

GUIDE TO GET
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
ON BOARD WITH RECYCLING





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*LOOKING TO GET YOUR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP
TO BUY-IN TO A RECYCLING PROGRAM?*

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO MAKE IT A SUCCESS.

*IF YOU ARE A PARENT, TEACHER, OR SCHOOL STAFF MEMBER CONSIDERING
TAKING ACTIVE STEPS TO BEGIN YOUR PROGRAM, THIS GUIDE WILL HELP
PREPARE YOU TO EXPLAIN YOUR VISION FOR A RECYCLING PROGRAM TO
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS.*

*THE CHECKLIST AND RESOURCES ON THE FOLLOWING
PAGES ARE A GREAT PLACE TO START.*

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SAMPLE MEMO TO STAFF FROM ADMINISTRATOR

SAMPLE LETTER TO VOLUNTEERS

SCHOOL RECYCLING PLAN STARTER CHECKLIST

TAKE THESE FIRST STEPS TO START THE PROCESS OF LEARNING HOW RECYCLING WORKS IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND PREPARING TO BRING OTHERS ON BOARD WITH YOUR NEW PROGRAM. FOLLOW THE LINKS FOR MORE INFORMATION.

- ✓ Check to see if your school, city, or state has sustainability/zero waste goals
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the [benefits of a school recycling program](#)
- ✓ Be able to explain how sponsored school recycling program's such as [Recycle Rally](#) can benefit your school.
- ✓ Research what kind of recycling resources are available in your community (calling your town office or local department of public works is a great place to start).
- ✓ Identify potential [partners within the school](#) (PTA, janitorial, willing teachers, etc.)
- ✓ Request a [meeting with your Principal](#) (or other key decision maker)



“ONE OF THE THINGS THAT I LOVE ABOUT THE RECYCLE RALLY IS THAT EVERY KID CAN BE A PART OF THIS TEAM! IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE YOU COME FROM, NO MATTER YOUR ACTIVITIES OR INTERESTS EVERYONE CAN PARTICIPATE.”

- CHRIS VAIL, PRAIRIE VIEW ELEMENTARY GREEN TEAM, OGALLALA, NEBRASKA.

SCHOOL RECYCLING BENEFITS

RECYCLING DOESN'T COST AS MUCH AS YOU THINK

- School recycling programs can save money on garbage collection by keeping recyclables out of the trash can.
 - Over a couple of years of recycling and composting, Sioux Trail Elementary School went from producing enough trash to fill a four-yard dumpster daily to only filling a one-yard dumpster weekly.¹
 - “Recycling was the catalyst for our school's ongoing waste diversion and sustainability program. Since 2007, we've expanded recycling from simply collecting paper to recycling plastic bottles, aluminum cans, and even composting food waste. In addition to recycling, we performed waste audits and right-sized our waste pick-ups. As a result, our school has seen approximately 20% savings by diverting garbage from the waste stream, right-sizing dumpsters and reducing the number of weekly collection. Overall, our school had a renewed interest in doing the right thing.”
— Lisa Johnson, School District I97 Sustainability Manager, Dakota County Schools
- Students, organizations, and/or clubs can be the drivers for recycling programs, saving staff time.
- Partnering with your city, county or non-profit organizations can save money.
- Programs, such as Recycle Rally, can offer rewards and opportunities to earn cash prizes that can directly benefit the school.

USING RECYCLING AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LEARNING TAKES EDUCATION TO THE NEXT LEVEL

- Recycle Rally provides an array of related lessons that may be able to be utilized in the classroom.
- Recycling engages kids in deeper educational lessons in math, science, civics and practical application. For example, it may be easier to teach certain math, science and social studies lessons by relating them to students' practical, hands-on experience with sorting, counting, weighing recyclables and tracking progress, working toward goals, etc.
- Students can help weigh and measure how much they recycle, and graph and project trends, conduct experiments, develop and test hypotheses, and more.
- Students can reference resources and tools to translate their efforts into the impact on society in different terms that might be easier for them to relate to (amount of greenhouse gases avoided in terms of number of trees planted, amount of energy saved in terms of houses powered for a year, etc.)

RECYCLING PROGRAMS CAN HELP DEVELOP STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS.

- Recycling reinforces environmental themes that students learn about in school.
- Many schools have shared feedback that a student-led green team that supports recycling programs encourages leadership and organizational skills.
- Practicing skills like teamwork, organizational management, math, science, marketing and presentation skills, students can rapidly improve their school's recycling and participation rates.
- Recycling serves as an example of the connections between individual actions and environmental stewardship. Support of a recycling program will manifest these lessons into practical application, teaching our students to be good stewards of our planet.

