



**CARTON  
COUNCIL**



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# CARTON RECYCLING IN SCHOOLS

## Best Practices Guide





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# GETTING STARTED

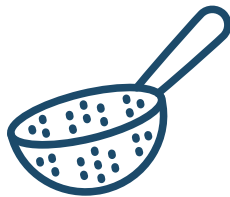


GETTING STARTED

# Equipment to help with your program



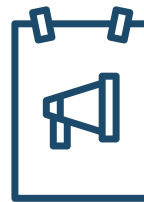
BUCKETS



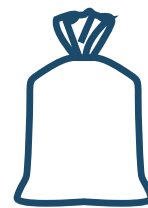
STRAINERS/  
SCREENS



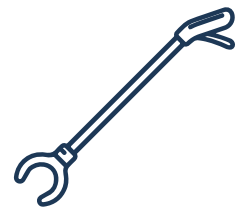
RECYCLING  
CONTAINERS



SIGNAGE



PLASTIC OR MESH  
BAGS



LITTER STICKS

***PLEASE REFER TO OUR PROGRAM GUIDE FOR  
DETAILED HELP IN DEVELOPING YOUR PROGRAM.***



## GETTING STARTED

# Carton recycling basics: Empty those cartons!

1



2



3



1. Students from Forest Hill Elementary in Camden NJ empty their residual milk and juice into a 5- gallon bucket (purchased at any Home Depot or Lowes) that has a strainer in it to capture any food, straws or wrappers. These buckets are easy for custodial staff to lift and empty.
2. A custodian at Ridgewood Middle School in Arnold, MO created a system where students empty residual milk into a metal funnel attached to a hose that empties into a sink. A bin is placed below the system for carton recycling.
3. Students from Waukesha, WI can empty their residual milk and juice into a 33-gallon container. Installing a spigot at the bottom of that container makes it easier for the custodian to pour the residual liquids into a floor sink.





4



4. A custodian at E.P. Foster Elementary School in Ventura, CA built this system after having difficulty lifting the residual milk to empty it into the sink. Students pour milk into two strainers nested in a rectangular bin, which sits atop an old painter's dolly. The custodian can crank the dolly up to pour liquid into the sink from the spigot installed at the bottom of the bin.

5



6. Liberty Elementary School students from the Harrisburg School District in South Dakota piloted this residual bucket prototype. They used a 5 gallon pickle bucket from the cafeteria to collect the residual milk and attached a spigot to the bottom of the bucket so it could be emptied over a floor drain. They purchased the dolly from Grainger Industrial Supply for about \$20.00. The strainer on the top of the bucket is for gold panning and was ordered from Walmart for about \$14. They modified the strainer slightly by grinding off some little flanges on the sides that prevented it from dropping securely into the bucket.



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# RECYCLING STATIONS



1



1. New York City Schools Recycle Cartons! The city created some creative carton recycling bin signs and materials. These materials are available to any school throughout the country to use. Find the Grow NYC toolkit materials at <https://www.grownyc.org/recyclingchampions/cafeteria-best-practices>

Notice: NYC schools recycle cans, bottles, and cartons all in one bin. The residual liquid bucket is placed in the middle and the schools provide different sized containers for smaller children to reach.

2



2. Students love the smiley face design on the Recycling and Draining Station.



3



3. Students at Lincoln Public School District in Lincoln, NE empty their cartons into a residual bucket and then drop their cartons into a recycling bin that has a reusable mesh bag liner. Mesh bags allow any residual milk to drain to the bottom of the container keeping cartons dryer.

*\*See Resource section for more information on mesh bags*

4



4. This station was designed by high school students at Missoula Public School District in Montana.





5



5. Students in St Paul, MN can easily recycle what's left after lunch at the recycling station. The smaller openings used on the recyclables container on the left help prevent contamination. All the containers are on dollies with wheels. This station has excellent, easy to read, color coordinated signage as well.

6



6. This recycling station uses bright, clear signage and all containers are on dollies with wheels to make emptying very easy.



