Classroom & Office

Recycling Setup Guide

On average, 90% of NYC school waste is recyclable, creating an opportunity to engage students and staff in developing a healthier NYC.

This guide outlines best practices developed and implemented in NYC Schools, so you and your students can recycle effectively.
Our Key Stakeholders are:

Principal or Assistant Principal: ____________________________

Sustainability Coordinator: ____________________________

Custodian Engineer: ____________________________

School Aides, Faculty, Green Team, etc. ____________________________

Classroom & Office recycling can start at any time of the year. The important thing is to set a goal to start, and communicate goals with your school community. Recruit a key group of people to be involved in the initial plans. It’s with this group of people that you’ll need to garner support, recruit additional participants and clarify responsibilities.

Remember, the important thing is just getting the conversation started! Some general questions you may want to ask are:

🌟 What are the biggest perceived challenges to recycling in your school? What if any are the real barriers?

🌟 What is working about the current process of recycling?

🌟 Where are the opportunities to improve recycling?

🌟 What are solutions that students, staff and faculty can help support?

🌟 If your school has a student Green Team, how can they help?

A three-stream system—New York City currently has a three-stream, color-coded residential system for recycling which is applicable to schools. This requires that we separate PAPER, METAL/GLASS/PLASTIC (includes cartons) and LANDFILL TRASH from each other. There should be designated bins for each of these materials to stay sorted, and custodial staff should be familiar with Department of Sanitation collection schedules for each type of material.

Organics Collection—There is a new Organics Collection Program in over 700 NYC schools that requires a fourth bin in the cafeteria for food scraps and food service paper, but does not affect classroom or office recycling at this time. Schools are added to the organics collection each year, so if you do not yet have the collection, your school will be added at a future date.

Where to Recycle—School recycling is required in all rooms and common areas, including hallways, gyms, auditoriums, classrooms, offices, faculty lounges, and cafeterias. For a more detailed guide on cafeteria recycling, visit www.grownyc.org/recyclingchampions/cafeteria.

NYC schools are required to recycle throughout the school building, including classrooms, cafeterias, and offices, as mandated by Local Laws 19, 41, 77 and Chancellor’s Regulation A-850.
Setting up the Proper Infrastructure

One way to look at improving recycling is to think of it in terms of A) Infrastructure and B) Education. Setting up an effective recycling system requires getting the infrastructure in place, which includes the bins and signage you need to make sorting recyclables easy and efficient.

CATER RECYCLING TO YOUR SCHOOL’S NEEDS

School buildings and practices vary widely in the NYC school system, so your recycling set up may vary from another school too.

Three vs. Two—Three-stream recycling, or three bin set-ups in both classrooms and hallways is the best practice for recycling infrastructure. If there are too many obstacles to set this up, it is also OK to have PAPER and TRASH recycling for classrooms and METAL/GLASS/PLASTICS (MGP) recycling in hallways, particularly in schools that do not allow any drinking or eating in the classroom. This decision is made together with the Custodian Engineer, Sustainability Coordinator and Principal of the school.

When students eat in classrooms, room allows, and purchasing multiple bins is an option, use a three bin collection system. Paper, MGP, and trash bins placed together with clearly marked signage offer convenience for both students and faculty. The custodial staff will need to set up a routine for collecting, storing and bringing recyclables to the curb or EZ Pack dumpster.

When students do not eat in classrooms, or there is a limited budget for bin purchasing, adding a paper recycling bin is the first priority. Make sure there is a hallway recycling bin for MGP (metal, glass, plastics) nearby.

BIN PURCHASING & ACQUISITION

Do you have all the bins that you need? Complete an inventory of the bins already at your school. This will help you assess the need for any additional bins so that each room has a recycling area. Don’t forget recycling bins for the hallways, offices and other common areas.

Figure out what bins your school already has by using the Recycling Champions Bin Tally sheet, provided in the RCP website. Engage students in this activity— they can help complete this assessment.

For a sample bin tally sheet: www.grownyc.org/files/rcp/ BinTallySheet.pdf

Check with your Custodian Engineer, there might be bins hiding in the basement or in a closet. If more bins need to be purchased, talk to your custodian about purchasing options from the SDI Catalog.
It is important that all bins are clearly and consistently labeled. How do we know “which bin does it go in?” if the bins are not clearly marked. You can check out the Recycling Champions’ Signs and Posters section on our website or DSNY’s Resources for Recycling section to order and/or print out signs. Remember, always follow the city’s color-code system in your signage and labels: Green for Paper, Blue for Metal, Glass, Plastics, Cartons, and Gray/black for LandfillTrash.

To order free signs and decals from DSNY, visit www.nyc.gov/html/nycwasteless/html/recycling/schools.shtml

**BEST PRACTICE: CONSISTENT SET-UPS & SIGNAGE**

- **Consistency is important for students to form positive recycling habits.** Make recycling easier for students, faculty and custodial staff by following these simple tips...
  - Recycling bins should exist anywhere there is a trash bin.
  - Make sure bins are labeled on and above bins.
  - Keep bins together and in the same place every day.
  - Never use a recycling bin for trash.

