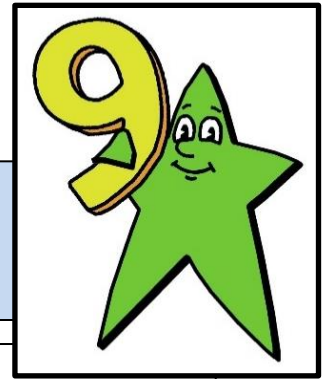


# Locker Leftovers/Classroom Cleanout

## Snapshot

At the end of the school year, capture unwanted school supplies and more for reuse and recycling.



**Objective:** Divert as much as possible from the landfill or incinerator during end-of-the-year classroom and locker cleanouts.

**Age Groups:** K-12<sup>th</sup> grade

**Setting:** School building

### Project Duration:

- Preparation: 1-2 hours
- Implementation: varies based on school size and chosen project (1-3 days)

### Materials:

- School trash, recycling, and/or composting bins
- Boxes or bins for collecting reusable items
- Signage for all bins
- Tables for stations
- Volume-tracking sheets

### Why This Project Matters:

Humans are consuming the earth's natural resources at an alarming rate. One reason for this is the common habit of replacing perfectly usable items with new ones. Buying back-to-school supplies is a prime example. Students and their families often purchase new folders, pencils, crayons, notebooks, and other items even though last school year's supplies still have plenty of life in them. Classroom and locker cleanouts during the frenzy and excitement of the last days of school often lead to large quantities of usable school supplies and other personal items being tossed into the trash.

### Project Summary:

These two projects have the same goal (an astounding reduction of waste), but slightly different formats based on age groups and school layout. *Locker Leftovers* is designed for secondary schools that utilize lockers for student belongings, and *Classroom Cleanout* is designed for elementary schools where classrooms typically contain student belongings, not lockers. Implementing an organized and structured collection system for reusing and recycling unwanted materials will drastically reduce waste during end-of-the-school-year cleanout sessions. The result is cleaner hallways, emptier trash dumpsters, happier custodians, and a healthier planet.



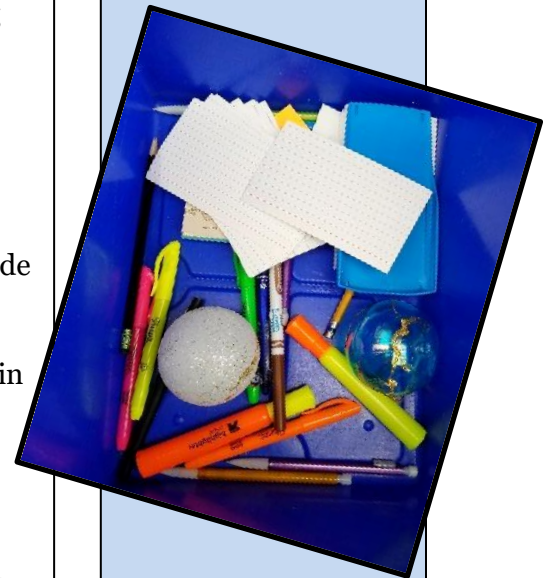
## Implementation:

