

Creating and Building a Schoolyard Improvement Committee **Rebecca Cline, rebecca@rebeccaclinemusic.com**

Before the cleanup:

1. Start by doing an informal cleanup on your own or with a few friends in order to assess the cleanup needs, the scope of the work, the tools available, and the culture of the school's approach to schoolyard care.
2. Plan for 2-hour projects, and limit the scope of the work accordingly. Set clear and specific goals for each clean-up.
3. Offer food. Solicit donations from local pizza businesses, request a small food budget from parent association, and consider holding fund raisers such as bake sales.
4. Schedule an activity 30 minutes following the scheduled meal, eg. Kickball, scavenger hunt, kick the can, etc.
5. Identify cleanup areas and tasks (eg. Outdoor classroom, raking/bagging leaves, weeding, etc.)
6. As far in advance as possible, plan a series of cleanups for fall season (Sept-Nov), and spring season (April-June).
7. Choose dates that work for you, then seek approval from principal.
8. Advertise cleanup dates through the school's newsletter and online calendar.
9. Make half-sheet flyers announcing all cleanup dates for the season. Pass them out at parent council meetings, on the playground, or try a backpack flyer blitz.
10. At least two weeks before the first cleanup date, submit a single FMT-17 volunteer form (<https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/domain/1884>) for all dates in the season to Facilities (mlewhouston@bostonpublicschools.org).
11. Make an online sign-up sheet (like wejoinin.com) where community members can volunteer for specific supportive tasks, such as supervising children's play, supervising particular areas of the cleanup site, and picking up the pizza, for 30- or 60-minute slots. Link to this sheet in every online announcement for the cleanups. Recruit core participants to sign up to get it going.
12. Create a Schoolyard Improvement Committee mailing list (easy on Gmail). Always send emails to yourself and BCC the mailing list to protect volunteers' privacy. Use the list to announce upcoming events and to solicit volunteers to sign up for specific tasks, and to thank volunteers for their hard work after a clean-up.
13. Collect email addresses continuously to add to the mailing list.
14. Request any needed yard waste bags from Facilities via Maria Lew-Houston (mlewhouston@bostonpublicschools.org) or Don Cuzzi (dcuzzi2@bostonpublicschools.org).
15. Request to borrow tools (rakes, shovels, hand tools, etc.) from the City of Boston via the Outreach and Service division of the Mayor's Office for Civic Engagement (kaira.fox@boston.gov).
16. For bigger tasks, solicit local colleges and the City of Boston for assistance through any service programs they might have in which their participants give back to the community.
17. Communicate your interest in outdoor improvement and learning to Mary Smoyer of Friends of the Boston Schoolyards (howsmoyer@gmail.com), who will connect you with resources as she becomes aware of them.

On Cleanup Day:

18. Arrive 30-60 minutes before the start time. Have two clipboards at each event: one for signing in, another to opt in to the mailing list. Write the date of the next clean-up at the top of each sheet.
19. Consider having a third clipboard with a sheet soliciting feedback. Ask "What did you like best about today?" and "What would you change?"
20. Place all filled yard waste bags in central locations near streets that are easily accessed by BPS trucks. Contact the BPS head groundskeeper, currently Sean Byrne (sbyrne@bostonpublicschools.org), at least 2 days before and again immediately after each clean-up to let them know where and how many bags are waiting to be removed. They usually remove the bags shortly after school starts on Monday.

21. Bring drinking water and cups. Consider investing in a cooler/dispenser. Ask if your parent association will reimburse.
22. Costco sells packs of gardening gloves. Bring one or two packs to save the volunteers' hands.
23. Take pictures of volunteers at work and at play, and ask permission to post. Submit a brief blurb with pictures to the school's newsletter or other online presence to celebrate the accomplishments and community building of the day.
24. Thank each person for coming.

To support outdoor learning:

1. Identify specific teachers interested in outdoor learning, and ask them how you can support their goals.
2. Locate and troubleshoot outdoor water supply, and make sure any existing hoses are functioning.
3. Ask teachers if they are interested in using external resources for STEM learning opportunities. If so, ask organizations for quotes and descriptions (Green City Growers, City Sprouts, etc.).
4. If necessary, raise funds to support these external resources. Recruit parents with grant writing expertise.
5. Ask if any teachers are interested in collaborating on building a pollinator garden.

Beautification:

1. Contact [Boston Blooms](#) in September to request daffodil bulbs for your school. Schedule a planting date the first week in November at your school.