

Classroom & Office Recycling Follow-up and Troubleshooting

Once your school has set up classroom and office recycling, the most important thing to keep in mind is that consistency and reinforcement are keys to success. In order to ensure that classroom and office recycling truly become incorporated into a school's culture, make recycling a day to day habit for students and faculty. Here are some helpful tips:

- ✓ **Recycling is a community effort** – if faculty and students are doing a good job of keeping materials separate, then the custodial staff can see that materials get to the appropriate dumpster or curbside location.
- ✓ **Check in with your fellow faculty** at your monthly or biweekly faculty meetings in order to address any challenges they may be facing with regard to recycling. Try to include school recycling as a part of the meeting agenda. Get a feel for how students are reacting to the new changes and provide encouraging words and helpful advice to teachers who may need support.
- ✓ **Schedule consistent check-in meetings with your custodian** to get a sense of how successful the recycling program is in your school. Make an effort to schedule these meetings on a biweekly or monthly basis. This is an excellent way to keep the lines of communication open.
- ✓ **Continue to make recycling fun**
 - Create an incentive system for the class/grade that is most proactive in their recycling efforts. For example, offer classes field trips, pizza parties, homework passes, etc.
 - Have students make daily announcements
 - Organize a class trip to the Sims Municipal Recycling facility in Brooklyn.
 - Engage faculty in fun ways to integrate recycling into curriculum requirements, so it is not an additional activity.



Students at MS 194 Bronx create posters for a recycling campaign

TROUBLESHOOTING

While recycling is one of the easiest things a school can do, each school is faced with unique circumstances to setting up a model recycling program. This guide addresses common problems and corresponding solutions that may arise as you implement recycling in your classrooms, common areas, and office spaces. If you come across a problem that is not addressed, please contact GrowNYC's Recycling Champions Program, schoolrecycling@grownyc.org.

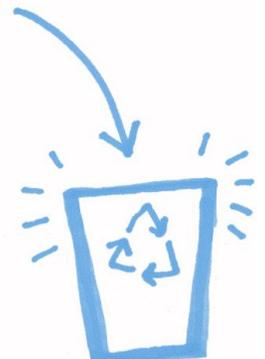
I. Lack of Support

Problem: I am trying to start a recycling program at my school, but I am not getting enough support from faculty and administration

Possible Solutions:

- **Check the school's Sustainability Plan.** Every public school in NYC must submit an annual Sustainability Plan signed by your Principal, Sustainability Coordinator, and Custodian Engineer. This document outlines the specific requirements of school recycling as in compliance with Local Law 19 (1989), 41 (2010), 77 (2014) and Chancellor's Regulation A-850 (2010). Circulate the plan and discuss it publicly. If you're having difficulty locating this plan, email the NYC Department of Education Sustainability Initiative, sustainability@schools.nyc.gov
- **Create a sustainability team by enlisting the help of fellow faculty, staff, or students.** Having a group of engaged participants will help you present your case to the principal. With students or colleagues you can request a brief meeting with the administration to solicit their support and outline your plan.
- **Outside Agencies & Organizations.**
 - The NYC DOE Sustainability Initiative
<http://schools.nyc.gov/community/facilities/sustainability/default.htm>
 - The NYC Department of Sanitation
http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycwasteless/html/stuff/infofor_schools.shtml
 - GrowNYC's Recycling Champions Program
<http://www.grownyc.org/rcp>

These groups, along with other City agencies and non-profits, hold annual recycling trainings for Custodian Engineers, SchoolFood Managers, and Sustainability Coordinators from all five boroughs, and have a wide variety of resources, tools, and outreach specialists that are readily available.





II. Contamination

Problem: Trash and recycling are mixed together when collected from rooms

Possible Solutions:

- Speak with your custodians and the building’s Custodian Engineer. Make sure there aren’t two bags in one collection. Some schools don’t have additional bins to use on each floor for collection, so they keep a separate bag for paper on the outside of a bin, or even inside. Sometimes custodians will also collect trash and recycling on different rounds around each floor.
- Recycling can become contaminated. Check to make sure the recycling is not being treated as trash by custodians because it was contaminated with liquid or excessive trash.
 - Custodian Engineers can issue a second, large 55 gallon bin as part of the evening cleanup. The bins are on wheels, and can be joined together or moved together using a tandem dolly. Ask your Custodian Engineer to label collection bins appropriately, so it is clear which is for trash and which is for recyclables.
 - Ask your Custodian Engineer to speak with the evening crew about collection, reminding the staff to maintain separation of trash and recyclables. Custodian engineers can also write formal letters to their crew and to school staff to remind them of the importance of separation.
 - If the problem persists, please request a site visit from the NYC Department of Sanitation: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycwasteless/html/recycling/outreach.shtml>



Custodian Engineer at P.S. 125X bought attachments for the trash bins to collect blue stream recyclables.



Tandem dolly used for collection of trash and recyclables from classrooms and offices.