A RECYCLING PROGRAM CAN ENHANCE YOUR SCHOOLS CONNECTION TO THE COMMUNITY

- Involving parents and afterschool clubs in the promotion and operation of the recycling program connects your community with a common sustainability goal.
- Rewards from the program can be used to assist groups like the PTA or after-school programs or other organizations to raise funds and support your school's efforts.
- Students will learn about an important industry and all the steps people involved in making it happen.
- Recycling doesn't stop at the recycling bin! It takes a village to collect, process, and remanufacture these items into new, usable items.
- Parents and other community members share common concerns about sustainability and stewardship. They can be involved in the recycling programs as volunteers. They can help promote the program, volunteer to transport, or keep track of recycling to make it easier for schools to calculate their impact.
- Increasing recycling and involving your community to make a positive difference can also drive positive media exposure for your school or opportunities to earn recognition from outside organizations.

REACHING OUT TO RECYCLING STAKEHOLDERS

ONE OF THE FIRST STEPS IN MAKING RECYCLING HAPPEN AT YOUR SCHOOL IS ENGAGING WITH YOUR SCHOOL'S PRINCIPAL. PRINCIPALS WILL OFFER A VALUABLE WINDOW INTO CURRENT PRACTICE, AS WELL AS NEEDS IN CREATING AND SUSTAINING STUDENT-DRIVEN RECYCLING SYSTEMS IN YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL COMMUNITY. YOU'LL BE HARD-PRESSED TO FIND A SCHOOL LEADER OF WHOM DOESN'T HAVE A DESIRE TO PROMOTE EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS THAT RESULT IN LESS WASTE. HOWEVER, THE ROLE OF A PRINCIPAL IS COMPREHENSIVE WITH COMPETING INSTRUCTIONAL, SAFETY, AND COMPLIANCE DEMANDS, AND S/HE CAN'T DO IT ALONE. S/HE WILL LIKELY NEED THE SUPPORT AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL, AS WELL AS YOUR SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE IN GETTING THE PROGRAM UP AND RUNNING.

A GOOD PLACE TO BEGIN IS BY SETTING UP A MEETING WITH THE PRINCIPAL. THE GOAL OF THE FIRST MEETING WITH THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR IS IN PART SELLING THE VALUE OF RECYCLING (IF NECESSARY), BUT THE GREATER PART IS INFORMATION-SEEKING ABOUT HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN. YOUR PRINCIPAL CAN BE A VALUABLE SUPPORTER AND HELP NAVIGATE HOW TO MAKE RECYCLING HAPPEN.

A [sample email to the principal](#) is included in this guide as a starting point to reach out and set up a meeting. Plus, the questions below will offer some ideas for key questions you may want to explore while engaging your school leader, as well as communicating that you are a partner in this process.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR ENGAGING WITH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR/PRINCIPAL

FOR SCHOOLS THAT ARE NOT CURRENTLY RECYCLING:

- What would you envision as an ideal recycling program at our school?
- What steps would we need to take to implement a recycling program?
- What are the primary barriers you would expect to encounter?
- Who do you think some champions would be?
- Which other stakeholders in the district need to be engaged to make this initiative successful, in which order should I contact them, and how do you recommend I reach out to them? (Be sure to record the names and contact information of those key stakeholders in the [Stakeholder List](#) and ask your principal to help make introductions)

Possible responses...

- School Business Administrator
- Facilities Director
- Custodial Supervisor
- Superintendent
- How can I (as parent/teacher/community member) help you to make this happen? What next steps do you recommend? (Principals can't do it alone – they will likely rely on you to push the program forward)
 - Let the principal know that there are [template memos they can use to notify staff](#) when a recycling program is ready to launch
 - Have your principal review and approve your [email to recruit potential volunteers](#) before sending.

REACHING OUT TO RECYCLING STAKEHOLDERS

FOR SCHOOLS THAT ARE CURRENTLY RECYCLING

- What does recycling look like now in school? Classroom? Cafeteria?
- Where does it work well? Why do you think it works?
- What's not working? Why, in your opinion, is it not working? OR What are the major roadblocks to sustainable student-driven recycling in the school?

Possible responses from principal's perspective...

