

# SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE & CAFETERIAS INITIATIVE



**Information Webinar, January 8, 2026**



# Webinar Housekeeping

- All attendees are muted.
- Questions?
  - Type them into the Q&A.
  - Or “raise your hand” at the end to let us know that you would like to be unmuted to speak.
- The recording and slides will be posted on our [Webinar Recordings page](https://www.sustainablejerseyschools.com/resources/presentations/webinar-recordings/) within a few days.

The screenshot shows the website's navigation menu with 'Resources' circled in red. The main content area features a sidebar with 'Presentations' and 'Webinar Recordings' circled in red. The main content area is titled 'Webinar Recordings & Presentations' and includes a paragraph of text and a 'Category Navigation' section with a list of links, including 'Waste Reduction & Recycling' which is circled in red.

FOR SCHOOLS SUSTAINABLE JERSEY CERTIFIED  
A Brighter Future, One School at a Time

ABOUT NEWS SUPPORT US CONTACT US HOME Register Sign in

Certification Actions Grants & Technical Assistance Events **Resources** Get Involved

Climate Change Education Resources

Presentations

**Webinar Recordings**

NJSBA Conference

Other Presentations

Sustainability Summit

Publications

Purchasing Center

Green Team Resources

**Webinar Recordings & Presentations**

To further assist you in the certification process, we have provided links to previous webinar recordings and presentations that supply information relevant to all aspects of our program. If you were unable to attend one of our online presentations, this is a great opportunity to learn about what you missed. Webinars are listed by action category.

**Category Navigation**

- Arts & Culture
- Certification & Recertification
- Digital Schools Program
- Education for Sustainability
- Climate Change Education
- Energy
- Grants Program
- Green Design
- Healthy School Environments
- Integrated STEM
- Learning Environment
- School Culture and Climate
- School Grounds
- Student & Community Outreach
- **Waste Reduction & Recycling**

<https://www.sustainablejerseyschools.com/resources/presentations/webinar-recordings/>

# Agenda

- Overview of Initiative and connection to *Sustainable Jersey for Schools*
- Sustainable Practices and Strategies To Explore
- What's Involved and How to Apply
- Next Steps / Application Wrap-Up
- Q&A



# From Cafeteria to the Waste Stream

**30 to 40 percent of the U.S. food supply, ends up as food waste**

- Schools in the US waste over 1 billion pounds of food each year
- In a 2021 study of 3 NJ schools, the average food waste per school was 20,700 pounds per year
- Reducing cafeteria waste conserves resources, saves money, and teaches students sustainability habits they can carry into adulthood.





# Initiative Overview

The Initiative is funded by the **New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection** and the **Gardinier Environmental Fund**. It is administered by the Sustainability Institute at **The College of New Jersey (TCNJ)**. The Institute manages the Sustainable Jersey non-profit.

**The Sustainable School Food Service & Cafeterias Initiative** is a statewide opportunity for NJ school districts to reduce cafeteria food waste, save money, and model sustainability for students. The purpose is to develop and promote new guidance and resources to help schools reduce cafeteria waste.

- The Initiative will engage up to seven school districts to participate in a Learning and Doing (L&D) Cohort from February 2026 to June 2027.
- Participants learn together, test practices, and share lessons.
- Sustainable Jersey will publicly share resources and support implementation of effective practices for NJ schools through its certification program that offers recognition, grants, and technical support.



# Sustainable Jersey for Schools



- Identifies **actions** to become more sustainable
- Provides **tools, resources, and guidance** to make progress
- Provides access to **grants** for schools and school districts
- Recognizes **accomplishments** with school certification



