



# Steps to Starting a Recycling Program In Your School

## Congratulations on taking the significant step of recycling in your school!

You are helping to create a sustainable environment for your students and staff. Setting up a recycling program involves a few small steps that will make a huge difference and helps students learn and practice becoming environmental stewards at school and at home.

The School Recycling Assistance team from Waste Management is available to help you start your program. Below are some helpful tips to establish and maintain a successful recycling program in your school.

### 1 Step One: Create a Green Team

The first step is to create a Green Team or the group of people that will champion recycling and help educate the school about any changes. Having a group not only spreads the work around but helps ensure program continuity in case of staff turnover. Consider the following ideas.

- Invite the principal, the custodian, dedicated students, and an enthusiastic teacher or two as key members of the Green Team.
- Ask an existing student team (ASB, environmental club, etc.) to help educate fellow students and to monitor the new recycling program.



### 2 Step Two: Assess Your Existing System

The next step to starting or improving your recycling collection program is to review what you already have in place and identify opportunities to improve your recycling set up. This is the operations piece. Think through what needs to be in place from when a student is ready to recycle to how the materials will be collected from the school. Make a list of any tasks that still need to be completed and identify the appropriate person or group that will take responsibility for these tasks.

## 2 Step Two: continued...

### Take Stock of Your Bins

- ❑ Are recycling bins in every classroom?
- ❑ Does every garbage container have a matching recycling bin next to it? (Try to avoid “lone” garbage containers where trash and recycling end up mixed together.)
- ❑ Are recycling (and potentially compost) bins in the lunchroom?
- ❑ Is a recycling bin next to each garbage container in the hallways?
- ❑ Are all containers labeled appropriately “garbage” or “recycling”?
- ❑ Do signs on recycling bins clearly show what can and can’t be recycled?

### Finalize a Collection Plan

- ❑ Who is currently collecting the recycling from the classrooms and lunchroom? (Custodian? Students? Other volunteers?)
- ❑ How is it being taken to the outdoor dumpsters?
- ❑ Do you need additional bins or tools, (e.g. wheeling carts) to make the collection process as efficient as possible?



## 3 Step Three: Implement Your Plan

### Once Bins are in Place, Set a Kickoff Date

- ❑ Make sure the Green Team (staff, principal, custodian, etc.) support the recycling plan and that tasks are assigned with an adequate timeline for completion.
- ❑ Set a date for when the new program will be rolled out.

### Educate

- ❑ Share the new recycling program, changes, and kickoff date in school announcements, at staff meetings, to get everyone on board.
- ❑ Make daily announcements about the new recycling program for one week. Share these announcements over the school’s PA system, at assemblies, in the lunchroom, and/or in classrooms. (See sample announcements below.)
- ❑ Create “3D” posters with real samples of what goes in the garbage, recycling and compost (if that’s an option) bins.
- ❑ Place posters above waste containers in the lunchroom.
- ❑ Have signs or labels on all bins throughout the school: include the name of the container - Recycling, Compost, Garbage - as well as a small sign with pictures of what materials go inside.
- ❑ Hang recycling signs all around the school so students and staff will see reminders of the new program everywhere, not only when they are at a bin.

## Implement Lunchroom Monitors

- Have a student team monitor in the lunchroom to show their fellow students how to properly sort wastes.

## 4 Step Three: Measure and Share Successes

- Check inside your new recycling and garbage containers regularly to see if there is any contamination or other issues.
- Note how full the recycling and garbage dumpsters are on pickup day (work with the custodian) and help determine if the dumpsters need to be reduced in size or pickup frequency.
- Track your school's recycling rate and promote any changes to students/staff.
- Make a monthly announcement to remind students/staff to keep recycling and thinking about other ways to reduce waste.
- Encourage teachers to integrate recycling into class lessons when possible. See *Curriculum Connections* below for ideas.
- Have classrooms or grade levels compete against each other to see who can waste the less or who can recycle the most. Get students excited to reduce and recycle.
- Share successes with the entire school and celebrate!



## Need Some Additional Help?

In addition to providing technical assistance, our recycling education experts are available to guide a club, team or class of students through various environmental projects catered to their particular interests and needs. Projects can range from waste sorts and recycling events to creating personalized PA announcements and waste free lunch campaigns. Each "Green Team" will receive prizes and recognition for their work. Please contact [recyclinghelp@triangleassociates.com](mailto:recyclinghelp@triangleassociates.com) or 206-583-0655 to sign up or for more information.

# CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

## Try These Ideas for Integrating Waste Reduction and Recycling Lessons into the Classroom

### MATH

- Have students weigh garbage and then again after recycling is implemented to see how numbers change. Repeat monthly and graph results.
- Calculate and track the school's recycling rate.
- Create a posterboard for the lunchroom to track improvements.

### LANGUAGE ARTS

- Write poems about the environment or essays about why recycling is important to them.
- Write letters to family or community groups that use the school to remind them to recycle when they use the school facilities.

