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HOW TO RECYCLE IN SCHOOLS

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Many municipalities have successful recycling programs, but what about the "community within the community": our schools? By adopting recycling programs, schools can establish and reinforce environmentally sound practices throughout students' lives, giving them the opportunity to continue this behavior as adults. This bulletin serves as a reference for schools interested in starting a student-run school recycling program.

WHY RECYCLE AT SCHOOL?

The definition of recycling is to remove materials from the waste stream and put them to new uses. By adopting recycling programs, schools not only remove materials from the waste stream but they also:

- ⊕ reduce disposal costs;
- ⊕ save valuable landfill space;
- ⊕ conserve natural resources;
- ⊕ provide educational opportunities; and
- ⊕ empower students.

13 STEPS TO SUCCESS

Step 1: Join the School Recycling Club

The School Recycling Club (THE CLUB) is designed to give school groups a chance to promote, advance, network, and stimulate school recycling. Members can:

- ⊕ Get the latest news and learn about technology advances in the world of recycling;
- ⊕ Gain recognition for the school's recycling efforts;
- ⊕ Receive technical assistance for the school; and
- ⊕ Learn about free educational resources.

Contact Northeast Resource Recovery Association (NRRA) at 603-736-4401 or send an email to theclub@nrna.net to join THE CLUB!

Step 2: Select a School Recycling Coordinator

The success of implementing a school recycling program depends upon the work of an enthusiastic and knowledgeable coordinator. School recycling coordinators include teachers, principals, school staff, and outside volunteers. The coordinator oversees the day-to-day operations of the school's recycling program including: organizing meetings, researching market information, training staff and students, providing adult supervision of the students involved.

Step 3: To Recycle or Not to Recycle

The recycling coordinator must now introduce the possibility of adopting a school recycling program to the principal. When meeting with the principal, explain the advantages of school recycling programs and emphasize that don't want to make more work for anyone.

Step 4: Take Your Idea to the People

Once the principal supports the program, introduce the idea to the staff at a full staff meeting. If the staff does not support the program, it may not succeed. Use open ended statements to discuss the program, thus allowing the staff to provide the coordinator with feedback. This session also provides a chance to address misconceptions and give the staff a sense of ownership of the program

Step 5: Designate a Lead Group

Most successful school recycling programs have a centralized group that performs the everyday operations of the program. Groups that run recycling programs in schools include the student council, individual classrooms, Eco-Clubs, and local Boy Scout troops.

Step 6: Take a Trash Tour

Before starting a school recycling program, you must identify the recyclable material within the waste stream. Tour all areas where trash is generated: cafeteria, classrooms, offices, and custodial areas. Record and identify who's disposing of what and target areas as well as materials for source reduction, reuse, and recycling.

Step 7: Get Recyclables to Market

The school must now decide how to get recyclables to market. Below are some options for transportation.

- ⊕ Deliver collected recyclables to the municipal recycling facility (call 603-736-4401 for contact information and a list of acceptable materials);
- ⊕ Pool recyclables with a neighboring school or business to gain more marketing power;
- ⊕ Deliver recyclables to a private facility;
- ⊕ Negotiate with a private recycling firm for the collection of the school's recyclables; or
- ⊕ Host an annual or semi-annual recycling drive.

When seeking a market for the school's recyclables, please ask these questions of prospective buyers:

- ⊕ Do you provide indoor containers for the collection of recyclables?
- ⊕ Do you pick up collected recyclables? If yes, what is the minimum weight you will collect?
- ⊕ Do you provide weight slips from sales?
- ⊕ How long has your company been in business?
- ⊕ What do you charge/pay for your service?
- ⊕ Please give the names of two or three current schools or businesses marketing recyclables through your company.

Contact THE CLUB at (603) 736-4401 or e-mail theclub@nrra.net for information on recycling centers.