**421 Registered Districts**  
**1224 Registered Schools**  
**367 Currently Certified**

01/07/2026



# Actions To Reduce Cafeteria Waste

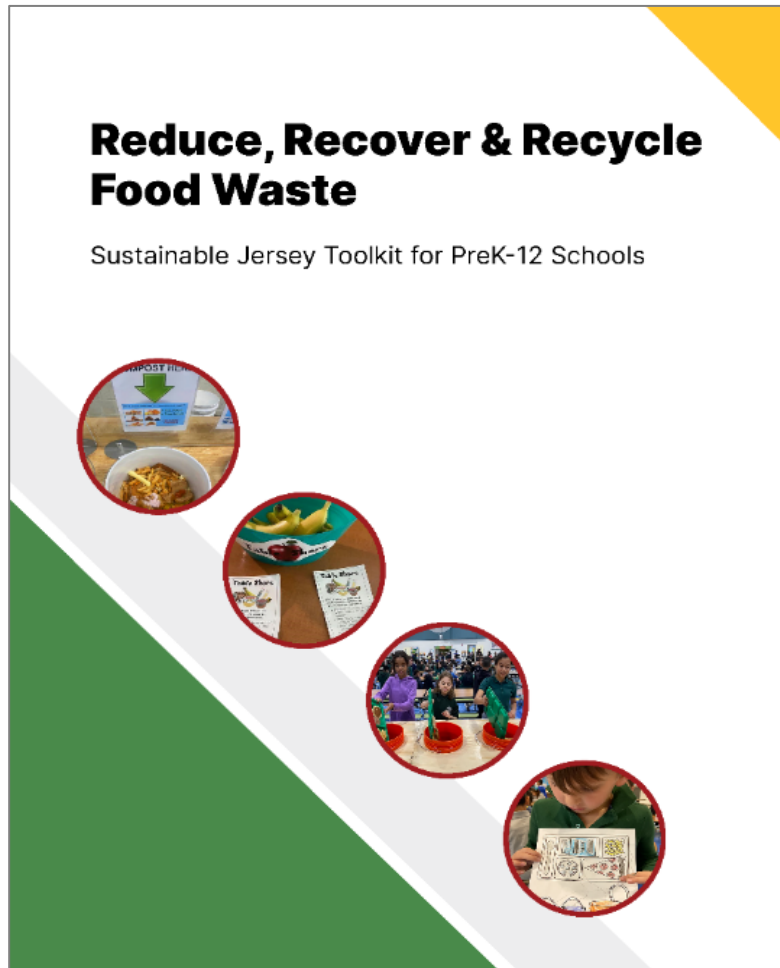
The *Sustainable Jersey for Schools* program offers guidance and incentives to complete these actions – schools earn points toward the 150 points needed for certification.

- **Waste Audit 10-20 points**
- **Campaign To Reduce School Food Waste 10 points**
- **Food Recovery - Share Tables & Donation 10-20 points**
- **Food Service Training & Best Practices to Reduce Food Waste 10 points**
- **Food Waste Recycling/Composting 15 points**
- **Recycling Non-Mandated Materials 5-20 points**

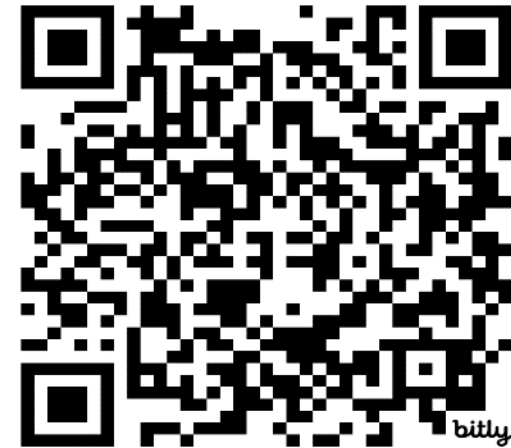
View all actions at: <https://www.sustainablejerseyschools.com/actions/>



# Reduce, Recover & Recycle Food Waste



## Sustainable Jersey Toolkit for PreK-12 Schools



<https://bit.ly/FoodWasteToolkit>



# SUSTAINABLE JERSEY GRANTS PROGRAM



**PSEG**

FOUNDATION

## \$10k & \$2k Public School and District Sustainability Project Grants Currently Available!

### ELIGIBILITY

Established  
Green Team

Registered or  
Certified



Public NJ school/district

### APPLICATION DEADLINE

**Monday  
3/9/26  
11:59pm**





# Participants Map Search

Use the [Participating Districts & Schools](https://sustainablejerseyschools.com/certification/search-participating-districts-schools-approved-actions/) (*sustainablejerseyschools.com/certification/search-participating-districts-schools-approved-actions/*) page to find examples of documentation from certified schools and connect with school green teams.

