



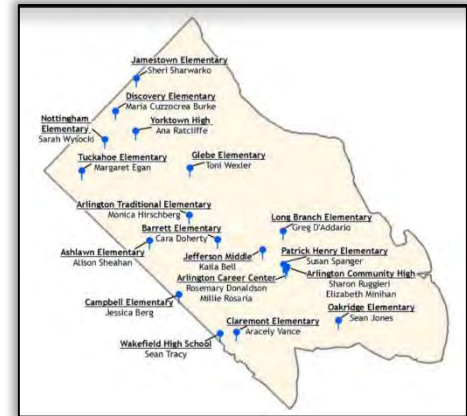
## Arlington Public Schools – 2018-19 Waste/Recycling Site Assessment Results

### Background

Arlington Public Schools (APS) has supported the Sustainability Liaison Program since 2016. Sustainability Liaisons are selected annually through a competitive process. They receive a modest stipend in exchange for their year-long effort to build a culture of sustainability through school-based curriculum, operational, transportation, and communication projects. The program began in the fall of 2016 and in 2019, APS supported 18 Sustainability Liaisons in 18 of 33 county schools.

In the 2018-19 school year, Sustainability Liaisons were required to complete three primary projects: inventory the sustainability practices in their school, conduct a waste assessment, and implement at least one waste-related project.

In addition, most Sustainability Liaisons completed several additional sustainability-related projects.



### Waste/Recycling Site Assessment

In recent years, Arlington County has implemented an enhanced county/school waste contract. In alignment with the new contract, the Sustainability Liaison program required the liaisons to complete a waste/recycling site assessment and implement one project based on the site assessment results during the 2018-2019 school year. The goal of these efforts was to help APS improve its waste and recycling practices, reduce waste generation, improve procurement practices and creatively engage students, faculty, and staff.

In 2018-19, 17 Sustainability Liaisons conducted school waste/recycling site assessments. The results show many positive efforts working to reduce waste at the 17 schools with Sustainability Liaisons as well as several areas for improvement. The full results can be found on the following pages, but here are some highlights.

### Assessment Highlights

- **97%** of classrooms have recycling bins
- **91%** of school corridors have recycling bins
- **35%** of the schools have a compost program with additional programs in process during the school year
- **70%** of the schools have programs to reduce food waste with student share tables and/or AFAC donations
- **47%** of the schools say that there is a system in place for reuse / donation of school supplies, etc. when desks / lockers are cleaned out at the end of the school year
- Over **80%** of the schools reduced paper usage by using online tests and books, double sided printing and copying, reusing paper for art, notes, etc.
- Approximately **60%** of the schools purchase recycled paper and paper products
- **80%** of the schools have incorporated reducing waste and recycling more into the curriculum.





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The assessment itself raised the awareness of the participants and served as a learning tool on how to reduce waste in our schools. As an initial coordinated effort, the waste assessment was a tremendous step.

### ***Opportunities***

Data from the school waste/recycling site assessments suggest several opportunities for enhancing waste reduction and recycling in APS, including:

- Working with the waste contractor to get better waste data at all schools. The new County waste contract was intended to improve the waste data, but as a result of Waste Management purchasing ESI, the waste data has actually deteriorated. The lack of data from Waste Management is impeding the ability to measure the waste metrics. Management needs to address the requirement for timely, accurate data reporting with the Vendor.
- Improving recycling support through better bin signage, co-location of waste and recycling bins, and more student, faculty and staff education (e.g., toolkits for custodians, teachers, and students on how to reduce waste and properly recycle in schools). There is significant contamination in the recycling bins with non-recyclable materials and recyclables being thrown in the trash.
- Reducing the packaging used for meals and improving procurement processes. In general, there is excessive packaging in the cafeteria, much of it plastic that can't be recycled. There are also opportunities to support the purchasing of more sustainable products overall through APS procurement.

The Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Sustainability will examine these opportunities and make future recommendations to improve waste reduction and recycling in APS.

For more information on the 2018-2019 Waste/Recycling Site Assessments and the other outstanding accomplishments of APS Sustainability Liaisons, visit the [APS Sustainability Liaison website](#).

## **School Waste/Recycling Site Assessment Statistics for 2018-19**

Below is a summary of all of the data collected through the school waste/recycling site assessments.

### **Planning Meeting**

**88%** of the schools held planning meetings for the site waste assessment.

**82 people in total** attended the planning meetings across schools.



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### Recycling Bins

97% of classrooms have recycling bins.