Step 8: Obtain Necessary Equipment

The school's recycling market, as well as the types of materials collected will dictate the equipment needed to

run the program. A basic school recycling program needs the following:

- ⊕ Classroom/Office Collection Containers - Corrugated boxes, manufactured curbside bins or re-usable bags for collecting trash from a specific area.
- ⊕ Cafeteria Bins - Usually totes with lids or specially marked trash bins that serve as the collection point for the vending machine recyclables (i.e., aluminum, plastic, glass).
- ⊕ Collection Toters - Typically 90-gallon totes that serve as the collection point for all the recyclables collected within the school.

The school's market may not provide the necessary equipment for a school recycling program. To help fill this void, the School Recycling Club has published an informative bulletin called *School Recycling Collection Containers*. This bulletin lists the basic characteristics of recycling collection containers, companies or organizations that sell recycling collection containers, as well as some creative, low to no cost alternatives!

CLUB EXCLUSIVE GRANT!

THE CLUB has received funding from New Hampshire the Beautiful and the New Hampshire Soft Drink Association to promote school recycling by offering New Hampshire members of THE CLUB the opportunity to purchase the following recycling bins at a drastically reduced rate:

- ⊕ *Clear Stream Recycling Bins* -- The strong wire frame, see through bag, bold graphics and raised 3-hole lid dramatically increase recycling participation and reduce the chance of contamination. The Clear Stream Bin is available to members of THE CLUB for only \$16 and can be used to collect any type of container, such as aluminum cans or plastic bottles.
- ⊕ *Classroom Recycling Bins* -- This dark green bin (16" wide x 22" long x 13" high) is available for only \$3 each! The bin comes printed with the New Hampshire the Beautiful logo.

Contact THE CLUB at (603) 736-4401 (or e-mail theclub@nrra.net) for more information.

Step 9: Develop a Collection Route

In order to ensure the proper collection of recyclables, design a collection route. Collection routes typically assign a group of students to a specific area within the school, who then take the recyclables to the central collection area.

By establishing a specific protocol for students to follow, you can ensure the proper collection of recyclables, and also help eliminate materials that may contaminate the recyclables (i.e., trash mixed with paper).

Step 10: Education and Training!

Education and training are integral parts of ensuring the success and longevity of the school's recycling program. An educational program must be developed to train each individual who is involved in the program.

Having students who are directly involved with the program educate both staff and the student body provides a great educational opportunity. Students can make presentations and develop posters or a brochure that describes the program.

Step 11: Kick-offs & Press Releases

After all the hard work of planning, researching and educating, it's now time to get things started! Turn the start of the recycling program into a fun-filled class period or afternoon:

- ☺ Send press releases to local newspapers.
- ☺ Invite the local press.
- ☺ Hold contests prior to the event and announce the winners (i.e., school wide poster contest).
- ☺ Kick off the program in conjunction with a national environmental event such as America Recycles Day (11/15), Earth Day (4/22), Arbor Day (last Friday of April), etc.
- ☺ Invite professional performers to entertain and educate the students about recycling (contact NRRA at 603-736-4401 for a listing of recycling-related performers).

- ☺ Invite keynote speakers such as the local recycling coordinator or a representative from the school's recycling market.

This creates enthusiasm for the program and helps educate students and staff program specifics.

Step 12: Track and Continue Promotion

One of the major challenges programs face is keeping the interest of students and staff. Often, a school recycling program starts with great fanfare and is a booming success. Unfortunately, without constant reminders, participation rates can drop and the program can fade away.

To help combat this problem, many schools reinforce their initial promotion of the school recycling program through fun and entertaining activities.

Step 13: Closing the Loop!

An essential part of recycling is buying products made from recycled materials, better known as "closing the loop." Buying materials that contain recycled content creates markets for the recyclables separated from the school's waste stream

Most office supply stores sell items with recycled content. Some examples of recycled content products that your school can purchase are copy and ruled paper, envelopes, pencils, computer disks, recycling bins, paper napkins, plastic lumber benches, toner cartridges, rulers, and presentation folders. Ask the school's purchasing agent to buy these important recycled content items.

THE CLUB is a project of the Northeast Resource Recovery Association (NRRA), a proactive, non-profit working to make recycling programs strong, efficient and financially successful.