## Search by action

Waste Reduction & Recycling
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Waste Audit
Cafeteria & Food Waste
<input type="checkbox"/> Campaign to Reduce School Food Waste
<input type="checkbox"/> Food Recovery - Share Tables & Donation
<input type="checkbox"/> Food Service Training & Best Practices to Reduce Food Waste
<input type="checkbox"/> Food Waste Recycling or Composting
Recycling & Reuse
<input type="checkbox"/> Document Recycling Rates
<input type="checkbox"/> Materials Reuse
<input type="checkbox"/> Recycling Non-Mandated Materials

## View certified schools approved for that action

APPLICANT	DISTRICT	CERTIFICATION
<a href="#">Patrick McGaheeran Elementary School (Hunterdon)</a>	Clinton Township School District	BRONZE
<a href="#">Round Valley School (Hunterdon)</a>	Clinton Township School District	SILVER
<a href="#">Deal Elementary School (Monmouth)</a>	Deal Borough School District	SILVER
<a href="#">Delran Middle School (Burlington)</a>	Delran Township School District	BRONZE
<a href="#">George L. Catrambone Elementary School (Monmouth)</a>	Long Branch Public School District	SILVER DIGITAL SCHOOLS STAR
<a href="#">Marine Academy of Science and Technology (Monmouth)</a>	Monmouth County Vocational School District	BRONZE
<a href="#">Charles H. Bullock Elementary School (Essex)</a>	Montclair Public Schools	BRONZE
<a href="#">Johnson Park School (Mercer)</a>	Princeton Public Schools	BRONZE

## Open certification report for example documentation

**George L. Catrambone Elementary School (Monmouth)**  
Certification Level: Silver  
Certified On: August 15, 2025  
Total Points: 845  
Certification Report: [View Report](#)  
Applicant Profile: [View Profile](#)  
Digital Schools Star Report: [View Report](#)



# Sustainable Practices to Explore in the Learning & Doing Cohort

Districts choose from a menu of strategies and practices to reduce food waste that they are interested in, such as:

- **Menu & Inventory Planning:** Student taste tests, "Offer Versus Serve," salad bars and self-serve condiments, forecasting demand, reducing packaging.
- **Cafeteria Operations:** Behavioral nudges, cafeteria layout, staff training, recycling.
- **Food Recovery & Diversion:** Share tables, food donations, composting.
- **Student Engagement:** Student leadership, curriculum connections, campaigns, school garden connections.
- **Policy & Procurement:** Extending lunch periods, **value-based procurement.**

See application form for additional practices.



# What Participating Districts Receive

- \$5,000 planning/start-up grant
- Eligibility for \$10,000 implementation grant (reimbursement-based)
- Training & support, peer exchange, and statewide visibility



# What Districts Commit To

- Participate in cohort meetings (3 virtual + 1 in-person)
- Implement new practices and strategies for sustainable cafeterias
- Conduct pre- and post-intervention cafeteria waste audits
- Share experiences and help shape future guidance for Sustainable Jersey for Schools
  - Provide Feedback: Review and comment on new guidance documents for sustainable food service and cafeterias.
  - Share Knowledge: Participate as a presenter in at least one Sustainable Jersey conference session or webinar
- Submit a final report



# Eligibility Requirements

- PreK-12 NJ public school districts or public charter schools
- Must be registered with Sustainable Jersey for Schools
  - Can register during the application process
- Other Sustainable Jersey grants do NOT affect eligibility



# Broad Timeline

- **Apply:** by January 30, 2026
- **Award Notification:** Feb 13, 2026
- **Planning Phase:** Feb–Aug 2026
- **Implementation:** Aug 2026–June 2027



# Phase 1: Apply to Participate (through Jan 30 2026)

Phase 1 is about readiness and commitment, not about having a perfect project yet. The application signals interest and direction, not a final commitment.

## Key requirements:

- Board resolution or signed authorization letter (templates are provided)
- Identify a district project team (minimum 3 people). Diverse teams are recommended, including food service, facilities, and educators.
- Select current and potential cafeteria practices
  - Build on what you already do well
  - Combine prevention, recovery, and education
  - Select practices that fit your food service model

### Resolution of Support Authorizing the Submission of an Application for the Sustainable School Food Service & Cafeterias Initiative

The purpose of the resolution is to affirm that the Board of Education approves of the proposed project/activities. A copy of the signed and certified resolution should be submitted with the application form, per the application guidelines. The following sample may be used as a template, but any standard resolution in support of applying for the Sustainable School Food Service & Cafeterias Initiative will suffice.

