



# How to Improve Your School's Recycling Program

## Organize a Team

- A successful recycling program needs the support and guidance of administrative school officials. Making sure everyone is on board is Step 1 !
- Organize a "Green Team" that represents the whole school community: teachers, students, parents, custodians, cafeteria staff, administrators. A successful committee will have the skills and resources needed to plan, design, implement, and maintain the waste reduction program. Schedule a regular meeting time and place.
- Designate a leader who can take notes at meetings, gather the information needed to create and carry-out the program, effectively direct the team's efforts, and report to school or district officials about the program.

## Collect Data

- It's important to have baseline data about the school's waste stream, which can later be used to assess the recycling program's success. Where are the garbage and recycling bins located throughout the school? What types of waste does each room in the school create? What gets thrown in the garbage the most? What gets recycled the least? How much is the school paying for garbage? How much for recycling? Are lower fees possible? Are there purchasing practices that could reduce waste and cut costs? These are some of the questions that need to be addressed. There are many ways to gather this information, use the Waste Audit ToolKit to help figure out how to conduct a formal waste assessment.

## Identify Goals

- Use the information gathered from the Waste Audit to identify goals and waste streams that can be targeted for reduction and recycling. Do Administrative Offices need more recycling bins and fewer garbage bins? Does each classroom need a garbage bin or can there be a large, central, community garbage and recycling station in a main hallway? Does the cafeteria want to try composting? What will be done with the finished compost? Can deposit beverage containers be collected to raise funds? Where will those funds go? Are there non-recyclable materials the school could donate instead of throwing away?

## Develop a Recycling Strategy

- Identify and delegate responsibilities among the Green Team members.
- Identify budgetary considerations for any new purchases of bins, signs, materials, etc and how will those costs be met?
- Locate available grants and resources to assist strategically and financially.
- How can the students be involved? Work with teachers to incorporate recycling science and technology into their classroom.

## Implement Changes

- Make new purchases if necessary.
- Move bins and hang Recycling signs where necessary.
- Educate the participants of the recycling program (both staff and students) about the changes.
- Inform parents about the new recycling program.
- If food scrap composting is one of your goals, consider having Green Team members be present for lunch periods while the new changes are implemented.

## Monitor & Assess the Program Success

- Conduct another waste audit to collect a new dataset about the school's recycling rate.
- Have the Green Team continue to meet regularly to discuss any obstacles with the roll-out of the new recycling program.
- Assess refuse removal expenses and quantify the total savings for the school.
- Share your success with the community to promote environmental sustainability as a core value of the school, and share your success with other schools to inspire change.

### Examples of Profit-Generating Recycling Concepts

- ✓ Deposit beverage containers are collected in a separate recycling bin in all areas where food or beverages are consumed.
- ✓ Printer Ink Cartridges are collected and sold for recycling.
- ✓ A TerraCycle© Collection Brigade earns points for the school or favorite charitable organization.
- ✓ Scrap metal from old desks and chairs always gets recycled.

### Examples of Cost-Saving Waste Reduction Concepts

- ✓ All printers in the school are capable of double-sided printing, reducing paper use by 50%
- ✓ Purchasing processes are evaluated to identify unnecessary overstock
- ✓ Reduce paper hand-outs among teachers and students by encouraging electronic communication
- ✓ Circulate memos, magazines, newspapers, and have staff sign off on a check list when they've read it (reduces paper waste and paper costs)
- ✓ Invest in eatery silverware and cut costs from disposable, plastic forks and spoons

### Examples of Re-Use Concepts

- ✓ Ask teachers and students to donate old folders, binders, and supplies at the end of the year. Consider coordinating a large event or school wide rummage sale with the donated items or have a small Free section in the school where students and teachers can access the supplies.
- ✓ Host a clothing donation collection event
- ✓ Incorporate up-cycling into the school art education program

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