**PICK-UP SCHEDULES FOR RECYCLING & TRASH**

Did you know that pick-up schedules can vary from school to school? These depend on location routes, curbside or dumpster pick-up programs. Ask your custodial engineer or consult DSNY’s Recycling Collection Services for schools.

*Custodian Engineer works together with Sustainability Coordinator to improve recycling at K686.*
INVOLVE KEY FACULTY & STAFF

It’s important to involve a key group of people on a recycling initiative, especially at the beginning. Support is also critical to making sure recycling happens from year to year. Look to your initial group of stakeholders before conducting your student outreach. Remember, recycling is easy and it’s mandated by law.

Faculty Outreach—Informing faculty and staff of the importance of recycling is a key step to a sustainable recycling program. Faculty set the rules in a classroom and the culture throughout the school. Students graduate, but faculty model and maintain positive behavior year after year. If faculty and staff are recycling, students are more likely to do so as well.

Start with an upcoming faculty or staff meeting to get everyone on the same page. Ask your Principal for some time to speak with staff. The amount of time needed depends on what you would like to present. Some useful ways of communicating recycling efforts to faculty are:

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<tr>
<th>MEMOS</th>
<th>PRESENTATIONS</th>
<th>5-MINUTE OVERVIEW</th>
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<td>Useful when there is not much time to communicate with faculty in person, or as a reminder of an important recycling event. A sample faculty letter can be found on the RCP website.</td>
<td>Ideal when allocated a good amount of time (20 minutes or more) to address faculty on recycling. Visit RCP’s website for a sample power point.</td>
<td>Even a couple of minutes of talking to your co-workers can go a long way. So if there is a full agenda on the next faculty meeting, ask for these 5 minutes.</td>
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Remember to mention that recycling is easy. It doesn’t require more work from staff, and even the youngest student can recycle. Faculty can take a couple of minutes with their students at the beginning of each semester to discuss the sorting system for recycling in New York City, along with best practices for recycling in classrooms.

RECYCLING BEST PRACTICES

- Keep bins close together.
- Always keep bins in the same place.
- Make recycling a classroom rule.

Feel the need for outside support? Please reach out to GrowNYC for additional support and/or resources: schoolrecycling@grownyc.org
STUDENT OUTREACH

Schools have many different options to engage students in recycling. These may include but are not limited to: environmental or leadership clubs, special events, classroom science or civic lessons, community service requirements, or meetings and announcements that are already in your schedule.

Assemblies—Assemblies are a great way to kick off a recycling campaign. Student outreach can be done briefly during an assembly on another topic, or an assembly can focus solely on recycling. You can show a video, movie, have students present information, invite an organization, or use an RCP PowerPoint. Some students create a song, skit or activity for assemblies, which promotes peer-to-peer learning. Assemblies can include instructional information, or what to recycle and how, along with a fun activity or film clip.

Classroom Workshops—Faculty can also address students simultaneously during a certain block of classes. This ensures that all students will be addressed, and that they receive the same information.

Student Involvement

Some of the best outreach ideas for students come from their peers. Be sure to consult with green-minded student groups, or leadership clubs for ideas and help. Students can also help directly with the outreach whenever possible.

Take Action!

Follow-up your assembly with immediate action. Some schools have students go back to their classrooms to assemble bins or hang signage. If students are learning and feeling empowered, then they should be able to take action as soon as possible.

Some tasks include:

- Morning announcements about recycling
- Poster-making sessions
- Create/participate in school recycling contests
- Distribute signs and bins to teachers or office staff.
- Establish a student bin or classroom monitor system

To have a Recycling Champions Coordinator speak at your school, please email: schoolrecycling@grownyc.org
**OFFICE RECYCLING**

The office is that space where parents, special guests, students and staff gather each school day. It is an important place to showcase your efforts, as recycling reflects on the culture of the school community.

In an office work space, it is important to have at least one Metal, Glass, Plastics bin. Paper and Trash bins, though, should always be close together, and located near or under desks, workstations and copiers.

**Inclusion of Administrative Staff** - Administrative Assistants and other office staff are often very busy, and may be unaware of the recycling initiatives going on in the rest of the school. Take the time to include them in the recycling campaign. Some schools have students regularly visit the office to remind staff to recycle, which incentivizes and rewards participation. Students can serve in a leadership role as they develop relationships with school staff.

**NEXT STEPS**

Recycling is one of the easiest things you can do while having a big impact on the Earth. Maintaining recycling throughout the whole school year, and throughout the building, is an ongoing process. The *Recycling Champions Troubleshooting Guide* provided on our website can help with additional advice on how to keep your recycling program going strong all year long.

⭐ Together, we can all become Recycling Champions!

For more resources and downloadable Green Team tools, check out the Recycling Champions webpage:

www.GrowNYC.org/RecyclingChampions