

# Purchasing Policy 2: School/District Policy

eco-cycle

## Snapshot

School buildings and school districts can implement an Environmental Purchasing Policy to model and achieve a commitment to sustainability.

<https://bit.ly/eco-cycle-zero-waste-schools-guide>

### Objective:

Purchasing decisions will be made based on predetermined environmental priorities.

**Age Group:** Adults

### Setting:

Administrative offices

### Project Duration:

- Drafting policy: 1-2 hours
- Follow-up: ongoing

### Materials:

- Example of an Environmental Purchasing Policy (see sample)
- Records of purchases made within the last 6-12 months

### Why This Project Matters:

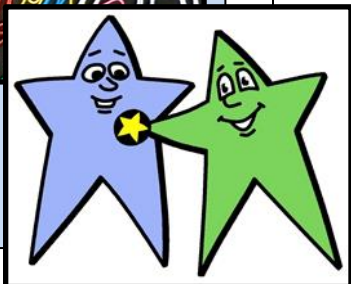
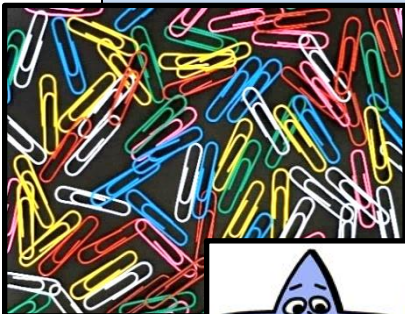
A sustainable recycling process involves three steps: collecting the recyclable material, remanufacturing that material to form new products, and purchasing the new, recycled products. Without consumer demand for recycled products, the collected recyclables have no use, and the process can't be sustained. The same is true for non-toxic and other sustainably-made products. The availability of these items will only stabilize, and their prices decrease, if consumers create a demand for them.

### Project Summary:

In a school or district, many supplies are purchased regularly, from paper and staples to computers and furniture. Creating official green purchasing practices is a great way to model and achieve a commitment to preserving the environment. Many governments, businesses, and school districts have adopted Environmental Purchasing Policies to ensure that money is spent on items and services that support sustainability. Administrators can draft an Environmental Purchasing Policy for the school or district to follow.

### Implementation:

1. Meet with administrators to identify purchasing categories and school or district policies related to purchasing (cost limits, bid procedures, etc.). Examples of categories:
  - Office supplies/paper
  - Meetings & conferences
  - Building & construction
  - Landscaping
  - Vehicle fleets
  - Carpets
  - Cleaning
  - Electronics
  - Food services



2. Use purchasing records from the previous 6-12 months to identify frequently purchased items and establish priority products and services. Eco-minded purchasing can include requiring paper to have a certain percentage of post-consumer recycled content, buying in bulk, and giving preference to products with less packaging.
3. Consider improving indoor air quality and its effect on student and staff health by prioritizing non-toxic flooring, building materials, cleaners, and art supplies.
4. Consider changes in food service purchases. Examples include transitioning from individual milk cartons or water bottles to bulk milk or water in reusable cups, sourcing recycled paper napkins, and purchasing washable trays, plates, bowls, and utensils.
5. Investigate cooperative purchasing options. Small offices and districts can reduce costs by coordinating their purchasing with other districts, local governments, or institutions.
6. Consider a 10% rule. Many schools and districts have adopted the rule stating that if an environmentally preferable product is within 10% (or other designated percentage) of the lowest-priced conventional product, the environmentally-safer product is purchased.
7. Finalize an Environmental Purchasing Policy. (See sample policy below.) The Environmental Protection Agency maintains a website dedicated to Environmentally Preferable Purchasing. While intended for the federal government, the site has lots of tools to help implement green purchasing. <https://www.epa.gov/greenerproducts>

#### **Assessment:**

Four to six months after implementation, meet with those who conduct the purchasing and review the policy. Discuss which parts are going well and which need refining. Determine if more products or services can be added.

#### **Related Activities:**

Waste-Free Lunch 3: Durables in the Cafeteria – Chapter 2  
Purchasing Policy 1: Classroom Policy – Chapter 17

#### **Extensions:**

- Coordinate a “Surplus Supply Exchange Day.” Before an upcoming office supply order, ask classrooms or offices to bring all unused supplies to a central area (from extra pens and paper to unused furniture) and give all staff access to the free supplies.
- Have office staff work with a student group to gain recognition for their green purchasing. For example, students could interview staff to find out which green purchasing practices they follow and write announcements or school newspaper articles to celebrate the staff accomplishments.



## **(Sample Policy)**

XXXX District

### **BOARD POLICY**

TITLE	PAGE	POLICY NUMBER
Environmentally Preferable Procurement Policy	1 of 4	4-6
	EFFECTIVE DATE	REVISED DATE
9/25/21		
APPROVED BY:		
Board Action: 09/25/21, Item 4.2		

### **BACKGROUND**

The mission statement of XXXX District reflects a commitment to provide environmental leadership through policy development and program design.

