

Here is an excerpt of the RI State Law

§ 23-18.9-17. Food Waste Ban.

On and after January 1, 2023, each **educational entity** and each covered educational institution shall ensure that the **organic-waste materials** that are generated by the covered entity or at the covered educational facility **are recycled** at an authorized, **composting facility or anaerobic digestion facility or by another authorized recycling method** if: (1) The educational entity generates not less than thirty (30) tons per year of organic-waste material; and, (2) The educational entity is located not more than fifteen (15) miles from an authorized, composting facility or anaerobic digestion facility with available capacity to accept such material.

- Educational entity = School District.
- All school districts in RI, except the six smallest, produce more than 30 tons of food waste each year.

§16-110-5. Food donations

It shall be the policy of the state, the department of education and any **educational entity to donate any unserved nonperishable or unspoiled perishable food** to local food banks or the Rhode Island Food Bank in accordance with the guidelines from the Rhode Island Department of Health "The Rhode to End Hunger" initiative.

Get Food

Smart RI

For more information visit our website and sign up for our newsletter and to hear more about our program for your school.

<https://rirecyclingclub.org>

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Starting in January 2023, all RI school districts, except the six smallest, will be required to develop a process to divert food waste and recover surplus food at their schools. (see back page for the RI law)

Food waste is a huge problem in need of solutions.

- 1 in 4 Americans is food insecure.
- Food production accounts for 50% of the land use in the US.
- A whopping 35-40% of food produced in the US is wasted and most of it ends up in landfills
- Food waste in landfills produces methane gas, a more powerful greenhouse gas than even CO2.

RI Schools Recycling Club Assessment of Wasted Food in the RI Public Schools

In April & May 2019, we conducted 15 comprehensive Food Scrap Audits in 3 school districts (Urban, Suburban & Rural) to measure how much food was being wasted each day at lunch in our Elementary, Middle & High Schools.

We extrapolated the data to estimate how much food is being wasted in individual schools, entire school districts and all of Rhode Island over the course of the school year; measurements that can inform schools as they develop strategies to reduce the amount of food waste sent to the landfill.

Findings

Approximately **2,500 tons** of food waste is sent to the landfill every year by RI Public Schools.

388 tons of that is perfectly good untouched, unopened food – fruit, milk, yogurt, carrots, cheese, etc. that could be redistributed to those who are food insecure.

Wasted food represents **79%** if the total waste coming out of the 15 lunchrooms audited.

To put this in visual terms, in almost all cafeterias, when the students are done eating, they take their tray with everything on it and dump it all into one large grey garage can. Once that's full the custodian takes the full bag out to the dumpster. When that's full it's taken to the Johnston Landfill. Edible food, compostable food, liquids, and recyclable items all go into the trash.



The **RI Schools Recycling Club** has been awarded a grant by the US Environmental Protection Agency. The funds are being used to help reduce food waste in our public schools.

Currently students in elementary and middle schools throw all their lunchroom trash into big gray trash cans which fill up quickly and are taken to the Johnston Landfill.

But now in four schools – in Providence, Cranston, North Providence and Smithfield - students are taking the leadership roles, showing all students how to sort what's left on their lunchroom trays into these sorting stations;

1. **Share Table** Food that's still edible and can be shared with students and families that are food insecure, goes here.
2. **Liquid Bucket** Liquids such as half-full milks and OJ gets emptied here so we can pour the liquids down the drain instead of trucked to the landfill.
3. **Recycling Bin** Milk carton, juice boxes, soda cans & clean paper and plastic containers go here so they can be recycled instead of dumped in the landfill.
4. **Compost Bin**; all food scraps are put into the Compost pail and taken by *Bootstrap Compost* to the new Anaerobic Digester where its converted into energy and compost to help regenerate the soil in our communities.
5. **Trash Bin**. What's left, and it's not much, goes here and that small amount goes to the landfill.
6. **Tray Table** Trays get stacked neatly so they take us less space in the trash can if they don't get washed in that school.

As a result, each of these schools has reduced the amount of lunchroom trash going to the landfill by 80%.