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# School Sustainability Policy Guide



A practical guide to designing and adopting sustainability policies at the district and school levels. Includes policy examples and templates

# Table of Contents

<b>Background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
Why is sustainability policy in K-12 education important?	3
What is a Policy?	3
What makes a good policy?	4
<b>The Policy, Regulation, and Implementation Cycle</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Suggested Policy Sections and Topics</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Policy Templates</b>	<b>9</b>
Green Initiative Committee	12
<b>transportation Policy Template</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Examples of School Sustainability Policies</b>	<b>16</b>
Energy And Water Conservation	16
Newport-Mesa Unified School District	17
<b>Rules and Regulations</b>	<b>19</b>
What are Rules and Regulations?	19
Drafting Rules and Regulations	19
<b>Regulation Template</b>	<b>21</b>
Energy and Water Management Plan	21
<b>Examples of SCchool Sustainability Regulations</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Supplementary Documents</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Educational Code</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Programs, Resources, and Funding Code</b>	<b>39</b>

## THE POLICY, REGULATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE

The Policy, Regulation, and Implementation Cycle is the process that describes the steps necessary to draft and ratify compelling policies and regulations, in addition to implementing them effectively. While the individual steps may vary between schools and districts, they are generally as follows:



- What is the underlying problem the policy makers want to address? Anyone can recognize a problem and come up with an idea for a new policy or improvements to an existing one. Engage stakeholders at a high level to determine if a policy approach is required to address the problem. Gathering as much stakeholder support as possible will give the policy the greatest chance of being successfully adopted. An idea for sustainability policy may be born out of identifying a problem, like poor waste practices or may acknowledge a widespread belief, like support for improving environmental quality.



- Conduct background research on the problem and how a policy will address it. Examine the status quo and any alternatives to it; develop criteria to compare the costs and benefits of all available options. Some examples of relevant criteria are: ecological impacts, economic efficiency, distributional equity, social acceptability, legality and uncertainty. Look for examples of existing or similar policies. Changing or adding to an existing policy to personalize for a given school district can be easier than creating one from scratch.



- Using the information gained during the policy analysis, get the entire community of stakeholders on board with the proposed policy. Form a sustainability committee, composed of stakeholder individuals with varying backgrounds, positions in the community and experiences. The committee should brainstorm any possible impacts from the policy and suggest changes that would limit or eliminate resistance from the affected parties. Establishing a diverse team to design and review policies will ensure the integration of different points of view and result in a more robust policy.

## Policy Design

- Create the draft policy using the input and comments obtained in the previous steps. Ensure that the policy is a framework that establishes a general stance on a sustainability area, like energy, water or waste. Remember, a policy is a statement of intent, not necessarily an actionable plan.

## Revise Policy

- Once the language of the policy has been determined, submit the document for review to the various stakeholders and committee members. All stakeholders should be satisfied and agree with the policy, otherwise there could be barriers to adoption and subsequent implementation of said policy. This phase usually includes a public comment period and all submitted comments should be considered by the policy makers. This will ensure the sharing of best ideas and practices, as well as transparency.

## Adoption

- This step should be easy if the policy analysis and design phases were exhaustive. A well written sustainability policy that incorporates stakeholder concerns and offers clear benefits over the status quo and alternatives will have widespread support. Also, the fact that sustainability policies often do not impose a financial burden on schools or school districts makes their adoption even more appealing.

## Regulation Design

- Regulations are the actionable and enforceable rules for attaining the goal or goals stated in a policy. Regulations are usually very specific tasks or actions that should be undertaken. Stakeholders must agree upon the responsibilities described in a regulatory document for it to be ratified. The later section titled "Rules and Regulations" breaks down the regulatory design steps in more detail.

## Revise Regulations

- As with policies, regulations should go through a revision phase in addition to a public comment phase. Performing these steps will ensure that all stakeholder concerns have been addressed by the rule-makers. Regulations provide a more concrete structure for implementation, so anyone potentially effected by the regulations should be included in this process.

## Implementation

- Once both a policy and the corresponding regulations are adopted, the last step is to implement them. Policies are the plan to reach a specified goal. Implementation is the process of putting that plan into action. Use the actions and responsibilities outlined in the regulations to guide stakeholders towards regulatory compliance and realization of the purpose of the original policy.

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## SUGGESTED POLICY SECTIONS AND TOPICS

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Policy documents can take on many shapes and sizes, but formatting is ultimately left to the discretion of the entity responsible for the policy's creation. An effective policy should address all of the potential concerns raised throughout the policy, regulation and implementation cycle while being as concise and brief as possible. Below is a guide that lists and gives examples of important information that should be stated in a policy. (Note: not all areas will be applicable depending on the nature of the policy and the governing board's requirements.)

**1. Policy Title, Date and Number**

Any policy should have an informative title and an assigned number for administrative purposes.

**2. Policy Statement and Purpose**

What is the policy?

What does the policy hope to address/achieve?

What factors brought about the need for this policy?

Example: Funding, state/federal policy, educational code, moral obligation

**3. Definitions**

Key words or concepts should be defined, making the policy easy to understand.

Example: Waste: material that is not wanted; the unusable remains or byproducts of something.

**4. Scope**

What aspects/areas/people will the policy cover?

Example: Building efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable procurement

Who are the stakeholders?

Anyone who is effected by or has an interest in the policy

Example: SFF, MCF, local communities, faculty, students

**5. Implementation**

Generally, how will the policy be implemented?

Who is responsible for certain aspects?

