



Guide to Starting a Recycling Program in Your School

Step 1: Form your Team

Talk to and recruit classmates and school staff that are concerned about your school's waste output. It could be a pre-existing environmental club/team, or you can create your own!

Make sure that you get not only your teachers involved, but also your school's principal, advisors, and janitors. They will all be important parts of your team.

Can't convince an important staff member that recycling is needed at your school? Try using these persuasive points:

- 1. If we start recycling, we can help reduce the amount of waste in our community's landfill.**
- 2. Recycling at our school will cost little to no money, and we may even get paid money to recycle! (Check with your local recycling center)**
- 3. Recycling can save us money by reducing the amount of trash we have to get picked up.**
- 4. A recycling program at our school will help teach students civic responsibility and the importance of taking care of our planet.**
- 5. [Here are some more reasons](#)**

Step 2: Collect Information

Talk to your teachers to find out more about what recycling looks like at your school:

- **Does your school already have a recycling program?**
 - **Has it ever had one before?**
 - **What were the successes and failures of the current/previous recycling programs?**
 - **What strategies do they think will be most successful in getting students to recycle?**

Talk to janitors and other support staff to find out how waste collection works at your school:

- **Is there a dumpster where the trash is collected before being taken away?**
- **How often does the dump truck come, on what days?**
 - **Does your school already have a recycling collection program set up?**
 - **What is the name and contact info for your waste collection service?**
 - **Does your current waste collection service also support recycling collection?**

Talk to your principal/school head to make sure you have the support you need to start planning:

- **Is the school willing to provide money to pay for the recycling collection service (If it is not already set up)?**
 - **What about for recycling bins?**
 - **Would janitors be able to collect the recycling or would students need to collect it?**

You will often find that the school is very willing to help you out in any way they can! Write down the answers to all these questions, as this will help you create your plan much more easily.

Remember to ask all these questions politely with a smile on your face 😊

Step 3: Create a Plan

Continue to coordinate with your team to brainstorm ideas and find solutions to any problems you face during planning. You will need to answer these questions to form your plan:

How will you get recycling bins?

1. If you have money available to buy bins...

- Check out these websites for affordable bins:

[Bulk Office Supply](#) [Waste Wise](#)

- Websites for expensive but very convenient bins: [RecyclingBin.Com](#) [Amazon](#) [Recycle Away](#)

2. If you do not have money to buy bins...

- Use cardboard boxes; you can ask for students and staff to bring in boxes and you can even paint on recycling symbols!

- Contact your local waste management facility, environmental group, or [recycling center](#), they may be willing to donate bins.

- Enter a recycling bin competition or program! You can search for ones in your area or visit any of these websites:

[Keep America Beautiful](#) [PepsiCo Recycle Rally](#)

[TerraCycle](#) [SOCRRA](#)

Where will the recycling bins be placed?

Remember to get approval from your principal/school head on the placement of the recycling bins.

1. Do you have many bins or a smaller school?

- Place bins everywhere! Put one in each classroom, and some in high traffic areas such as the lunchroom, library, and teacher lounge.

2. Do you have fewer bins or a very large school?

- Place bins mainly in high traffic areas such as the lunchroom and library. Put some sporadically in the hallways so that a recycling bin is always nearby.

What kind of recycling will be collected (paper, plastic, aluminum, etc)?

This all depends on your local recycling center. If you don't know where to find your local recycling center, check out [this](#) website.

Make sure you check out your recycling center's website, so you know what types of recycling your center takes.

You will need to indicate on your recycling bins what is acceptable to put in, it is best to use visuals!

Is your recycling collected all together (single-stream)? Or does it need to be sorted? These are important questions that can change your plan. If it needs to be sorted, you may need to have multiple bins or you may need to sort the recycling after it is collected.

Who will collect recycling from bins?

1. Students – First find a time that is best for your recycling collection team: it could be after school, during a free period, or in a certain class. Make sure you have a way to communicate with your team so you can coordinate the collection.

Then, make sure you have the necessary equipment to collect the recycling. A rolling cart with a very large bin on it will be most convenient to collect and transport the recycling. Make sure you also have any personal protective equipment you need such as gloves and masks. Ask your janitors for this equipment.

2. Janitors – If your principal approved having the janitors collect recycling, make sure to let them know where all recycling bins are placed and what they need to do with the recycling once they collect it. Give them a big thanks for their hard work!

How often will recycling be collected from bins?

This depends on your recycling center, the size of your school, and the types of recycling you are collecting.

First, check when your recycling center collects recycling. What day of the week is it collected? You may want to collect the recycling from bins a day or two before the recycling center comes to pick up your recycling.

Then, you will need to estimate how much recycling output will be produced. You want to make sure that the recycling bins do not overflow, so take into account their size as well. Depending on the bin size and how many students are using each bin, you may need to collect the recycling anywhere from every day to once a week.

The type of recycling you are collecting also plays a role in how often recycling should be collected from bins. If are collecting bottles that have sugary residues in them, you may want to collect recycling every day so that you do not attract bugs. You could also collect the recycling more often in areas like the cafeteria where there may be food residue.

Who will take recycling from the school?

1. Recycling collection truck

- If you already have recycling collection set up or your school was willing to pay for collection ([Here is one company that does recycling across the US](#)), make sure you know where to put the recycling that you collect from the bins (in a dumpster or in bins that are rolled out to the curbside)

2. A school staff member

- If you could not set up recycling collection from your recycling center, try asking a group of staff members to pitch in. They might be willing to drive the collected recycling straight to a recycling center.

Step 4: Implement Your Plan

GO GO GO!!!

You got this, remember to work together with your team through this whole process. Take all your planning and turn it into a working recycling program! Remember, things may not work out the first time around, but find out what is wrong and fix your mistakes.

Here are the steps you should take to implement your school's recycling program:

1. Hype it up

Talk to your peers and teachers about how awesome this recycling program is going to be. Make announcements on your school's intercom or news channel that tell your classmates that it is coming soon!

2. Place your bins

You can either do this all in one day or in a phased placement to gradually get people used to recycling. Placing the bins next to trash cans is the best way to get great results!

3. Add some signs

Make sure your classmates know what to put in the recycling bins, and how big of an impact they can make if they recycle. Hang signs above/on recycling bins that show people what can and can't go in the bins. Hang signs in the hallways to make sure everyone knows that recycling can make a difference in your community and world! Check out [these](#) premade posters.

4. Publicize

Keep your classmates involved in the recycling program! Make more announcements and/or school news advertisements. Another great way to connect to the student body is through social media, if your school allows it. Recycling competitions can also help get people involved. Have a contest to see which classroom can recycle the most and reward the winning class with a fun treat!

5. Keep on collecting

Make sure you collect the recycling regularly and take out anything that should not be recycled.

You did it!

Step 5: Measure and Share Your Success

Time to let your school district and community know how much of a difference you have made!

To get some hard data, you can measure how your school's recycling output changes over time, or survey your classmates to find out how their perception on recycling has changed.

A great way to present your information is through a powerpoint presentation, a video, or even a school wide assembly. Make sure to include lots of pictures of your process through all these steps and anecdotes of the struggles and successes you and your team faced together. Share this presentation with your district's superintendent and your school. You might inspire other schools in the district to follow in your footsteps and create a recycling program of their own!

To make sure that your recycling program doesn't stop when you leave the school, continue recruiting younger members to your team so that they can continue the recycling program.

Congratulations on your successful recycling program!