

## Cafeteria Recycling Checklist

- Set a Date** - Cafeteria recycling can start at any time of the year, certainly the earlier in the school year the better. Set a goal for a start date for cafeteria recycling. Consider school attendance, vacations, and proximity to when you plan to outreach to students.
  
- Ensure Support & Approval** - Find a time to get a key group of people involved in the initial plans. It's with this group of people that you'll need to clarify responsibilities, assign assistance, and garner support. Make sure the following people are involved:
  - Principal and/or Assistant Principal
  - Sustainability Coordinator
  - Custodian Engineer
  - School Food Manager
  - School Aides (if present in your cafeteria)
  
- Campus Buildings** - If there are multiple schools in your building, it's ideal to have every school participating in cafeteria recycling. Expand the above list to include the Sustainability Coordinators, and Principals and/or APs from the other schools. If you don't know who the other Sustainability Coordinators are, check with the school's principal.
  
- Cafeteria Culture** - Instituting cafeteria recycling can be a way to improve student behavior in the cafeteria. Identify what you would like to see changed in the cafeteria; litter, not cleaning up, food fights, running, fighting, etc. Recycling is a positive habit and can be combined with an increased administrative presence in the cafeteria to address these issues. Improving discipline in the cafeteria will transfer into better behavior in the classroom, and less time spent by School Food employees, custodians, and school aides cleaning up in between or after lunch periods.



# Recycling Champions Resources

**Materials & Setup**– Find, purchase, or assemble a cafeteria recycling station that best suits your school’s needs. Please see the “Cafeteria Recycling Set-Ups” guide for ideas and images.

- **Bins & Lids** - Additional large bins (usually gray 55 gallon Rubbermaid bins) and a smaller liquids bucket (to collect remaining milk and juice) can be found in the cafeteria kitchen or from your Custodian Engineer. Lids are highly recommended so as to distinguish recycling bins from trash bins, and limit recycling contamination. Holes can be cut into the center of lids.
- **Signage** - Can be downloaded from Recycling Champions or ordered from the NYC Department of Sanitation. Click on the “Download Signs and Posters” section of the Recycling Champions site. Any signs should be protected with lamination. If your school designs its own signs, consider consistency in messaging as important to developing habits, as well as longevity, you won’t want to be making new signs all the time.
- **Sorting Stations** - It’s best to make the sorting stations convenient and noticeable, student input here can be valuable. You may need an old desk or table to rest the liquid bucket on. Once recycling is launched, stations should be present everyday and bins should always remain together; they are not to be separated. Consistency will foster recycling habits, as well as allow for student participation to improve.

**Establish a Process** - Reach an agreement between School Food and the Custodial Staff regarding the following: In most NYC schools, School Food staff dump and rinse the liquids bucket at the end of the lunch periods while the custodial staff maintain clearing the bins, either after each lunch period or at the end of all lunches.

**Storage** of recyclables prior to pick up is important. Confirm with your Custodian Engineer when your Dept. of Sanitation pickup dates are for the blue stream recyclables (metal, glass, plastic, cartons). If there is resistance to storing recyclables, or other challenges, please contact the NYC Dept. of Sanitation (using the link in the trouble shooting guide) for a school walk through to help resolve logistical issues.

**Set a Goal & Measure Progress (Optional)** - It’s great to quantify your efforts as an educational resource for students and other schools, and as motivational tool. Please use the Carton Council’s Impact Estimate to quantify your baseline and establish a goal. This is located in the “Setup Cafeteria Recycling” section of the Recycling Champions webpage.



# Recycling Champions Resources

- Student Outreach** – NYC schools have taken a variety of approaches to student outreach. Please see the “Cafeteria Recycling Set-Ups” for more ideas and images, but here are the basics:

**When?** What strengths in your school schedule – advisory periods, assembly times, homerooms – exist when students can be introduced to the process? You could do outreach during lunch, or address entire grades during advisory periods. Whatever path your school chooses, remember that it is best to address all students in as concise a time frame as possible leading up to your launch date in the cafeteria.

**Where?** Could the cafeteria host a town hall during an advisory or homeroom period prior to lunch? Would it be better to host an event or town hall in the auditorium? In either case it’s best to setup a demo sorting station. If you’re using the cafeteria, then the sorting station can be in the location you intend.

**Who?** Involving student leaders in your outreach is a great way to legitimize the process; you may also need an administrative figure present to get students attention. If you’re planning on having students monitor the recycling to start, this would be a good time to involve them.

**What?** Launching cafeteria recycling can also be fun. Bring some positive energy to the lunch room by involving students, having a raffle, creating a temporary mural, etc. Remember to keep it simple, but feel free to be creative. Check out “Cafeteria Recycling Set-Ups” for more ideas.

- Inform & Update Staff** – Even if staff is not present cafeteria, it’s great to generate support and awareness by informing staff about cafeteria recycling. A pre-drafted letter is available in the “Setup Cafeteria Recycling” section of the Recycling Champions webpage. Staff can also be reminded of the cafeteria recycling efforts during the year and updated on any progress relating to your school’s recycling goals.

- Follow-Up** - Once your cafeteria recycling has launched, you may need to increase student participation or clarify any logistical issues with School Food or custodians. You can either check-in on progress during the week or work on monitoring recycling.

**Student Monitors:** A club or Green Team can serve as an effective way to remind students to sort and recycle. Keep in mind that a student presence is not sustainable and should be slowly reduced as student habits and participation increase. Similarly, please ask any School Aides or Assistant Principals that make announcements during lunch to briefly remind students to separate and recycle. Plugging a message every day makes a big difference.



# Recycling Champions Resources