Example: "The implementation of the plan will be the joint responsibility of all District stakeholders, including board members, administrators, teachers, staff, volunteers and students."

**6. Review**

Is the policy working?

How can the impact of the policy be measured/tracked?

**7. References**

Any references or citations used throughout the policy document

**Strategic Energy Innovations**

**Waste Management Policy – Template**

Business and Non-Instructional Operations

July 2014

**Policy: #####**

The Governing Board has presented a Green Initiative Program that shows the commitment of the school community to be stewards of the environment. Appreciating the understanding of the flow of resources that sustain us and understanding ways in which we can minimize the impact of our activities on resources is the stalwart of that policy program.

As of July 1, 2012 State Law AB 341 (Chesbro) will require the School District to have an organized recycling service, as a beginning step in achieving the new statewide goal of 75% source reduction, recycling, and composting by 2020. The County of Marin has adopted an 80% diversion rate by 2013 and 94% by 2020 as a goal for waste diversion from landfill. In an effort to be responsive to county and statewide initiatives, the School District will set goals for attainment to be consistent with these waste reduction objectives. The School District will also stay current with these policies as they evolve in coming years.

**Scope:**

- Minimize waste generation at the source and facilitate reducing, reusing, repairing before replacing and recycling over the disposal of waste.
- Develop a comprehensive waste reduction program to include recycling, composting, and disposal as the basis of the waste management program.
- Identify and promote waste management best practices.
- Provide clearly defined roles and responsibilities to identify and coordinate each activity within the waste management chain.
- Provide training for staff, students and other stakeholders on waste management issues.
- Conduct waste audits (professional or informal) to provide valuable information and feedback as to how school sites are meeting specified goals and set new goals.
- Prepare and institutionalize tailored classroom recycling procedures to each school site's needs.
- Ensure the safe handling and storage of all wastes on campus.
- Promote environmental awareness in order to increase and encourage waste reduction, reuse and recycling.

**Responsibility**

This policy applies to all activities undertaken by (or on behalf of) the School District including its staff, clubs, organizations, and sporting events.

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## EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL SUSTAINABILITY REGULATIONS

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**Regulation #####**

**Dixie School District  
Waste Diversion Program DRAFT**

**I. Purpose:**

The Governing Board has presented a Green Initiative Program that shows the commitment of the school community to be stewards of the environment. As set out by the Green Initiative Policy #3543: "The District shall develop a comprehensive waste reduction, recycling, composting and reuse plan for all aspects of its operation." In an effort to be responsive to this policy, as well as state and countywide waste reduction initiatives, the following waste diversion program is proposed to coordinate waste reduction and increased diversion from landfill District wide.

**II. Organization and Management:**

The responsibilities and organizational arrangements for this Waste Management Policy lie within a variety of School District and community members.

**Principal Responsibilities:**

- Create and sustain a network of communication between custodians, district office and surrounding community about the effectiveness of the waste management program.
- Ensure that all staff members are trained in the goals, benefits and waste diversion procedures.
- Coordinate educational trainings on waste management for all teachers and staff.
- Communicate with green team leaders regularly.
- Facilitate waste service level changes (particularly during the summer and winter breaks).
- Set up waste audits annually (can be arranged through Conservation Corps North Bay, Next Generation or Marin Sanitary) and communicate results to the Green Team.
- Ensure the Site Council creates a waste reduction piece for the school site plan that aligns with the school's waste initiatives.
- Facilitate communication with Marin Sanitary to get special pickups and a debris box at the end of the year (waste gets properly sorted that way) instead of increasing regular pickups.

**School Site Custodians Responsibilities:**

- Oversee the day-to-day delivery of general waste and recycling services.
- Empty waste, recycling, and compost into separate containers for disposal into dumpsters (trash only), blue paper recycling carts, brown general recycling carts, and green compost/yard waste carts respectively.
- Manage location of collection containers.
- Know and understand pick up days of waste and recycling services.
- Communicate with principals and monitor levels of service.

**Teacher Responsibilities:**

- Teachers may choose to have a designated student empty classroom recycling containers. Each classroom has a container for recycling and for paper.
- Understand and encourage student involvement in waste diversion on campus.

- Participate in training on proper waste diversion procedures.
- Be knowledgeable of recycling container locations on campus.

**Site Green Team Responsibilities:**

- Analyze waste audits and set annual waste reduction goals.
- Plan and implement waste diversion education campaigns such as assemblies, banners, and curriculum ideas.
- Operate and maintain lunch sorting stations.

**Green Team Leaders at School Sites Responsibilities:**

- Prepare and distribute classroom-recycling procedures.
- Work with Green Team to create proper sorting signage with visual icons or photos indicating the types of materials accepted for recycling to put up in recycling locations on campus.
- Establish a team of parent volunteers to assist with lunch sorting duties.
- Create a map identifying locations of all collection containers (dumpsters, sorting containers, stations etc.)
- Monitor and assist with waste reduction on a regular basis.

**Site Council Responsibilities:**

- Incorporate a waste reduction piece into each school site plan.

**District Green Initiative Responsibilities:**

- Annually review waste bills and analyze waste program.
- Identify and promote waste management best practices.
- Provide public relations support encouraging waste reduction to all site teams/principals.
- Incorporate the waste diversion procedures in volunteer and school handbooks.
- Members should return to their sites and update their principal on the discussion after each meeting.

**III. Other Considerations:**

Any school that wishes to enhance their waste management program beyond the recommended actions laid out in this document, is encouraged to do so and to notify other schools of their best practice findings.