18% of the bins in classrooms are labeled.

18% of the bins in classrooms are considered accessible.

91% of school corridors have recycling bins.

17% of the bins in school corridors are labeled.

24% of the bins in school corridors are considered accessible.

On average school cafeterias had at least **2 recycling bins**. **1 out of 3** were labeled and considered accessible.

Schools gyms tended to have at **least 1 recycling bin**. **Only about half** were labeled and considered accessible.

**All** teacher's lounges had recycling bins. **56%** were labeled and considered accessible.

**90%** of administrative offices had recycling bins. **22%** were labeled and **24%** were considered accessible.

**56%** of the bins in copy rooms were labeled and **60%** were considered accessible.

**50%** of the bins in outdoor play areas were labeled and **55%** were considered accessible.

**24%** of the bins in receiving / loading areas were labeled and **26%** were considered accessible.

**48%** of the bins in the media center were labeled and **52%** were considered accessible.

**40%** of the bins in other spaces in the school were labeled and **20%** were considered accessible.

### Which of the Following Items are Recycled at your School?

Item	Percent of Schools that Recycle Item
Paper	100%
Aluminum Containers	100%
Plastic Bottles / Rigid Plastics	100%
Printer Cartridges	87%
Cardboard	100%
Copier Cartridges	73%
Steel Food Cans	100%
Glass Bottles and Jars	94%
Other (e.g. Crayons)	29%



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### **Composting**

35% of the schools have a composting program.

0% of the schools collect compost and take it offsite.

35% of the schools use compost in their school gardens.

12% of the schools have composting bins in the kitchen.

18% of the schools have composting bins in their cafeterias.

0% of the schools have composting bins in the staff lounges.

24% had composting bins in other places.

### **Waste Audit Recycling Bins**

44% reported that liquids were contaminating their classroom recycling bins.

31% reported that there were compostable food scraps in their classroom recycling bins.

86% reported that there was landfill trash in the classroom recycling bin.

69% reported that liquids were contaminating their cafeteria recycling bins.

54% reported that there were compostable food scraps in their cafeteria recycling bins.

62% reported that there was landfill trash in the cafeteria recycling bin.

21% reported that liquids were contaminating their teachers' lounge recycling bins.

14% reported that there were compostable food scraps in their teachers' lounge recycling bins.

29% reported that there was landfill trash in the teachers' lounge recycling bin.

### **Waste Audit Trash Bins**

93% reported that there were recyclable paper products in the trash bins of classrooms.

67% reported that there were recyclable plastic bottles in the trash bins of classrooms.

12% of the trash bin was estimated to contain compostable food scraps in classrooms.

87% reported that there were recyclable paper products in the trash bins of cafeterias.

80% reported that there were recyclable plastic bottles in the trash bins of cafeterias.

34% of the trash bin was estimated to contain compostable food scraps in the cafeterias.



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**50%** reported that there were recyclable paper products in the trash bins of teachers' lounges.

**31%** reported that there were recyclable plastic bottles in the trash bins of teachers' lounges.

**17%** of the trash bin was estimated to contain compostable food scraps in teachers' lounges.

### **Source Reduction – Paper**

**60%** of the schools said that their school purchases recycled paper.

**67%** of the schools said that their school purchases items that are made from recycled materials (tissues, napkins, paper towels).

**58%** say that the paper is certified to ensure that it comes from sustainably managed forests.

**53%** say that strategies to reduce paper use are communicated to staff via email.

**12%** say that strategies to reduce paper use are communicated to students via email.

**29%** say that strategies to reduce paper use are communicated to parents via email.

**88%** say that strategies to reduce paper use include using online tests.

**88%** say that strategies to reduce paper use include using online books.

**94%** say that strategies to reduce paper use include using double sided printing and copying.

**80%** say that strategies to reduce paper use include re-using scrap paper for art, notes, etc.

**40%** say that they used other strategies to reduce paper use.

### **Source Reduction – Other**

**12%** of the schools serve food in reusable plates / trays that are not disposable.

**0%** of the schools use metal utensils that are not disposable.

**53%** of the schools say that un-eaten or unopened food is made available for students on a share table rather than thrown away.

**50%** of the schools say that un-eaten or unopened food is donated to an organization such as AFAC rather than thrown away.

**47%** of the schools say that there is a system in place for reuse / donation of school supplies, etc... when desks / lockers are cleaned out at the end of the school year.