

A Guide to Recycling at School

Amended from the Paper Industry Association Council

Six Steps Toward Improving Your School's Recycling Program



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Learning the Basics

All Anne Arundel County Public Schools have the ability to recycle. Each school has at least one recycling dumpster and one trash dumpster on its premises. Just as their trash is collected on a routine basis, so are their recyclables.

In an effort to improve your school's program, the Recycling Division of Anne Arundel County Government has devised these guidelines to help schools improve their current school recycling efforts. Your school's recycling program is similar to your community's curbside or drop-off program which makes it even easier for students and their families to recycle more often at home and at school.

1. Gather the Facts

Identify recyclables

Conduct an audit to determine the amount and types of recyclables generated in your school. Take a look in the trash cans in your classrooms, staff offices, food service areas, libraries, and even the trash dumpster. This assessment will provide information about where most of the recyclables are generated.

Determine what to collect as recycling

Refer to the [Recycling Program](#) webpage for Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) for guidance on what is or is not recyclable in your school's program (www.aacps.org/html/press/recycling.asp) or contact your Operations Area Manager at 410-360-0138.

2. Design a Program

Generate school administration support

As you begin to design a program, it is important to enlist the support of school administrators, faculty, food services, and custodial staff. Then, determine the best way to collect recyclables.

Use the data gathered during the audit as well as discussions with teachers, students, and custodial staff to make sure you address their recycling barriers (i.e. reasons that keep them from recycling). These barriers often boil down to:

- ♻ Convenience. It must be easy to do.
- ♻ Being made aware of the benefits of recycling to the students, the school, the environment, and the community.
- ♻ Knowing what goes in the recycling container.
- ♻ Assurance that what is collected as recycling is in fact recycled.

Use this information to formulate a program and build ownership among school personnel and students.

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Designate a program coordinator

To help get things started, appoint a recycling coordinator and a supporting team. Your coordinator should be one who is willing to lead, manage, and coordinate the recycling effort and not be afraid of this hands-on experience. This person should be a staff member or a reliable and dedicated parent/volunteer. The coordinator and his/her team will be essential to the success of the program by providing organization, education, and enthusiasm for the recycling efforts.

Organize collection procedures

Work with administrative and custodial staff to create a collection system that encourages student participation and ensures easy collection of recyclable materials.

Things to consider:

- **Containers** – In many cases you already have them! If a classroom has two trash cans, you can convert one to become a recycling container and then educating all that use the space about recycling. Recycling bins should always be placed side-by-side with existing trash cans to avoid container misuse.
- **Collection points** - Determine how and where recyclables will be collected.
- **Training custodial staff** - Work with custodial staff to organize a manageable collection system. Provide properly labeled equipment and train custodial staff in new procedures.
- **Signage** - Encourage students to create signs for the recycling collection containers to heighten program visibility and show what materials are accepted for recycling. Be creative but consistent with your message. Encourage the students to use their artistry, humor, or whatever inspires them to make eye-catching signs that promote what you recycle, how easy it is to recycle, or why they should recycle.

3. Start it Up

Hold a kick-off event

When you're ready to begin the program, start with a kick-off event that includes students, faculty, custodial staff, parents, and community recycling leaders. This is an opportunity to build awareness, encourage program ownership, and educate your audience about what and how to recycle.

Involve students

Student participation will help generate enthusiasm for the program. Encourage students to monitor specific bins and assist with the collection of recyclables.

4. Education is Essential

Education is the most important part of any program. Educate students, faculty, food services, and custodial staff about the benefits of recycling and the specifics of the program.

- **Make presentations** - Invite a representative from the Operations Division, the County's Recycling Division, or your waste hauler to participate in a school assembly. Visit individual classrooms to demonstrate recycling procedures.
- **Share information** - Use the school newspaper, morning announcements, website, email, and student orientation to reinforce the importance of recycling at school.

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- **Use peer education** - Have older students teach younger classes about the school recycling program.
- **Arrange field trips** - Help teachers arrange student field trips to local recycling processors or the landfill, so they can see how the materials they recycle become new again in everyday products.
- **Focus on teachers** - Teacher acceptance and understanding of the program will help educate students. Use staff meetings, written communications, and in-service days to educate teachers about the program.
- **Engage students** - Organize a poster or slogan contest for the recycling program. Allow students to decorate a school hallway or bulletin board with recycling education information.
- **Monitor recycling bins** - Inspect bins regularly and create a system to remind students and faculty about appropriate recyclable materials.
- **Reinforce** - Take every opportunity to communicate the progress and success of the recycling program and praise positive actions.

5. Measure and Track Results

Keep track

Track results to evaluate your school's recycling program by monitoring the amount of material that is recovered for recycling.

- **Quantity recycled** - Compare recycling collection before and after implementing the recycling program to get data on the amount of material being diverted from trash disposal. Totals by classrooms, staff offices, or other generation points may be useful in looking for improvement.
- **Program acceptance and participation** - Monitor progress during the implementation of the program. Survey faculty, students, custodial staff, and your recycler to get feedback on program results.
- **Publicize recycling successes** - Positive feedback motivates participants to keep recycling.
- **Students and teachers** - Keep a running total and post monthly recycling figures to make students and faculty aware of the results of their efforts. Recognize recycling champions at school gatherings, faculty meetings, and in the school newspaper or website.
- **The community** - Provide regular updates to parents and community residents about program activities and successes through newspaper articles, community and school events, school newsletters, community emails, and presentations to parent organizations.
- **Nationally** - Enter your school recycling program in national recycling awards and competitions to bring recognition to the program's best practices and results, and to student leaders.

6. Keep It Up

Sustaining a school recycling program takes ongoing effort. Each time a new school year starts or students return from a long summer or holiday break, education needs to be reinforced. Use these tips to keep your recycling program on track:

- **Solve the "summer months" problem** – Develop ways to recruit students to your school's recycling team so that you are well staffed as the school year begins.

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- **Make it fun** - Motivate students with contests, classroom rewards, and personal recognition for achieving recycling goals.
- **Create a slogan** - Create a short, simple, and engaging slogan for your recycling effort and use it consistently. Build flexibility into the program - track results and be willing to make changes as the program grows or circumstances change.
- **Ask for feedback** - Survey students, faculty, and custodial staff about the program. What's working? What isn't? What would help to improve participation?
- **Include everyone** - Ensure that the program is not dependent on one champion to succeed. A recycling program needs the participation and ownership of the entire school.

Other online resources to consider as you begin your recycling program:

www.RecycleMoreOften.com

www.afandpa.org

www.kab.org

www.nrc-recycle.org

www.plt.org

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Examples of School Labels

