

# *Improving Your School Recycling Program and Increasing Participation*



## **Gain Support**

District-wide support is critical to the success of your recycling improvement program.

Gain support by demonstrating how a waste reduction and recycling program can:

- ✓ Save the school money
- ✓ Increase student education
- ✓ Save natural resources



## **Coordination, Involvement and Communication**

Select one person to coordinate the program. Choose someone enthusiastic and organized who communicates well with students, staff and the school administration about the program's goals and successes.

It is important that the administration, facilities staff, and students are all involved in the process. This will create a greater sense of ownership and increase support for the recycling program.

## Analyze Your Waste and Recycling: What's the Current Situation?

Assess the program you currently have and the waste that is already generated. Complete a visual waste assessment or organize a waste sort. This is a great way to get students and facilities staff involved in the process. (See waste assessment forms)



**A School Waste Sort** tells you what waste is created and how it can be managed or reduced.



Now your school can target opportunities for reduction, recycling improvement, education and money-saving strategies.

### *Questions to consider:*

- ✓ How much waste does your school generate?
- ✓ Where, how and why is waste generated?
- ✓ What types of materials is your school throwing away?
- ✓ Are your recycling or trash containers over-flowing in a specific area?
- ✓ Do all classrooms and office spaces have trash and recycling containers?
- ✓ Do hallways, media centers, gymnasium and cafeteria have trash and recycling containers?
- ✓ Are Styrofoam trays or washable trays used in your cafeteria?
- ✓ How many lunches are served daily?
- ✓ Where is your waste going? How is it managed?
- ✓ How often is waste and recycling picked up per week? Who is the hauler?
- ✓ How much do your collection and disposal services cost the school?
- ✓ How much of your waste can be reduced and/or recycled?

## Reduce, Reduce, Reduce!

Waste reduction can lower costs in every area of your school - not only classrooms, offices, and break rooms, but also building, equipment and other maintenance areas.

### Waste Reduction Strategies For Your School

- ✓ Use both sides of a sheet of paper when printing and copying.
- ✓ Buy supplies in bulk or economy sized packaging.
- ✓ Purchase washable, reusable cleaning cloths.
- ✓ Install a dishwasher in the cafeteria and purchase reusable trays and silverware.
- ✓ Bring a reusable mug to class.
- ✓ Pack a zero-waste lunch by replacing plastic sandwich bags and non-recyclable plastic containers with washable service ware and food storage containers.



### Stack Trays—Save Money!

Save money on the school's trash hauling bill by stacking polystyrene trays at breakfast and lunch!

Styrofoam trays take up much more space in a waste container and as a result their use has more impact on waste and recycling fees. Stacking trays will reduce the volume of your waste, which then allows for less frequent collection and lower costs.



# Setting-Up Your Recycling Program

Determine the best method for collecting and storing materials at your school. Every recycling program should work efficiently and mimic the outline below. Most importantly- Your school's recycling collection system should maximize the collection of clean, recyclable materials and minimize contamination!

## *Choosing the Appropriate Containers:*

- Consider the size and shape of the recycling containers as well as the recycling bin lid design. Smaller bins are usually sufficient for classrooms and offices, but larger bins are needed in the cafeteria, gymnasium and other high-traffic areas.
- The recycling bin lid design is very important. Use holes for cans and bottles and slot openings for paper on the lid to encourage recycling participation.
- Encourage people to remove liquid from their beverage containers by providing a separate container for dumping out liquids.

## *Signage, Clear and Easy-to-read:*

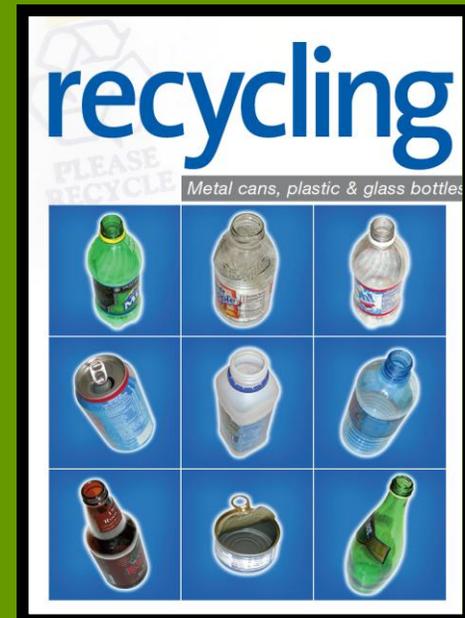
- Use large fonts that are easy to read.
- Use color images of the recyclable materials that are being collected.
- Clearly label both the recycling and waste containers.