#### DATE

Véronique Lambert  
Program Manager  
Sustainable Jersey

Dear Ms. Lambert:

This letter shall serve as documentation of the authorization for **DISTRICT or CHARTER SCHOOL NAME HERE** to submit an application for the Sustainable School Food Service & Cafeterias Initiative – administered by Sustainable Jersey – that includes the use of \$15,000 in funding to plan and implement a cafeteria waste reduction project.

As the **BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR/SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS/PRINCIPAL**, I fully support this application and authorize its submittal on behalf of the school community.

If selected to participate in this initiative, we will **BRIEF MENTION OF PROJECT**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

#### SIGNATURE

**NAME**  
**POSITION**  
**SCHOOL/DISTRICT**



# Phase 2 for Awarded Districts: Project Planning (Feb–Aug 2026)

Districts refine their ideas here, using cohort learning and grant funds to prepare for successful implementation in the 2026-2027 school year.

- Attend orientation (Feb 26, 2026)
- Complete TCNJ Financial Risk Assessment Form (required to receive grant funding) – linked in application form
- Attend L&D Cohort meeting on Apr 23, 2026
- Use \$5,000 planning grant
- By Aug 1 2026, submit scope of work and budget to implement new practices in at least one school



# Phase 3: Project Execution (Aug 2026–Jun 2027)

- Attend L&D Cohort meeting on Sep 24, 2026
- Conduct pre-intervention waste audit(s) in applicable school(s)
- Implement practices in at least one school
- Attend L&D Cohort in-person event in spring 2027
- Conduct post-intervention waste audit(s) in applicable school(s)
- Request reimbursement with documentation for eligible expenses up to \$10,000
- Submit a final report by June 30, 2027

Waste audits are valuable as both learning and evaluation tools.



# Eligible Project Expenses

Expenses must directly support the approved project and occur during the performance period.

- Materials and equipment
- Contractor services
- Staff time related to implementation



# Application Submission

Submit by January 30, 2026 (11:59 PM)

Email documents to: [lambertv@tcnj.edu](mailto:lambertv@tcnj.edu)

Email subject line: "Sustainable Cafeterias Initiative Application – [School District Name]"

## Required:

- **Application form**, which includes
  - Project team contacts - at least 3 personnel to lead the effort (e.g., Business Administrator, Food Service Director, Teacher, Green Team member)
  - Selection of practices of interest
- **Board resolution** or **signed letter** authorizing participation and use of funds
- Evidence of **Sustainable Jersey registration** underway (if not already registered)

**Optional:** Attach letters of support from faculty, department heads, project partners, school club leaders, or external partners

**Notification:** Recipients will be notified on Friday, February 13, 2026



# How Applications Are Selected

Sustainable Jersey is seeking a diverse learning cohort .

## **Selection considers:**

- Mix of sustainable practices (procurement prioritized)
- District diversity (size, location, demographics, food service type)
- Capacity and team readiness



# Next Steps

Application information and application form are found here:

<https://bit.ly/4pljDlr>



- Review application materials
- Identify internal project team
- Start working on securing authorization resolution or letter
- If not already registered with Sustainable Jersey for Schools, start working on board resolution to register the district (may be combined with authorization resolution)
- Contact Véronique Lambert with any questions | [lambertv@tcnj.edu](mailto:lambertv@tcnj.edu) | 609-771-2469
- **Submit application by Friday, Jan 30, 2026**

Q

&

A



# Workshop for Teachers

## **Feeding Minds, Not Landfills: Turning Food Waste into Learning Opportunities**

Join Sustainable Jersey for this full day training for teachers at Stockton University. Participants will explore the environmental, social, and economic impacts of food waste, learn how to conduct cafeteria waste audits, and discover actionable solutions like waste reduction campaigns. The workshop is offered at no cost by Stockton's Climate Change Learning Collaborative.

Tuesday, January 27, 2026, 9:00am-3:00pm

[Learn More and Register](#)



# Thank You

**Véronique Lambert**

Program Manager / Outreach, Training & Special Projects

Sustainable Jersey for Schools

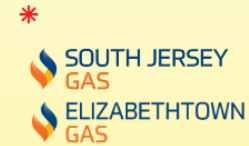
[lambertv@tcnj.edu](mailto:lambertv@tcnj.edu) / 609-771-2469

# Sustainable Jersey for Schools Underwriters and Sponsors

## Program Underwriters



## Corporate Sponsors



\*Digital Schools Underwriters and Sponsors