

How to start a school recycling program

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STEP 1: CHOOSE A RECYCLING COORDINATOR

Recycling can be initiated at any level: one classroom, one grade level, one department, one building, or the entire school district. Some schools have had success with one grade level being in charge of educating other students and staff about how to use the program, as well as taking responsibility for collecting and properly disposing of the materials.



The Recycling Coordinator should:

- Be a staff person, teacher, or adult
- Be truly committed to seeing paper recycling become a reality
- Have strong organizational skills
- Be a good communicator
- Have the ability to foster a sense of teamwork

STEP 2: CONTACT YOUR RECYCLER

It is very important to work with your waste or recycling coordinator, custodial staff, and school administration early in the process to:

- make sure recycling is included in your school's waste contract;
- find out the pickup schedule for your school;
- determine any additional costs or savings for your school by adjusting the size of dumpsters at the school or number of times garbage/recycling is picked-up each week; and
- confirm their list of recyclable materials.

The contractor/hauler for your school's garbage should be one of the Recycling Coordinator's key sources of information - they can help save costs and offer options for collection.

STEP 3: FORM A TASK FORCE

The task force should work closely with the Recycling Coordinator and should include administrative staff, faculty, students, and custodial staff.

Involvement from each of these groups is invaluable:

- Administrative staff to ensure top-level support and participation incentives
- Faculty to develop motivation techniques and an educational program
- Students to provide peer leadership
- Custodial staff to offer practical guidance

The coordinator and the task force should communicate regularly and make decisions regarding promotion and education for the school at large, when and how the materials will be collected, etc. Every building, classroom and grade is unique and you should develop an organizational structure that works for you.



STEP 4: DETERMINE WHAT CAN BE RECYCLED

The following types of paper are generally accepted in paper recycling programs:

- White and colored
- Computer
- Copy machine
- White and colored envelopes
- White and yellow legal pads
- Adding machine
- Telephone books
- Letterhead
- Tablet and note pads
- Fax paper
- Junk mail
- Carbonless forms/ invoices
- Advertising fliers
- Invoices
- Printer's scrap paper
- Magazines and newspaper
- Cardboard

The following items are generally NOT accepted:

- Food-contaminated paper
- Paper towels
- Napkins
- Toilet paper
- Tissues
- Carbon paper
- Wax paper
- Non-paper materials, including:
 - Plastics
 - Styrofoam
 - Photographs/slides
 - Labels/ label sheets
 - Transparencies

Contact your contracted waste hauler to find out exactly what would be accepted in your school's program (see step 2).

STEP 5: DEVELOP A COLLECTION SCHEDULE

Depending on your hauler's collection schedule, determine when your materials should be collected and deposited into your paper recycling dumpster.

STEP 6: GET STARTED!



You can use ordinary paper grocery sacks for paper collection. The sack itself is recyclable, and the students can get involved by contributing sacks from home for the recycling effort.

Whether you choose bags or bins, place collection containers which are clearly marked for recycling in convenient locations **away** from trash containers.

STEP 7: SET GOALS FOR WASTE REDUCTION

Consider activities that prevent waste from being generated. Scroll down on this page to

see suggestions on what you can do in the classroom to reduce how much you throw out.

Examine the waste that is generated to determine which materials could be collected for recycling.

STEP 8: MONITOR AND EVALUATE

The Recycling Coordinator and the Task Force should monitor and evaluate the program regularly, with input from the staff and students. What is working well? Where can adjustments and improvements be made?

STEP 9: EDUCATE AND EDUCATE MORE!

Students may be out of the "at school recycling habit" and need to be reminded why to do it and how to do it. The ongoing education program should also focus on the value of waste reduction in general.

Be creative and have some fun!

TIPS FOR REDUCING WASTE AT SCHOOL:

- Use both sides of the paper when running student worksheets, tests, etc.
- Make note/scratch pads by cutting and stapling unused worksheets.
- Keep a scrap box for construction paper scraps to use in other projects.
- Use refillable mechanical pencils when practical.
- Keep a class set of rulers and/or scissors.
- Buy classroom supplies in bulk.
- Buy items with minimal packaging.
- Use coffee mugs and reusable glassware instead of disposable plastic or Styrofoam cups and dishware.
- As much as possible, send messages and notes electronically rather than on paper.
- Encourage students to bring snacks and lunches in reusable containers.
- Remove your name from mailing lists of unwanted material.
- Place information on announcement boards and circulate memos rather than making multiple copies.
- Encourage your school to buy recycled products.

WHY RECYCLE?

- Recycling mixed paper is an easy way for the schools to do their part in reducing the amount of waste sent to Iowa's landfills.
- If your district is already recycling cardboard, they are probably already paying for the service. This program is easy to implement because uncontaminated mixed paper goes directly into the same collection bin.
- Help your school - and teach your students - to be environmentally responsible!

