



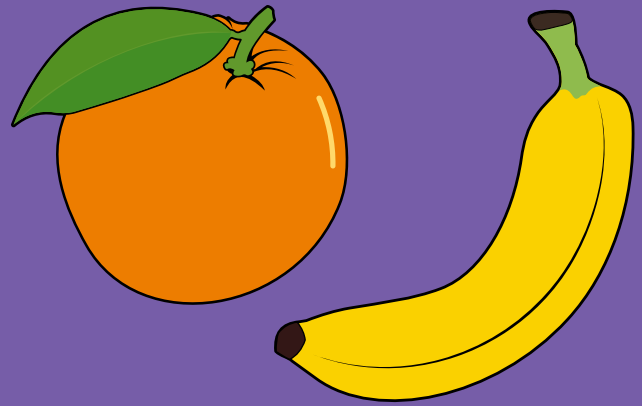
NORTH ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In 2018, the North Andover Public School District was awarded a [Sustainable Materials Recovery Program \(SMRP\) Municipal/Regional Grant](#) from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). The grant allowed the District to procure signage and other equipment needed to implement waste diversion sorting stations in cafeterias across the district. Today, with the direct oversight of a Compost Champion, the district diverts approximately 700 pounds of food scraps and compostable materials, as well as 100 pounds of liquids per day, totaling over 70 tons per year.

The district diverts over 70 tons from disposal
per year - over 150,000 pounds!

THE DISTRICT'S IMPACT: A QUICK SNAPSHOT

- **Daily diversion:** approximately **700 pounds of food scraps** and compostables district-wide.
- **Liquids:** approximately **100 pounds of liquids** diverted per day using 5-gallon pour-off buckets at each school.
- **Trash reduction:** about **50 fewer trash bags** each week (over 1,800 bags saved annually), resulting in lighter workloads with reduced risk of injury for custodial staff.
- **Share tables:** active at elementary schools to redirect uneaten food and **foster a sense of community**.
- **Student leadership:** students **act as Green Team volunteers** at lunch, with ongoing training and refreshers each fall, and meetings before/after school to share ideas.
- **Garden growth:** The compost produced from food scraps is returned to **school gardens as a soil amendment** from Bootstrap Compost, enriching the land and the school's gardens.



SHARE TABLES: PREVENT WASTED FOOD, BUILD COMMUNITY

North Andover elementary schools use share tables at the end of the sorting line, where students can leave allowable, unopened cafeteria items such as unpeeled oranges that they choose not to eat. Students are encouraged to take from the share table if they are still hungry, helping ensure that good food is eaten rather than wasted. In some cases, cafeteria staff can also reclaim unopened items to safely serve again, further reducing unnecessary disposal. In previous years, parents organized weekly donations of additional surplus food to a local shelter. They are now working to revive this effort to help address growing food insecurity in the community and surrounding areas.

North Andover's approach to food waste diversion is practical, hands-on, and built to scale, adapting over time to meet the evolving needs of the school district.



KEY PROGRAM FEATURES

The school administration actively supports food scrap separation in the cafeteria. This includes maintaining a dedicated coordinator, known as the Compost Champion, a role held by Joanna O'Connell, contracting with Bootstrap Compost for processing, and ensuring Green Team leaders have time to support the program. The administration also encourages student leadership opportunities across all schools.

Green Team leaders recruit and manage student volunteers, teaching them how to serve as sorting station leaders. Bootstrap Compost then processes the collected food scraps into soil.

Because the system cannot handle contaminants such as ketchup packets, plastics, and other non-certified compostable items, effective training is essential to the program's success.

- **Training cadence:** About 2–3 weeks of daily training per school, held at one school at a time.
- **Groundwork:** Posters are distributed, the principal presents a school-wide slideshow, and dedicated waste stations are set up before launch.
- **Roles:** Lunch attendants and cafeteria staff are trained, with Green Team volunteers monitoring bins at lunch in pairs.
- **Sustainability:** The school year begins with quick refresher slides and a re-training effort by the Program's Coordinator to get students back on track.
- **Leadership development:** 5th graders mentor younger students during the initial weeks, building leadership and peer-learning skills.



Joanna emphasizes that the approach is largely peer-led. Green Team leaders at each school schedule meetings, manage volunteers, and maintain posters and stations.

"Every school is just a bit different from each other, though the main idea is the same — reduce our waste, teach the importance of taking care of the Planet, and share ideas."

The North Andover model demonstrates how student-led program supported by school administrators can drive real, tangible change in school sustainability. North Andover public schools are continually evaluating and improving their process. Regularly tracking the diversion metrics helps ensure they stay on target. North Andover public schools have built a resilient system that teaches students practical skills and cultivates lifelong environmental responsibility.

The Green Team is an interactive educational program for K-12 schools in Massachusetts that empowers students and teachers to help the environment through waste reduction, reuse, recycling, composting, energy conservation and pollution prevention.

If your classroom, school, or district is interested in joining The Green Team, learn more on [our website](#).