### *Locker Leftovers (secondary):*

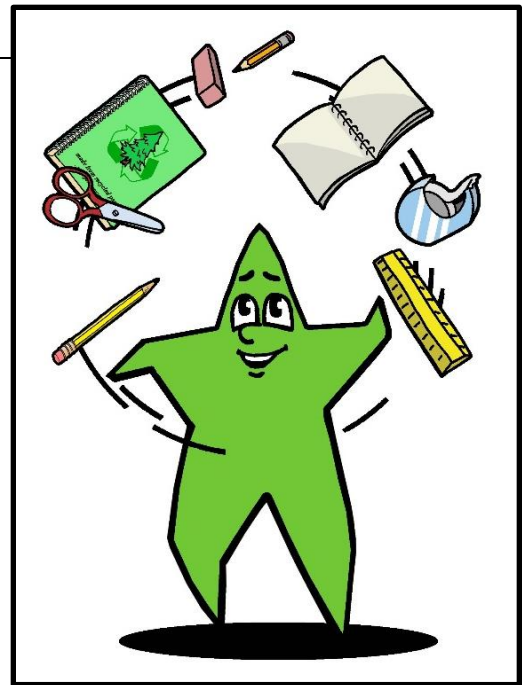
1. Coordinate with school administrators and custodians to select a date and time for locker cleanout.
2. Identify a student sponsor group and schedule a meeting for two weeks before the event. A student group will serve as the promotions crew. Student councils, eco-clubs and leadership groups are good options for this task.
3. Prepare the necessary information (when, where, and how) about the event and create an ad for publication in the school newsletter.
4. Do a walk-through of the hallways with the staff member who assigns student lockers. Determine where each grade level's lockers are located and use this when coordinating the classroom release schedule for locker cleanout.
5. After the walk-through, work with the head custodian to plan where the reuse and recycling station tables will be located. Determine how to staff each station (teachers, other staff, students, volunteers, etc.).
6. A few weeks before the event, meet for approximately 30 minutes with the student sponsor group. Take pre-made posters (students may add color/customize) and pre-written announcements for them to promote the event (see printable examples at the end of this chapter). Explain to the group that they are responsible for advertising the project to their school community. Allow students time to decorate the posters and practice reading the announcements during the meeting. Encourage them to customize the posters with phrases such as "Reuse if you can!" or "Recycle all of your used paper!" Students may also generate their own ideas for promoting the project, such as recording and distributing video announcements.
7. Have the group create a timeline for their promotions. Display the posters and start to share the announcements about one week before the cleanout date.
8. Decide how to categorize collected items during the cleanout. Create clear, bold signage for each collection bin (see printable samples at the end of this chapter).
9. Reach out to teachers and departments within the school to see which might be interested in receiving certain items for special projects or to distribute to their students. Create an official order form to track requests. Identify other groups in need that would like to receive the remaining used school supplies (charities, lower-income schools, etc.). Find out which items and quantities are desired by each group and coordinate delivery dates.

## Extensions:

- If space is available, store the collected and sorted reusable items during summer break and hold a "Back to School Used School Supplies Sale" as a fundraiser in the fall.



10. On the day of the event, collect as many hallway trash cans and recycling bins as possible and relocate them to the project collection stations, leaving no other options for waste disposal near lockers. Add compost bins if compost is collected at your school. This keeps students from automatically dumping their materials in the trash and funnels them towards the stations for reuse and recycling. Each station should have a table, reuse collection bins, recycling bin(s), trash bin(s), compost bin(s), and signage. (See Station Layout for Locker Leftovers/Classroom Cleanout below.)
11. When the locker cleanout event has concluded, sort any misplaced materials into their correct receptacles and record the total volumes in each category. Deliver items to charities and recycling centers, then share the landfill-diversion volumes with the school community.



*Classroom Cleanout (elementary):*

1. Coordinate a time frame with school administrators when students will clean out their desks and classrooms. (It may span more than one day.)
2. This project can be successful with or without a student sponsor group. If a student group will be helping with the promotions, schedule a meeting for two weeks prior to the cleanout. If not utilizing a student group, a willing teacher, parent, or staff member can organize the promotions. Promotional tools may include posters and school-wide announcements. (See samples below.)
3. Prepare the necessary information (when, where, and how) about the event and create an ad for publication in the school newsletter.
4. Establish an exchange table for reusable materials in a central location. Decide how items should be separated and make signage (see printable samples at the end of this chapter). Invite all teachers and students to put unwanted school and classroom supplies on the table and to take what they need. Identify a group or groups to receive anything left over (charities, lower-income school, etc.). Find out which items and quantities are desired by each recipient and coordinate delivery dates.
5. Assign someone to occasionally monitor the bins during the event to make sure they do not overflow.
6. When the cleanout event has concluded, sort any misplaced materials into their correct receptacles and record the total volumes in each category. Deliver leftover items.