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# ALTERNATE COLLECTION SETTINGS



# Breakfast in the Classroom Program



1. Upon arriving at school in the morning, volunteer students pick up a rolling cooler that is labeled with their classroom name and number. Inside each cooler is milk, yogurt, and anything else that needs to be chilled. Dry ingredients such as pastries are in a plastic bag tied to the top of the cooler. Note that when breakfast includes a hot item, like a breakfast burrito, they put a small second insulated cooler on top of the chilled rolling cooler. Plastic utensils and napkins are in a pocket on the side of the chilled cooler.
2. One or two students pick up a lined trash can on a rolling dolly and a small recycling bin. All students return to the classroom where breakfast is consumed.
3. After breakfast is over, any residual milk is poured in either the lined trash can or down the classroom sink. Cartons are placed in the blue recycling bin and the trash is placed in the lined trash can.
4. Students put the blue recycling cart on top of the trash in the rolling trash bin and return the trash bin to a designated collection spot.
5. Students also roll the insulated cart back to a designated collection spot. Both the trash can, and the insulated rolling cart are labeled with the classroom so that the custodial and nutrition staff can tell if any are missing.
6. The custodian consolidates the cartons and puts them in the outside recycling roll-off. The trash is also consolidated and goes into the outside trash roll-off. The insulated rolling carts are sanitized in the school kitchen, so they are ready for the next day's breakfast.



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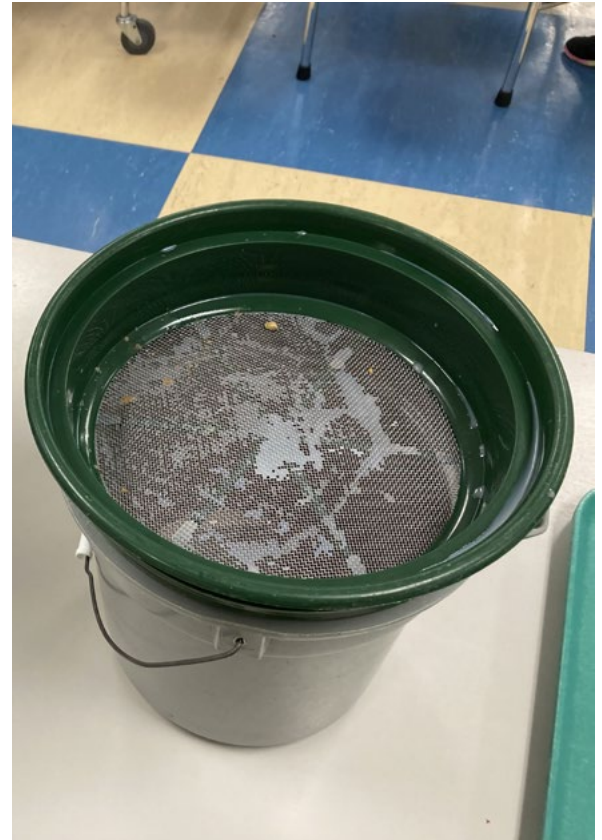
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# PROGRAM TIPS





# Don't forget an "empty" station



***DRAINING RESIDUAL MILK AND JUICE IS CRITICAL TO A SUCCESSFUL RECYCLING PROGRAM. USE A SCREEN (RIGHT) TO CAPTURE ANY WRAPPERS, STRAWS OR FOOD THAT GET TOSSED WITH THE MILK.***



## PROGRAM TIPS

# Consider using mesh bags



Lining your recycling bin with a Mesh Bag allows any residual liquid remaining in the cartons to drain out of the bags to the bottom of the recycling bin. This ensures that you have cleaner cartons for the hauler. It is not necessary to line the recycling bin with a plastic liner but some schools do because it makes for a quicker clean-up. If your school has a floor sink, you might consider adding a spigot to the base of your recycling bin so you can rinse the mesh bag and the recycling bin altogether.



**LINE RECYCLING BINS WITH MESH BAGS TO ENSURE THAT YOU HAVE CLEANER CARTONS FOR THE HAULER.**





## PROGRAM TIPS

# Keep cartons loose



***WHETHER YOU USE REUSABLE MESH BAGS OR PLASTIC BAGS, CARTONS MUST BE REMOVED FROM THE BAGS. CARTONS GO LOOSE INTO OUTSIDE COLLECTION CONTAINERS.***



This is what happens to cartons that have been stored in closed plastic bags. They start to decompose and cannot be recycled. If you use a plastic bag to line a container, dump the cartons into the outdoor recycling dumpster without the plastic bag and either reuse the bag or throw it away.



