



Working to Build Zero Waste Communities

Green Star Schools All-School Zero Waste Event Suggestions

The school's bins (recycle and compost) that are used during lunchtime may be used at Zero Waste school events. PTO (or other coordinating group) is responsible for emptying the bins into the dumpsters behind the school and for seeing that they are washed out for use in the cafeteria the next day. Eco-Cycle would be happy to attend the event (if staffing allows) to set up an information table for parents about Green Star Schools and how to pack a waste-free lunch. We can also train PTO, students, or other sponsor group members to monitor the waste station and help event participants sort their waste.

To be Zero Waste, you will need to use compostable, recyclable or reusable silverware, plates, cups/drink containers, tablecloths, etc. If you anticipate **fewer than 150 participants**, you can order all necessary utensils/plates/cups from Eco-Cycle at www.ecocycle.org/zwevents. (Allow three full business days for the order to be filled.) Here are some tips if your event will need to accommodate **more than 150 participants**:

Silverware, plates, cups, tablecloths, etc. must not be made of plastic or plastic-coated paper to be compostable. Most disposable paper products are coated with plastic, so it is important to follow the suggestions below.

- Costco carries DIAMOND brand (similar to CHINET) compostable paper plates (no plastic coating): 280 (7") dessert plates for \$7.89, 225 (8¾") for \$11.49 and 150 (10 5/8") for \$11.89. CHINET plates are available @Target, but are more expensive. Eco-Products (303-449-1876, option 2) also carries begasse (sugar cane fiber) products, which run higher as well. (In order to cover the cost of items purchased to insure a Waste-Free event, most schools just add \$.25-\$.35 to the cost of the ticket.)
- For coffee/juice/milk served in cups, you can get compostable ones from Eco-Products. Prices: **Cold cups**: (1,000/case) 10 oz.-\$70/case, 12 oz.-\$88/case **Hot cups**: 8 oz.-\$77/case, 12 oz.-\$96/case There are **very** few recyclable drinking cups – **only #2 and #5 plastic** cups (hard to find) are recyclable.
- If water/juice/milk is served individually, plastic bottles need to be #1, 2 or 5 to be recycled. All juice and milk boxes, and aluminum/steel cans are recyclable. Plastic lids, straws and straw wrappers **cannot** be recycled or composted. A **small** trash can should be provided for these items.
- For utensils, you can do one of three things:
 1. See if you can borrow the school's silverware. This means you would need to wash it afterwards for use in the cafeteria the following day.
 2. Call Eco-Products to buy compostable cornstarch utensils. These are \$45 for **each** 1,000-piece case of all forks, all spoons, or all knives.
 3. Ask families to provide their own utensils and have the school's silverware as back-up (which again entails washing the silverware for next-day use.)
- If you are serving butter and other condiments, don't purchase individual packets of these, as the packaging is trash. You can put plates with butter and plastic containers of condiments on individual tables or at condiment stations (#1, 2, or 5 **bottles** and #2 or 5 **tubs** are recyclable after rinsing). Another option is that condiments can be purchased in large containers and poured into individual gravy boats, syrup pourers or even mason jars that can be washed and reused.
- Instead of purchasing plastic tablecloths that are disposable, have students decorate butcher paper for this purpose (some schools set out colored pencils/crayons on tables for children to decorate the paper during the event). The paper can then be composted at the end of the event (remove **plastic** tape before composting if any was used to secure paper to table.)
- Compostable bags (biobags) can be purchased to line the **compost** bins if you want to make clean up easier. Eco-Products sells these in larger quantities, and Eco-Cycle (303-444-6634) sells them for \$1/bag (make sure to purchase the largest size.) Do not use **plastic** bags in either the compost or recycling bins.
- One last thing to think about: if you are making a purchase of compostable utensils/cups/plates, you may want to consider future events at your school. Buying in larger quantities can save you money. Further, a PTO gift to the school could be a set of inexpensive **reusable** utensils/cups/plates that can be used at all future food events.

If there is something on the menu or to be purchased for the event that has not been addressed above, contact me before purchasing the item to check on its recyclability or compostability.

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