**Assessment:**

Total the volume of all materials diverted by the event. Discuss with the head custodian the ways in which they see the program positively benefitting the school and the community. When announcing the success of the project to the school, emphasize this information along with the environmental benefits of the project (less trash, less need for landfills, natural resources and energy saved).

**Related Activities:**

- Repurposing in the Classroom – Chapter 12
- Schoolwide Recycling Collection – Chapter 18
- Creative Crayon Recycling – Chapter 20



Sample Poster:



# Locker Leftovers

Your trash could be  
someone else's **TREASURE!**



Remember to bring **reusable** &  
**recyclable** items to the donation  
stations during Locker Cleanout!

Sponsored by:

[Funder Logo]



## **Sample Announcements:**

\*Update similar facts from a reputable source before sharing with the school community. \*\*Enter specific information pertaining to your event.

**For several days prior to your Locker Leftovers or Classroom Cleanout event, use these P.A. announcements to motivate and inform the school community. This information can also be used to create banners, posters, and video announcements.**

1. We make 292 million tons of waste each year in the United States. An astounding 62% of this waste ends up in landfills or incinerators and only 32% is recycled or composted! You can help the environment and your community by recycling and donating reusable items during Locker Leftovers [Classroom Cleanout]. Look for donation station(s) near your lockers [other location] on [date]. This project is being brought to you by [funder(s)/implementing group(s)].
2. Americans make an average of 4.9 pounds of trash per person per day and only 1.6 pounds of this is recycled or composted! Don't let your school supplies go to waste! Bring reusable and recyclable items (such as paper, pens, notebooks, clothes, and art supplies) to the cleanout station(s) during Locker Leftovers [Classroom Cleanout] on [date].
3. We all throw away millions of tons of recyclable and compostable material every year. About 1/4 of our waste is paper and paper products. Remember that you can donate clean paper and notebooks, along with other recyclable and reusable items at the cleanout station(s) during Locker Leftovers [Classroom Cleanout] on [date].
4. The more trash we have, the more landfills we'll need. Landfills take up space, can pollute groundwater and give off methane gas, which is a potent greenhouse gas. Don't let your school supplies end up in a landfill! Take reusable goods and recyclable items to cleanout station(s) during Locker Leftovers [Classroom Cleanout] on [date].
5. Remember, your trash could be someone else's treasure. Reusing and recycling reduces trash and helps save limited natural resources. Take paper, pens, pencils, books, clothing, art supplies and other reusable or recyclable items to the cleanout station(s) during Locker Leftovers [Classroom Cleanout] on [date]. This project is sponsored by [funder(s)/implementing group(s)].

