

Granby School Recycling Assistance Project

Interim Report

Arlene C. Miller
Municipal Assistance Coordinator for MassDEP
Western Region

DRAFT #1

Granby Schools Recycling and Waste Reduction Analysis

The Town of Granby has about 2,300 households and a population of 6,216. The school district has 3 schools and a student population of 883 students.. Many years ago here was a vibrant recycling program, which included organics. That program was funded by Waste Management and managed by the Center for EcoTechnology (CET). Over the years the program has eroded. In June 2014, the Town began a 3-year contract for curbside collection of trash and recycling and began to work on a comprehensive solid waste management program. Getting the school-recycling program operational again is part of the vision of Granby's solid waste management efforts.

Supporting and enhancing recycling on Granby schools is a next logical step in strengthening the Town's waste reduction efforts. For many years, the landfill operator, Waste Management, was in control of all aspects of the Town's solid waste program. Since the landfill closed in June 2014, the Town has taken ownership of the program. Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) members have helped organize yard waste, bulky waste and HHW events to augment the new curbside program. Recycling in the schools is a necessary part of the whole program. Not only will it serve to reduce waste from the schools, but it will educate the kids about recycling and its benefits, resulting in the kids educating their parents.

Technical Assistance is being provided to the Town of Granby to assess the current level of recycling efforts in their public schools and to make recommendations for improvement. The goal would be to strengthen recycling efforts where possible and, at the same time, save the town money.

The first step in this assessment was to present the concept of the Technical Assistance to the full Granby School Committee for approval to proceed. That meeting occurred in September 2015 and the School Committee voted unanimously to give their support to proceed. Arlene Miller, the Municipal Assistance Coordinator from MassDEP for western MA was assigned to work on this project. Once she was CORE checked, the assessment began at each school.

School visits:

All three Granby schools were visited in December and January and an initial review of their recycling efforts was made. In most reviews such as this, each school would be discussed individually. In this case, because of program similarity, it seems logical to discuss them as a group.

Over View:

To have a recycling program be sustainable, a few key elements are necessary. They include support from the top (the principal), support of the custodian and cooperation of the teachers and students. In addition, there needs to be a certain amount of equipment to help move the material from the source to the recycling vendor. In all of the Granby schools, it was very refreshing to see enthusiasm and commitment to recycle from the principals, custodians and students. In fact, where equipment was not readily available, at least one school used cardboard boxes or laundry baskets for bottle and can recycling. In other schools, there was student-designed signage. It all worked just fine.

The three principals and the three custodians were all interviewed and provided tours of the relevant areas for recycling in their schools. That included the classrooms, teacher prep areas, the cafeterias and the back of the building. A library and media room were also included at the high school. Support for recycling and reducing waste was evident in all schools. Students and staff recycled paper and bottles and cans in classrooms, paper in faculty prep areas, bottles and cans in the cafeteria and #10 metal cans in the kitchen prep areas. In all schools the students participated in the recycling effort by being responsible for bringing the classroom recycling to a central location. In all cases, the custodians embraced the recycling effort and championed it.

Equipment needs:

Each of the schools identified minor equipment needs, which will be addressed. I am in the process of listing the equipment requests, and locating the best price. Some of the equipment can be obtained free thru the Green Team program, a MassDEP school assistance program. Other pieces of equipment (such as bins) will need to be purchased. Equipment needs included decals/signage for classroom bins, additional bins for bottle and can recycling and a few wheeled carts. See attached spreadsheet.

Program Expansion Ideas:

While the recycling efforts in each of the three Granby schools is impressive, there is room for improvement and a few suggestion will be discussed here.

1. None of the schools currently recycle milk cartons. The Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) where the recyclable go to be processed, does process milk cartons. The fiber from these cartons is quite valuable. Milk carton recycling has been done successfully in many schools in western MA and could be done with little effort and expense in Granby. Two of the principals have shown interest in adding milk carton recycling to their program and this will be pursued. In addition, it should be mentioned that just the act of pouring off excess liquids fro any and all containers, is a cost saving measure.
2. Waste Management is the waste hauling company servicing the Granby schools. They provide both dumpsters (for rash and cardboard) as well as wheeled carts or toters for paper collection. In at least one case, the custodian is emptying the wheeled paper containing cart by hand into the dumpster. I think with the cooperation of the hauler and custodian, we can design a more efficient method. That will be pursued.
3. It is great that Chartwell flattens boxes and recycles the large metal #10 cans from the kitchen prep area. However, because of the age and condition of the dishwashers in the schools, the cafeteria service provider uses disposable Styrofoam trays every day for each meal. This is costly and an environmental nightmare. It could be/should be a goal to transition to reusable trays if and when the schools are renovated. Any renovation should include state of the art dishwashers as well as the purchase of re-usable trays. This will help reduce trash and perhaps save money on the disposal end of the operation. In addition, it would be advantageous for the district, in the future, to include language in the next RFP for cafeteria management, which requires the vendor provide tray-washing service.

Next Steps:

It would be advantageous to acquire the requested decals and equipment before or soon after the winter vacation and have it in place by the beginning of March. Approval to proceed will be sought from the SWAC as well as the school committee. Next steps include:

1. Present findings to the Solid Waste Advisory Committee.
2. Present findings to the School Committee and seek permission to proceed.
3. Acquire the equipment and distribute to each school.
4. Work with Waste Management on hauler related issues.
5. Work with those schools interested in beginning milk carton recycling.
6. Announce the program expansion and improvements to the faculty and students at each school and provide instruction for any new programs.
7. Monitor the program and share the success with the community at large.