By incorporating environmental considerations into public purchasing, XXXX District can serve this commitment by reducing its burden on the local and global environment, removing unnecessary hazards from its operations, protecting public, student, and staff health, reducing costs and liabilities, and potentially improving the environmental quality of the region. This policy is an effective way to direct the District's effort in procuring environmentally preferable products and services.

### **PURPOSE**

The primary purpose of this policy is to minimize negative environmental impacts of the District's activities by ensuring the procurement of services and products that:

- reduce toxicity;
- conserve natural resources, materials, and energy;
- maximize recyclability and recycled content.

A collateral purpose is to support markets for recycled goods and other environmentally preferable products and services.

### **DEFINITIONS**

The following terms shall have the assigned definitions for all purposes under this policy:

- A. **XXXX District** means XXXX District elected officials, staff, and all schools and departments.
- B. **Environmentally Preferable Products and Services** means products and services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products that serve the same purpose. This comparison may consider raw materials acquisition, production, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, reuse, operation, maintenance, or disposal of the product.
- C. **Life-Cycle Cost** means the amortized annual cost of a product, including capital costs, installation costs, operating costs, maintenance costs, and disposal costs discounted over the lifetime of the product.
- D. **Practicable** means sufficient in performance and available at a reasonable price.

- E. **Recyclable Product** means a product which, after its intended end use, can demonstrably be diverted from the District's solid waste stream for use as a raw material in the manufacture of another product.
- F. **Recycled Material** means material and byproducts that have been recovered or diverted from solid waste and have been utilized in place of raw or virgin material in manufacturing a product. It is derived from post-consumer recycled material, manufacturing waste, industrial scrap, agricultural waste, and other waste material, but does not include material or byproducts generated from, and commonly reused within, an original manufacturing process.
- G. **Virgin Material** means any material occurring in its natural form. Virgin Material is used in the form of raw material in the manufacture of new products.

### **POLICY**

The XXXX District commits to:

1. Procuring environmentally preferable products and services where criteria have been established by governmental or other widely recognized authorities (e.g.: Energy Star, EPA Eco-Purchasing Guidelines).
2. Integrating environmental factors into the District's buying decisions where external authorities have not established criteria. Examples:
  - replacing disposables with reusables or recyclables;
  - supporting eco-labelling practices by buying products bearing such labels in preference to others (where they are available and provide value for money);
  - taking into account life cycle costs and benefits;
  - evaluating, as appropriate, the environmental performance of vendors in providing products and services;
3. Raising staff awareness on the environmental issues affecting procurement by providing relevant information and training;
4. Encouraging suppliers and contractors to offer environmentally preferable products and services at competitive prices;
5. Encouraging providers of services to consider environmental impacts of service delivery;
6. Complying with all environmental legislative and regulatory requirements in the procurement of products and services.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed as requiring a department, office, school, or contractor to procure products that do not perform adequately for their intended use or are not available at a reasonable price in a reasonable period of time.

Procedures and guidelines may be established as necessary to ensure the continuation of a strong Environmental Procurement Program.

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

All District departments, schools, offices, and contractors shall identify and purchase the most environmentally responsible products and services that are available for the intended purpose and that meet the performance requirements. Factors that should be considered when determining the environmentally preferable good or service include, but are not limited to:

- Minimization of virgin material use in product or service life cycle
- Maximization of recycled products used in product or service life cycle
- Environmental cost of entire product or service life cycle

- Reuse of existing products or materials in product or service life cycle
- Recyclability of product
- Minimization of packaging
- Reduction of energy/water consumption
- Toxicity reduction or elimination
- Elimination of uncertified hardwoods in product or service life cycle
- Durability and maintenance requirements
- Ultimate disposal of the product

*Purchasing Division Responsibilities:*

1. Develop and maintain information about environmentally preferable products and recycled products containing the maximum practicable amount of recycled materials, to be purchased by departments, schools, offices, and contractors whenever possible.
2. Inform departments, schools, offices, and contractors of their responsibilities under this policy and provide implementation assistance.
3. Institute product testing and trial service to evaluate environmentally responsible alternatives pursuant to established testing guidelines.
4. Require the use of recycled materials and recycled products by incorporating them in bid specifications where practicable;
5. Disseminate information on recycled and environmentally preferable product procurement requirements, specifications, and performance to assist vendors with procurement opportunities with the District.
6. Establish guidelines governing the review and approval of specifications for the procurement of selected materials based on considerations of recycling, energy, and water conservation, life-cycle costing and other environmental considerations.
7. Submit reports of policy impacts on an annual basis.

*Environmental Services Department Responsibilities:*

1. Support Purchasing in its implementation of this policy by providing training, information when requested, and assistance in the evaluation of the EPP status of a product or service.
2. Support departments and schools in evaluation and analysis of products and services for EPP criteria.
3. Help establish and promote needed environmental procurement legislation.

*Department, School, and Office Responsibilities:*

1. Evaluate each requested product and service to determine the extent to which the specifications could include an environmentally preferable option.
2. Ensure that contracts issued by the departments, offices and schools include environmentally preferable products and recycled products wherever practicable.
3. Understand standard at which products are considered environmentally preferable and use in selective criteria.
4. Expand the awareness and use of environmentally preferable products.

**Document Review**

This policy must be reviewed every three years.