

Brighton Schools Launch Zero Waste Initiative

Brighton Central School District is looking to become the first district in the county to go toward becoming zero waste. The Board of Education approved the first reading of its Zero Waste Policy at its April 25 meeting.

Zero waste is a philosophy that encourages the redesign of resource life cycles so that all products are reused. No waste is sent to landfills or incinerators. The process is similar to the way that resources are reused in nature.

In an effort to reduce waste, energy, and greenhouse gases, the District's initial goal is for 80 percent landfill diversion, meaning 80 percent of materials would be recycled or composted. Brighton is aiming to become a certified Zero Waste facility (90 percent landfill diversion) in the next few years.

"We are extremely excited to launch our zero waste initiative," Brighton Superintendent Dr. Kevin McGowan said. "Being environmentally responsible is incredibly important to the Brighton community and our district is looking forward to doing our part and setting an example for students."

In order to launch its zero waste initiative, the District is working with Impact Earth, a zero waste solutions provider co-founded by Brighton parents Robert Putney and Elizabeth Carey. They have provided individuals, businesses, and event planners with personalized training on sustainable practices since 2014. Impact Earth has worked with area food trucks, carnivals and festivals, and restaurants.

"As Brighton residents and parents of four kids in the District, Robert and I are extremely excited to be working with Brighton Schools and helping with their zero waste initiative," Carey said. "We have been overwhelmed by the support from administration, staff and students, and community members, and the excitement they all have for Brighton to become a zero waste district. We are honored to be a part of the solution!"

This initiative will soon take place in classrooms and cafeterias, as well as at all after-school and community events on school grounds. We ask that all after-school events and community groups support this by:

- Making sure all consumables provided, including silverware and other service ware, decorations, and giveaways are either recyclable, compostable, or reusable.
- Ensure that beverages served in bottles and cans, as well as cups, can be recycled or composted.
- Ensure that any paper products are recyclable and/or compostable (plates, napkins, and other items that come in contact with food need to be compostable).

Zero waste stations will be set up with bins for recycling and composting. An Impact Earth employee or community volunteer will be at each waste station to help instruct everyone on what goes into each bin. Students and community members will be trained so they can be zero waste station volunteers.

The District will generate less waste by reviewing how supplies, materials, and equipment are manufactured, purchased, packaged, delivered, and used, and manage their disposal.

Impact Earth will be conducting waste assessments around the District. These will show how much of Brighton's waste currently goes into the landfill, how much is recycled, and how much food waste there is.

"The impact could be huge!" Carey said. "Brighton has decided to become a leader in materials management and waste diversion from the landfill. Brighton is already a Climate Smart Community and now the school district is putting into place a policy that other communities will look to and follow."