## *Convenience:*

- Always pair a waste container with a recycling container.
- Place containers in areas where waste and recycling are typically generated. ex) Student Study Areas.
- Provide adequate recycling opportunities in office settings and classrooms. Decide whether paper recycling is sufficient or if beverage container recycling options are needed.
- Provide special containers needed at your school—such as extra bottle recycling containers for athletic events or more paper recycling bins near print centers or duplicating areas.

## *Consistency and Patterns:*

- Use the same colored bins, signs and sorting system throughout the school.
- Determine a consistent schedule for collecting trash and recyclable materials.



## Training For Your Program

Training and education are vital. Everyone who handles recyclables should understand how the program works. Include information about your recycling program during staff training sessions for any new-comers.

**Change Can Be Good!** Design the recycling and trash bin layout with flexibility in mind. Be ready to change your initial plan as you monitor the use of your recycling bins and the quality of recyclable materials that are being collected.



## Start it Off Right!

Employee and student participation is critical to the success of any recycling program. Gain the support and active participation of the school district. Make participation easy: educate everyone about the program. Post instructional signs throughout the school, organize a tabling event with information on the new program or create a recycling-themed school assembly!

## ***Promote Your School's Program***

- ✓ Make an announcement at your next school assembly or during the morning announcements.
- ✓ Promote the program in staff or parent newsletters to gain support for your efforts.
- ✓ Be creative! Ask the students what ideas they have to promote better recycling practices at the school and invite them to help make signs, posters or a presentation for the next pep-fest.



## ***Educate, Educate, Educate!***

Staff meetings and student assemblies or pep-fests are ideal for educating your school about your new recycling efforts.

- Answer questions
- Provide encouragement
- Discuss the program's needs and successes.
- Provide employees and students with a list of materials currently accepted (or specifically NOT accepted) by the recycling program.
- Give instructions on topics such as collection locations and material handling methods.
- Point out materials that are commonly mistaken for recyclable material at your school, such as pizza boxes.

## Share Your Results & Analyze Your Work!

Once the program is underway, track successes and show the school district and families how the school is saving money and making a commitment to be better stewards of their local environment. Monitor and evaluate the program to ensure its longevity and success. Track any revenue as well as avoided costs, such as:

- Recycling revenues.
- Lower garbage bills.
- Reduced purchasing or operating costs.

## Inform, Inform, Inform!

Provide regular program updates. For long-term success, positive communication and employee/student recognition are critical. Keep staff and students informed and involved:

- ✓ Write an article about the program's successes and staff involvement for the school newsletter.
- ✓ Send e-mail updates to employees on a regular basis.
- ✓ Post flyers reminding employees and students of program goals and successes.
- ✓ Talk about the recycling program at the next school assembly or pep-fest, or over the loudspeaker during morning announcements.
- ✓ Train new employees during the orientation process.
- ✓ Give awards to employees or students who have demonstrated innovative strategies for waste reduction and recycling.



## Share Your Program!

Be proud of your program. By making the commitment to reduce, reuse, and recycle you are helping to improve the environment and your community - an achievement the school district and families will appreciate. Publicizing your efforts will set an example for others to follow:

- ✓ Write an article outlining your school's efforts for the community paper.
- ✓ Motivate other schools in the area to establish their own programs.
- ✓ Remember, it never hurts to ask for help. Talk to your local county solid waste office to find out how you might get additional financial support or educational assistance for your program. Grant funding, extra recycling bins, or free materials may be available!



# Waste and Recycling Resources for Teachers and Students

- ✓ America Recycles Day  
[Tool Kit](#)
- ✓ Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection  
[School Recycling Fact Sheets](#)
- ✓ Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
[Recycling and Waste Education Resources for Teachers](#)  
[Smog City Game](#)
- ✓ Hennepin County  
[School Recycling Improvement Materials](#)
- ✓ Keep America Beautiful  
[“Waste in Place” Classroom Curriculum](#)
- ✓ Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection  
[Recycling Program Resources](#)
- ✓ Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)  
[Healthy Sustainable Schools Guide for Change Manual](#)  
[Learning Resource Center](#)
- ✓ PBS Kids  
[Loop Scoops Videos. Videos to teach children about proper waste and recycling procedures](#)  
[“The Greens”](#)
- ✓ Recycle More Minnesota  
[Implementing a School Recycling Program](#)  
[Media Tools Page](#)
- ✓ Rethink Recycling  
[Recycling Resources](#)