



ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOL RECYCLING TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

A first glance, implementing recycling is a relatively easy task for a school to accomplish, however, each school is faced with unique circumstances which need to be addressed before setting up a model 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 by this guide please contact the Orange County Recycling Coordinator at esiljkovic@orangecountygov.com

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

Potential Responses:

- 1) **According to Chapter 70, Laws of NY 1988 as well as O.C. Local Law No. 2, public, educational institutions are required to source separate and recycle materials collected in their local recycling program.** Check if the school already has a recycling program in place. If not, encourage your administration that in order to comply with the law, a functioning recycling program must be established.
- 2) **Create a sustainability team enlisting the help of fellow faculty, staff and/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.
- 3) **Enlist the aid of County agencies and organizations:**

Orange County Recycling Coordinator – Ermin Siljkovic
esiljkovic@orangecountygov.com (845) 291-3246

Orange County Water Authority – Eenika Cruz
ecruz@orangecountygov.com (845) 615-3868



The above contacts can help you develop an outreach plan for school administrators and as well as conduct recycling outreach to custodian engineers, school food managers, administrators, teachers and students.

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 total school community effort** – if faculty and students are doing a good job of keeping materials separate, then the custodial staff can ensure that materials get to the appropriate dumpster or curbside location.

► **Check in with 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.** 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.

► **Make recycling fun!**

- Create an incentive system for the class/grade that is most proactive in their recycling efforts. For example, offer field trips, pizza parties, homework passes, etc.
- Have students make daily announcements.
- Organize a class trip to the County Waste Transfer Station in Goshen.
- Engage faculty in fun ways to integrate recycling into curriculum requirements, so it is not an additional activity.



School aged residents touring OCTS#1



II. Contamination

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

Potential Responses:

- 1) **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 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.
- 2) **Prevent contamination of recycling and mixing with trash/refuse.** 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 O.C. Recycling Coordinator.



Synching collection with bin placement can increase efficiency and output of recyclables.

III. Collection of waste off-site (recyclables and refuse) by hired carter

Problem(s): I am unsure of when our school's recycling is collected or if it is even being recycled. Also, can I get a better deal on my waste hauling contract?

Potential Responses:

- 1) **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. If not, inquire as to how he or she goes about requesting service.
- 2) **Work with the Custodian Engineer in developing a rapport with the carting company.** Inquire with them as to what they accept and where materials are currently being tipped. This will give you a better idea on how they prefer the materials be set out.
- 3) **Negotiate a new contract.** If an effective recycling program is in place, why not share in the benefits of lower fees at the tip? Leverage a better rate from prospective carters by including language in your next bid for waste hauling services demonstrating your dedication to source separation and minimal contamination of recyclables.

IV. Lack of Storage

Problem: There is not enough space to store recyclables prior to pick-up by our hauler.

Potential Responses:

- 1) **Much of the space in bags full of recyclables is taken by air.** Deflate bags before tossing in container. Also, collapse boxes and flatten cardboard to provide more room in containers.
- 2) **Suggest to your custodian engineer that recyclables be collected on days that recyclables are regularly picked up by the hauler.**
- 3) **Consider other space on 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 with signage indicating it is for storage of recyclables.

V. Student Participation

Problem: I am having trouble engaging students.

Potential 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 skills sets. Here are some 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 up a recycling drive or campaign.** For example, setting up a clothing drive with a local charity as part of the ReClotheNY initiative. Encourage a health competition between classes to see which class can bring in the most textiles or just set a date to celebrate recycling at your school.

► **Form a Green Team.** Creating 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 a group that could deliver simple presentations in classes around the school? Furthermore, mentoring younger students is great way for older students to assume a leadership role and develop skills preparing them for the future.

► **Enlist the Orange County Water Authority.** OCWA can provide county school district elementary school classes with education modules on recycling as well as on water conservation. Contact Eenika Cruz (see contact info above) to schedule a series of education modules for your elementary school.

► **Organize a recycling field day.** There are plenty of other ways to learn about recycling other than in a classroom. On a nice day, come outside and coordinate a recycling relay race or another activity. Similar events can be conducted indoors in gymnasiums along with game shows and other interactive games. Contact O.C. Recycling Coordinator Ermin Siljkovic for assistance.

