



Starting a Recycling Project

While many factors play a role in making recycling successful, three key factors will make your project successful: convenience, communication, and cause (getting students to understand the many benefits of recycling and why they should care).

By educating and engaging students to recycle more of the right things the right way at school, they may take these new skills home with them.

This is easier said than done, but what we CAN do is make small changes today for a better tomorrow. And where we SHOULD start putting our focus is in teaching our kids. If we want to raise our youth to be environmentally responsible individuals we need to instill good sustainable habits at an early age. That's why we believe that schools should be ground zero when it comes to producing sustainable and environmentally "active" members of society.

Schools generate a large amount of waste and pollution including, paper, food, cleaning products, water, etc. There is tremendous potential for your school to not only become more resource efficient but begin saving money by implementing an effective recycling program. Recycling is an educational opportunity and it encourages sustainable behavior that students can take outside the classroom. With a strong and consistent recycling program in place our schools can become key drivers in developing sustainable models within our communities.

Step 1: Build Support For Your Recycling Program

- It pays to do your research. When it comes to initial funding to start a school recycling program, you may not have the budget available, that's why it is so important to look funding opportunities that are available through your town, county and/or state.
- Get everyone's buy-in! Get janitorial staff, teachers, students and active parents such as lunch and cafeteria monitors on board with a school recycling program. Conduct staff, student and PTA meetings to discuss the importance of an effective program, potential ROI, opportunities for funding, identify any past efforts (what worked, what didn't work) and first steps.

Step 2: Start A Green Team

- Put together a school Green Team with various stakeholders across the school. For example, teachers, parents and custodial staff this will make it much easier if you have

their buy-in from the beginning. We also highly recommend including students. It's important to be inclusive to build ownership for the program and shared responsibility.

- Conduct your own waste audit. See Waste Audit Checklist included on page 4.
- Create a list of recyclables and compost at your school
- Discuss the recycling program with your waste hauler and determine any ROI opportunities through recycling rebates.

Step 3: Plan The Recycling Program

- Determine collection points, how many different streams you will be collecting, and how many recycling bins you will need through the school including both indoors and outdoors.
- Choose your recycling bins based on capacity, location, and whether they are consistent with signage and colors. The right recycling bin for the right room is a critical part of effective school recycling programs.



- Get the GRAPHICS right: From showing students exactly what goes where, to communicating your sustainability message, graphics are a powerful component of any school recycling program.

Custom Transition™ TIM with Diorama

- Take the time to design your own graphics based on items your Green Team has identified as problematic in your waste audit. Include students in choosing items represented on the bin graphics to help guide them in making the right decision.
- Step 4: Promote The Recycling Program
- Be sure to communicate the upcoming roll out of your school recycling program through:
 - Student assemblies
 - Newsletters
 - Tent cards in cafeterias
 - Educational posters in classrooms and hallways to support the program
 - Emails to staff and parents
- Encourage teachers to set clear expectations of how to properly separate waste with their students and the role of the recycling program in their classrooms.

- Include lessons and activities on the importance of recycling, sustainability and waste diversion.

Langley Township Recycling Program with CleanRiver Top Loading Bin

Step 5: Analyze, Adjust And Celebrate

- Check in regularly with your janitorial team on how the recycling program is working from their perspective. Are they having challenges with staff and students not sorting their recycling effectively? Do you need to tweak the capacity of certain streams? If you've selected flexible recycling bins that allow you to increase or decrease the volume of streams you'll be able to adapt your program as it develops. Be sure to schedule regular follow ups.
- Celebrate and communicate the success any small wins of the recycling program with students, staff and parents.
- If your school is beginning to produce a profit use the money for school trips, special guests and family fairs.

If you would like someone from DRBA to help you with your Recycling Project, please contact Krista Hodges, Environmental Education Manager at khodges@danriver.org.

Waste Audit Checklist

1. Select your team and plan a date for the waste audit.

Recruit students from all grade levels. Make sure you include your custodial team in the planning process. They can advise you of anything you need to be aware of regarding your waste collection program and identify areas for improvement.

Select a week when there are no special events occurring at your school and ask the custodial team to collect all waste over a 1-day period and place in a secure container.

Waste should be collected on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday. Don't include Mondays and Fridays as there is typically a higher incidence of absences on those days

Provide labels for the custodial team so they can label each bag with the date and location they gathered the garbage from.

You may choose to do just one location, such as the cafeteria, computer room or library – anywhere you think there are items that can be recycled, but are not.

2. Gather your equipment

- Clear garbage bags for use in all the waste and recycling bins during the 1-day period
- Large secure container to store the bags collected
- Labels to identify date, location for each bag
- Permanent markers for the custodial team to mark the labels
- Protective clothing for the waste audit team including overalls, gloves, eye protectors and safety shoes (if required)
- Camera
- Printed checklist or tablet/laptop to record the data

3. Go through the garbage!

On audit day, remove the bags from the secure container and start to group the bags together by collection location. Weigh each one and record the weight, location. Do a visual assessment of the contents and determine the percentage of what can be recycled, composted and needs to go to the landfill.

4. Communicate your results.

Tell everyone the results of the audit. Highlight any areas for improvement by posting images of key areas of recycling by locations so it's top of mind for everyone.

Sharing the waste audit results also gives you the opportunity to reinforce your recycling goals and make everyone aware of the bin locations, and what's recyclable in your facility