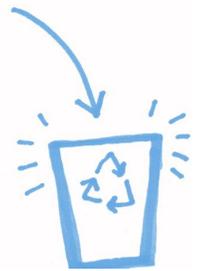


III. NYC Department of Sanitation Collection

Problem: I am unsure of when our school's recycling is collected by the NYC Department of Sanitation

Possible Solution:

- Check with your Custodian Engineer to inquire about the collection schedule, they should have a detailed schedule of the different days that recycling and trash is collected. Most schools are on a dedicated school collection route which means recycling is not collected every day, so the custodial crew may not collect recyclables every day.
- For most schools, **mixed paper and cardboard** are picked up on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. **Metal, glass, plastic, and cartons (MGP)** are picked up on Tuesday and Thursday. Your school's schedule may also depend on whether your recyclables are stored in EZ pack dumpsters or are placed on the curb. **MGP** is never placed in EZ Pack containers.
- For schools enrolled in the Organics Collection program, food scraps are collected nightly (Monday through Friday) by the NYC Department of Sanitation.



IV. Lack of Storage

Problem: There is not enough space to store recyclables prior to pickup by the NYC Dept. of Sanitation

Possible Solutions:

- Suggest to your custodian engineer that recyclables be collected on days that recyclables are regularly picked up from the NYC Department of Sanitation.
- Consider the school property and grounds. Is there an indoor storage space reasonably close to where recyclables will be set out for collection? There may also be space outside of the building, but within the fenced property of the school, that could be utilized. If either of these options can be used, then be sure to label the area using NYC Dept. of Sanitation recycling and waste labels.
- If a storage location cannot be found, it's best to schedule a walk-through from a NYC Dept. of Sanitation representative, by visiting the following site:
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycwasteless/html/recycling/outreach.shtml>.
- A walk-through can also be scheduled with your school's Deputy Director of Facilities (DDF). The principal and custodian engineer both know who the DDF is and how to contact them.
- One common issue with EZ Pack dumpsters used for paper recycling is that boxes are not always broken down. Custodian Engineers can remind their evening crews to break down boxes before



bundling them, or putting them in an EZ Pack dumpster or clear bag.

- Every year, Custodian Engineers from all five boroughs attend a mandatory recycling training. Your Custodian Engineer is familiar with the rules and regulations behind recycling. Engage him in the process and work together with him to make the school more sustainable.

V. Metal, Glass, Plastic, Carton (MGP) Items in Classrooms

Problem: Some students or classes eat lunch or snack in classrooms. Students consume outside drinks and snacks in classrooms. How can we make sure that lunch and snack items get recycled?

Possible Solution:

- Find out from your principal, or have a conversation to decide, what your school policy is on eating and outside food and drinks in the classroom is. Some schools allow this, others do not. If your school allows eating and drinking, then the waste must be managed correctly, which includes recycling whatever possible.



- If food and drink is allowed in classrooms, then separate, labeled blue bins for MGP must be setup in every classroom or as common area collection points in hallways. If there is a large amount of waste generated from breakfast or a special event or meeting, then extra clear bags can be provided by the custodial staff in order to keep recyclables separate.

- Send a memo out detailing the school wide protocol for teachers, staff, and students to follow. Faculty and staff can be informed of the policy and next steps at the next staff meeting. This is also an excellent way to reinforce behavior that students exhibit in the cafeteria. If your school has already started a system of recycling in the cafeteria, then these same behaviors will be reinforced in the classroom as well. If not, it will serve as a pilot to get cafeteria recycling implemented.

MGP bins for commons areas at the High School for Visual Arts, Bronx

- In offices, establish a place in common areas where faculty and staff can dispose of their metal, glass, plastic, and carton recycling. Proper signage at these stations will ensure that teachers know what items can be recycled.

VI. Student Participation

Problem: I am having trouble engaging students

Possible Solutions: Keep in mind that recycling is about developing a habit that can be practiced every day. Recycling gives students a hands-on opportunity to practice stewardship and develop their leadership skills. It also gives teachers an opportunity to engage different types of learners with different skill sets. Here are some



small but practical solutions:

- **Increase Signage:** Additional or larger signage can be a quick and easy way to catch student’s attention. These signs, if posted above a bin, also serve as a marker, for custodial staff, for where the bins should be located. Also a student group or an art class can create awareness through the use of posters and murals.
- **Involve Faculty:** Faculty can quickly address large numbers of students through their classes. Organize a date for staff to uniformly speak with students about recycling as a classroom rule. Enlist the support of your principal in your efforts, and start by sending faculty a reminder email or memo, emphasizing the importance of recycling and the best practices listed below.
- **Set a date for a recycling drive or campaign.** For example, collecting and donating clothing and textiles to Wearable Collections could help spark an interest in recycling. Encourage a healthy competition between classes to see which class can bring in the most textiles. Or, just set a date to celebrate recycling at your school, e.g. “P.S. 9 Recycles Day!”
- **Form a Green Team.** Create a forum/collective for motivated students can be a great help to accomplishing recycling and other green projects. You can also incorporate recycling activities into preexisting clubs or homerooms as part of the effort to green the school.
- **Student to student outreach.** Is there a class or group of students or a club that could deliver simple presentations in classes around the school? Students could earn community service hours for these activities. Furthermore, mentoring younger students is a great way for older students to assume a leadership role.
- Involve an outside organization for a performance or presentation. Contact GrowNYC, schoolrecycling@grownyc.org, to find out more.



A Brooklyn International High School student distributes recycling bins to classrooms.



P.S. 47 and C.S. 92 Bronx use bulletin boards to educate the school community about recycling.

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

www.GrowNYC.org/RecyclingChampions