# Set up a green team



***SCHOOLS CAN DETERMINE THE TYPE OF RECYCLING SYSTEM THAT WORKS BEST FOR THEIR STUDENTS. GET STUDENTS INVOLVED AND DESIGN YOUR SYSTEM TO MEET THEIR NEEDS!***





# Find your champion



***DON'T FORGET  
TO THANK YOUR  
CHAMPIONS!  
CHAMPIONS CAN  
BE CUSTODIANS,  
TEACHERS,  
STUDENTS,  
PARENTS, FOOD  
SERVICE DIRECTORS  
AND PRINCIPALS.***





# Effective carton recycling signage



***CARTON RECYCLING SIGNAGE HAS A GREATER IMPACT WHEN DESIGNED BY YOUR OWN STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND PARENTS.***





## PROGRAM TIPS

# Effective carton recycling signage





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# ADVICE FROM PEERS





# Advice from peers



“ Implementing a school carton recycling program takes a village. Think of the school as if it is a small community. To be successful, engage representation from all sectors of the school and offer clear messaging. Highest success is received when the planning team includes representation from students, staff, facility services, administration, and food service staff. Don't forget to offer frequent reminders and clear signage to ensure procedures are understood and continue each day especially after winter and spring breaks. At the beginning of each school year, take time the first week to help new students and staff learn the waste sorting line layout and procedures. It also serves as a great reminder for the students and staff returning. ”

– SUSAN SCHULLER, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COORDINATOR, RECYCLING CONNECTIONS, WISCONSIN

“ Make sure you have support from the top administrators and plan to work closely with everyone—principals, cafeteria staff, teachers, custodians and students. Listen to the people working at the schools, because they know the culture best and design the program for their unique system. We have ten schools recycling cartons and each one does it slightly different, but they do it in a manner that is sustainable and works for them. ”

– KIM O'ROURKE, MIDDLETOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT RECYCLING COORDINATOR, CONNECTICUT

“ Principal and custodial support is key to starting a carton recycling program. Each school may have a different cafeteria or lunch court trash and recycling set up, so it's important to understand the logistics, the student dismissal process, and then identify the best fit for including a liquids station(s) and carton recycling bin(s) into the mix. Getting student Green Team volunteers to help direct their peers on how to participate, and possibly helping to pour out extra milk to help the process move quickly, is also a great way to get students involved. ”

– JANET WHITED, ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIALIST, SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

“ A kick-off education campaign is critical to participation and long-term success. Involve student council, another student group or an upper-level class in your campaign. Incorporate multiple elements such as a short assembly, PA system announcements, posters and banners, and even a participation contest between grade levels. Have the student group involved in creating and implementing these. Send a letter home to parents announcing the program and highlighting the benefits to the environment. Remember that when students are involved, faculty will have more buy-in. ”

– CYNDRA DIETZ, ECO-CYCLE, COLORADO



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# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



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# Bins and screens available



32" x 36" Mesh Bags

Available on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com)

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Pour Away Screens

Available at [www.pourawayusa.com](http://www.pourawayusa.com)

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Strainer Insert for 5 gallon Bucket

Available at [www.baytecontainers.com](http://www.baytecontainers.com)





## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

# School waste reduction resources



[The Center for Green Schools](#) offers teachers and school facilities staff opportunities to educate and engage the school around recycling and more. Check out hands on curriculum for all grades on Learning Lab and take action with your community as part of Green Apple Day of Service.

USDA Resources:

- [Reducing School Lunchroom Waste](#)
- [Creative Solutions for Ending School Food Waste](#)

[The Go Green Initiative](#) is all about helping schools create a campus-wide culture of conservation. Their programs are free and accessible to any school, anywhere.

[Alameda County Stop Waste at School \(CA\)](#) works with students, teachers, and school district staff to become leaders in waste prevention and proper recycling and composting at school. This website is full of great resources that could be used as examples for any school district.

[The Oakland USD Green Gloves Program](#) is a national leader in helping schools decrease waste through the efforts of Nutrition and Custodial Services staff. This site includes waste sorting videos and free resources including how to set up a food share table and a waste sorting system, waste-free school party, signage, and more.

[Green and Healthy Schools Wisconsin](#) empowers, supports, and recognizes schools for nurturing healthy kids and sustainable communities. Their free guide provides suggestions for creating and sustaining a sustainability team and gives background information, tips, and ideas for each of the nine focus areas for school sustainability initiatives.

[GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools](#) has helped New York City schools create effective recycling programs. Visit their site for best practices for cafeteria and classroom recycling as well as templates for recycling stations, signage and more.



FOR MORE INFO

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