## Station Layout for

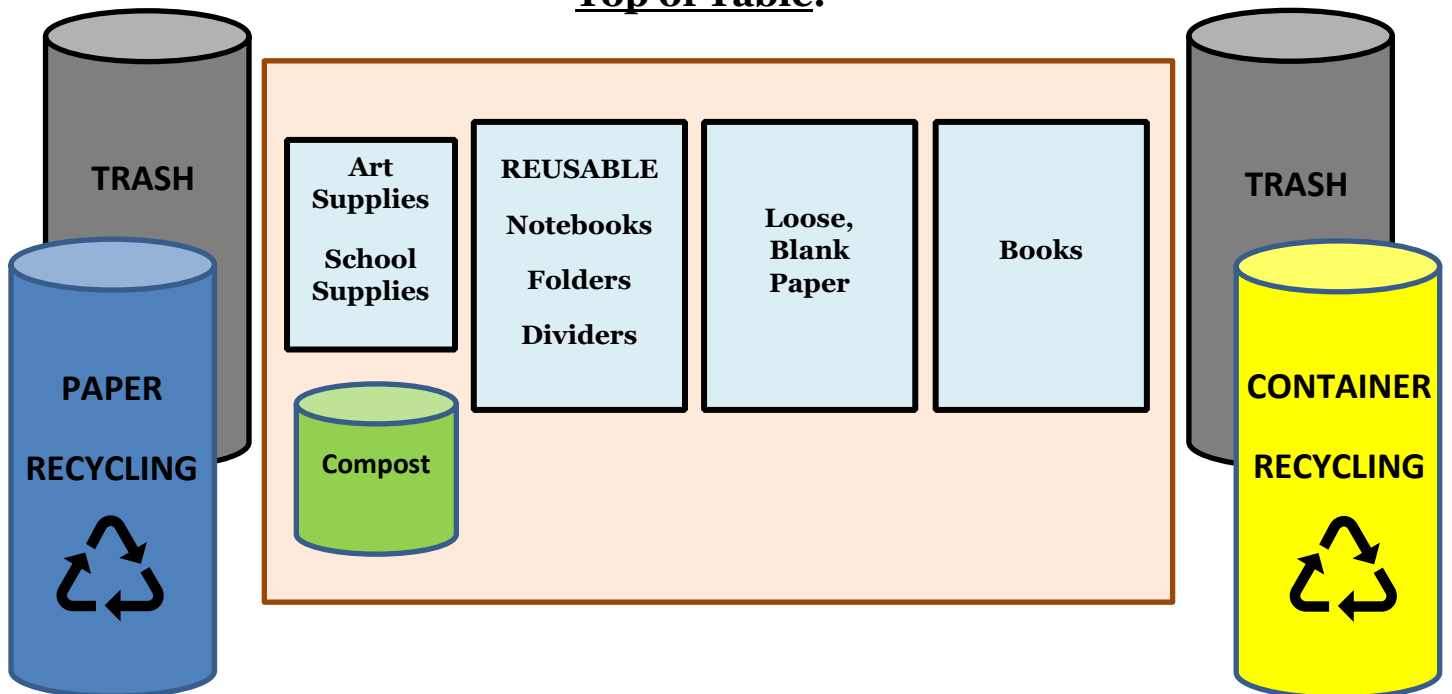
### Locker Leftovers/Classroom Cleanout:

See below for a sample layout of collection bins for the Locker Leftovers or Classroom Cleanout station(s).

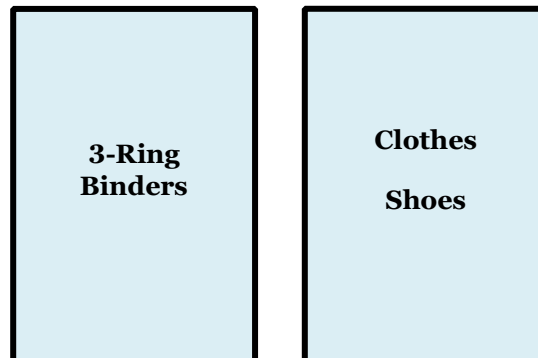
Side:

Side:

Top of Table:



Under Table:



Sample Bin Signage:

**Clothes &  
Shoes**



**Books**



**Loose, blank  
paper**



**3-ring  
binders**



**School  
Supplies  
& Art  
Supplies**



**REUSABLE  
Notebooks  
Folders  
Dividers**





Sample Bilingual Bin Signage:

Clothes  
& Shoes

Ropa y  
Zapatos



Books

Libros



Loose, blank paper

Hojas de papel  
sin escritura



3-ring binders

Carpetas de papel  
de argolla



School Supplies,  
Art Supplies

Utiles Escolares,  
Utiles para la  
Clase de Arte



REUSABLE  
Notebooks, folders, dividers

REUTILIZABLE  
Cuadernos, carpetas,  
separadores