- Kids don't know how
- Kids don't understand the WHY
- Teachers don't reinforce it in the classroom
- Classroom might not have proper bins
- Custodians might be collecting classroom bins and dump into one bin at night when cleaning—what's their accountability/incentive?
- Who is regularly supervising and supporting this learning process for kids?
- Which other stakeholders in the district need to be engaged to make this initiative successful, in which order should I contact them, and how do you recommend I reach out to them? (Be sure to record the names and contact information of those key stakeholders in the [Stakeholder List](#) and ask your principal to help make introductions)

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AFTER MEETING WITH YOUR PRINCIPAL, FOLLOW UP (EITHER THROUGH THE PRINCIPAL OR DIRECTLY IF ALLOWED) WITH EACH OF THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS RECOMMENDED BY THE PRINCIPAL AND WORK WITH THEM TO DEVELOP THE SYSTEMS NEEDED TO SUPPORT A SUCCESSFUL RECYCLING PROGRAM!



STAKEHOLDER LIST

Identifying key stakeholders for recycling – i.e. those who play a critical role in recycling and/or those who have an interest in supporting recycling at your school – will help you to make sure that these important people are part of the decision making process. Below is a list of a few people who may be important stakeholders at your school.

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL/ADMINISTRATOR

Name: _____ Title: _____

Contact information: _____

MAINTENANCE CONTACT

Name: _____

Contact information: _____

HEAD OF NUTRITION/CAFETERIA/FOOD SERVICES

Name: _____

Contact information: _____

SUPPORTIVE TEACHERS

Name: _____

Contact information: _____

Name: _____

Contact information: _____

Name: _____

Contact information: _____

STAKEHOLDER LIST

HEAD OF PTA

Name: _____

Contact information: _____

DISTRICT-LEVEL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

Name: _____

Contact information: _____

SCHOOL FACILITIES DIRECTOR

Name: _____

Contact information: _____

CUSTODIAL SUPERVISOR

Name: _____

Contact information: _____

CONTACT FROM SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

Name: _____

Contact information: _____

CONTACT FROM PROCUREMENT OFFICE

Name: _____

Contact information: _____

LETTER TO PRINCIPAL/ADMINISTRATOR

DEAR PRINCIPAL _____,

More than 50 percent of waste generated by schools is likely recyclable. As a _____ I am committed to help find solutions to encourage recycling at _____. Recycling saves resources and money and teaches our school community to be responsible for the waste they generate.

While starting a recycling program may seem like an overwhelming undertaking, I've learned that many schools find starting a recycling program is no different than collecting trash, except for the designated bins. Our school has a great opportunity to participate in the Recycle Rally Program and get free recycling container labels as well as opportunities to earn rewards as we recycle. Recycle Rally can also connect our resources to help us get our program up and running.

_____ can benefit from beginning a school recycling program in lots of ways:

- Creating a cleaner and more sustainable school
- Potential cost savings on reduced garbage collection
- Engaging kids in deeper educational lessons in math, science, civics and practical application
- Teaching students leadership and organizational skills
- Reinforcing environmental themes that students learn about in school
- Fostering a sense of community by involving parents and afterschool clubs in recycling promotion and operation
- Playing an active role in preserving natural resources

In casual discussions with _____ I've found that they, too are excited about this possibility and ready to pitch in.

Our students deserve to learn how to be good stewards of the planet; our teachers and administration can guide them through this process. As the leader of our school, your support of this program is essential in the success of this initiative. I would like to discuss this further at your convenience.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR VALUABLE TIME,



“WE CANNOT SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS WITH THE SAME THINKING WE USED WHEN WE CREATED THEM.”

- ALBERT EINSTEIN, PHYSICIST

SAMPLE LETTER TO VOLUNTEERS:

DEAR _____ ***VOLUNTEER,***

We are excited to announce that our school is beginning a recycling program for students, teachers, and faculty. Your children will have the opportunity to actively participate and learn valuable lessons while reducing the amount of waste our school generates.

Our school is participating in the Recycle Rally Program where we are eligible for reward points based on the number of bottles and cans we recycle. Your support can bring our school to the top of the leaderboard, which means more rewards for our students and the school.

We seek parents, volunteer groups, teachers, and community volunteers to assist us in this endeavor by signing up for shifts to transport recyclables to their final destination:

Please sign up by emailing your contact information and preferred shift to: _____

or use this free volunteer sign-up application: _____

Thank you for your assistance in improving recycling, empowering students, and creating meaningful educational opportunities for our school!

Together, with your help, we look forward to making our school a cleaner, greener place for learning.

SINCERELY,