### SOCIAL STUDIES

- Do a project on what we can learn about our society according to our garbage.
- Study "Not in My Backyard."
- Have a "no garbage" day where the students try to not create any garbage during the full day.
- Interview parents or family members about recycling and how it has or hasn't changed from when they were in school.

### SCIENCE

- Study recycling cycles and what items are turned into.
- Research how recycling helps cut down on harvesting new resources from the earth.
- Study composting and how different items decompose.

### MUSIC

- Come up with a recycling-related song for the kids to sing at an assembly on America Recycles Day in November or Earth Day in April.

### PUBLIC SPEAKING

- Have students give the daily/weekly recycling announcements over the intercom.

### Helpful Online Resources

- Waste Management (Think Green): <http://wmnorthwest.com/educational>
- Snohomish County Solid Waste ("Resource Guide for Educators" on the right side of the page under "miscellaneous"): <http://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/447/Brochures>
- Washington State Department of Ecology (resources for educators and students): <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/services/ee/index.html>
- US Environmental Protection Agency (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle page): <http://www.epa.gov/recycle/>
- US Environmental Protection Agency (Planet Protectors Club for Kids): <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/education/kids/planetprotectors/index.htm>

# Sample Announcements – RECYCLING only

## Monday

“ [School name] recycles! Today we will start to recycle new materials and decrease the amount of garbage we send to the landfill! We will try to recycle all that we can. Look for new signs on your classroom recycling containers listing what can and cannot be recycled. Also look for new recycling containers in the lunchroom for collecting bottles, cans and milk cartons. Together we are going to make a big difference!

## Tuesday

“ Recycling reminder! Did you know that milk cartons are recyclable? They are mostly made from paper, which is easily recycled. Just drink, empty and recycle; it's that easy! By recycling your milk cartons, our school will keep almost 400 bags of garbage out of the landfill every school year! Remember: Drink, Empty and Recycle!

## Wednesday

“ Can you name the four Rs of recycling? RETHINK, REDUCE, REUSE, and of course, RECYCLE! Help decrease the amount of garbage [your school name] sends to the landfill by practicing the four Rs and using the new recycling bins throughout the school. Garbage in the landfill will remain there forever. Now that's a long time! Twenty percent of what's in the landfill is paper that does not belong there. Keep paper out of the landfill by using both sides of a sheet of paper and then recycling it when you're done. You just made a difference!

## Thursday

“ [School mascots], let's work together to help the planet by recycling! Did you know that our school can recycle more than half of our waste by everyone using the recycling bins throughout the school? Recycling also saves energy! Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to run a computer for three hours. Look around for a recycling bin today and if you think we need more, let your teacher know. Thank you for recycling!

## Friday

“ Recycling reminder! What do candy wrappers, tissues, and zip-lock bags have in common? Answer: They are not recyclable. Tissues, napkins and paper towels - and any paper with food on it - cannot be placed in the recycling containers. Help keep our recycling containers free of contamination by placing your candy wrappers and zip-lock bags in the garbage. And instead of using disposable plastic bags in the first place, try using reusable containers for your lunch. The Earth will thank you!



# Sample Announcements – RECYCLING and COMPOSTING

## Monday

“ [School name] recycles and composts! Today we will start to recycle and compost new materials and decrease the amount of garbage we send to the landfill! Look for new signs on your classroom recycling containers listing what can and cannot be recycled. Also look for new recycling and compost containers in the lunchroom. The only things that should be thrown in the garbage are wrappers, zip-lock bags, tissues and bottle caps. Look for new signs around the school that will help show you where your waste goes. Together we are going to make a big difference!

## Tuesday

“ Recycling reminder! Did you know that milk cartons are recyclable? They are mostly made from paper, which is easily recycled. Just drink, empty and recycle; it's that easy! By recycling your milk cartons, our school will keep almost 400 bags of garbage out of the landfill every school year! Remember: Drink, Empty and Recycle!

## Wednesday

“ Composting tip: Don't waste your food waste! Your food scraps can now be composted at lunchtime! Please eat all that you can and throw any remaining food scraps in the new [green] bins marked “compostables” in the lunchroom. Your food scraps will be turned into compost that can be used in your garden at home. Now that's a good resource! Thank you for composting!

## Thursday

“ [School mascots], let's work together to help the planet by recycling! Did you know that our school can recycle more than half of our waste by everyone using the recycling bins in the classrooms, hallways, and lunchroom? And recycling saves energy! Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to run a computer for three hours. Look around for a recycling bin today and if you think we need more, let your teacher know. Thank you for recycling!

## Friday

“ Compost quiz, [school name]! Did you know that ALL of the following items can go in our new lunchroom composting bin: fruit scraps, bread crusts, chicken bones, cheese, paper napkins, French fries, and even pizza boxes?? Remember to eat all of your food that you can, but all of your leftover scraps can now go in the compost bin and will be kept out of the landfill. A typical school's garbage is about 1/3 full of food wastes. Not our school! Remember to recycle and compost in [school name] in all classrooms, hallways and the lunchroom. The Earth thanks you!