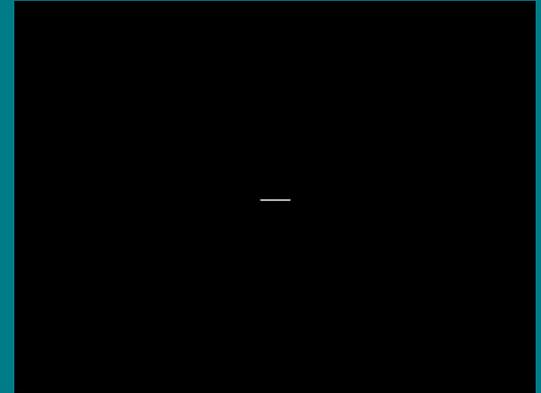
TRAININGS & OUTREACH

- **Education and trainings**

- Discussions in classes
- Student-made posters and videos
- DPW-led trainings for students, teachers and volunteers
- Food Services staff training

- **Communications with school community**

- Documents shared with teachers and paraprofessionals
- Trainings for the teachers, paras, and parent volunteers
- Letter overviewing the program sent to parents



LAUNCHING THE COMPOSTING PROGRAM

- **Data:**
 - Main form of data collection is auditing waste
 - Getting students and school community involved with the composting program
 - Can be used to generally catch people's attention and show how influential waste diversion can be
- **Day of Launch**
 - Brief overview presentation and sorting activity for each lunch wave
 - Help students sort their waste



MAINTAINING THE COMPOSTING PROGRAM



- **School Visits:**

- Daily for the two weeks following each launch
- Monthly to check in with stakeholders and address any blips in the program
- Remind school stakeholders to reach out with questions and concerns as they arise

- **Communication & Logistics**

- Weekly pickup updates that alert to any contamination or other issues
- Monthly tonnage amount

- **Audits**

- Annually after launch

- 7 Cafeterias
- 11 Kitchens



**247.4 tons compost
since 2023**



50 School Buses



The Statue of Liberty

TAKEAWAYS



- 1. Vital for the school to be the “owner” of the program**
 - a. Onus falls on administration and teachers, not just students and kitchen/custodial staff
- 2. Serviceware choices largely impact success.**
- 3. Students/peers are more influential than adults.**
- 4. Data collection is really important**

THANK YOU!

Sasha Palmer
Brookline Food Services Director
sasha_palmer@psbma.org

Rebeca Salguero Palacios
Brookline Food Services Sustainability Coordinator
rebeca_salgueropalacios@psbma.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Mass. Farm to School - www.massfarmtoschool.org - Subscribe to our newsletter and stay up to date on upcoming webinars and other professional learning opportunities

STAY IN TOUCH!



Visit us online:
www.massfarmtoschool.org

HISTORY OF SCHOOL COMPOSTING IN BROOKLINE

1. Independent cafeteria composting efforts led by different stakeholders
2. COVID-19 hit, composting programs fell to the wayside
3. Brookline's development of **Zero Waste Framework** (Jan 2022)
4. Statewide waste diversion **legislation** and food waste ban (Oct 2021, Nov 2022)
5. **DPW** and **Food Services** involvement and collaboration

