

RECYCLING ACTIVITIES

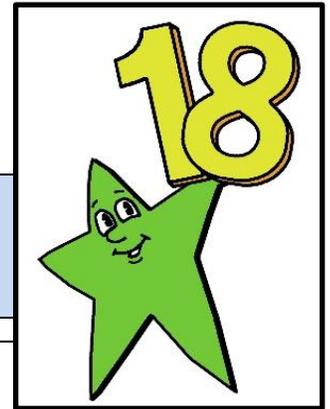


Schoolwide Recycling Collection

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Snapshot

Starting a schoolwide recycling program is an important, effective first step toward Zero Waste.



<https://bit.ly/eco-cycle-zero-waste-schools-guide>

Objective: Students will be able to distinguish between items that can be recycled in the school's recycling bins and ones that belong in the trash. They will also be able to state one or more ways that recycling helps the earth.

Age Group: K-12th grade

Setting: School building

Project Duration: Ongoing

Materials:

- Examples of recyclable items found at school (classroom/office paper, cardboard, drink containers)
- Collection bins for recyclables (5 to 8-gallon for classrooms, larger for most other areas)
- Signage/labels for bins
- Poster-making materials

Why This Project Matters:

Much of the solid waste produced by people in North America has the potential to be recycled. Different communities offer different recycling opportunities to their citizens, and schools are an important part of these efforts. The benefits of recycling include preservation of natural habitats, reduced air and water pollution, fewer waste items filling up landfills, reduced fossil fuel usage, and increases in available jobs (compared with manufacturing items from virgin materials and landfilling).

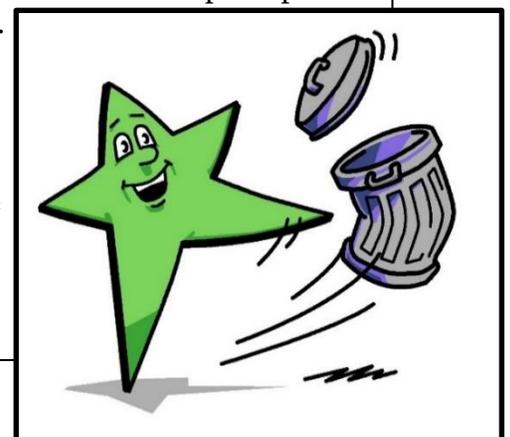
Project Summary:

A successful school recycling program features the efficient collection of recyclable items, regular education of the school community, and the tracking of volumes of recyclables collected. To achieve this success, the school will choose a reliable recycling hauler, acquire recycling bins for distribution throughout the building, provide regular training for students and staff, and communicate the diversion rates to the school community to motivate and encourage participation.

Implementation:

Getting started:

- A teacher, administrator, parent, and/or student group must take responsibility for implementing and maintaining the program. Start by meeting with the school principal to determine the program budget. The main costs are for bins and collection service. When discussing options, consider that the school will be able to reduce its trash hauling service and that those cost savings can be put toward recycling collection fees.



- Find a hauling company to service the school’s recycling. Inquire with local trash service providers, the municipal waste department, independent recycling services, etc. Compare bids from several companies and choose one that has a proven track record for reliability. Ask the company about the types of bins they will provide outside of the school for collection (dumpster, carts, etc.), making sure the school has space for these containers. Also ask which materials they accept in their recycling program, and which must be excluded. Finally, ask if they provide volume reporting on the materials collected and request a monthly report to be given to your school.
- Obtain the company’s recycling guidelines. This document should detail which items are acceptable for recycling and which are not. Use these guidelines to determine the types of bins you’ll need to purchase for use inside the school unless the recycling company provides those as well. In some communities, all recyclables can be placed together in the same container (called “single-stream” recycling), while in other areas paper and cardboard items need to be collected separately from metal, glass, and plastic containers.
- Determine locations within the building where recycling bins would be effective. Main hallways, staff lounges, and the cafeteria are common places. Most schools also include recycling bins in their classrooms and offices.
- Decide how often and by whom these bins will be serviced. Classroom bins are often the responsibility of the teacher and students, while cafeteria and hallway containers are usually a custodial duty. (Teachers and students empty their classroom containers into the larger hall or cafeteria bins, which custodians then service.)
- Signage on and near the bins is crucial. Design adhesive labels with the recycling guidelines (including images if possible) and place them on the lids and sides of each container. Posters displayed above or near the bins are also quite valuable.
- Purchase the recycling bins needed to properly outfit your school. Five to 8-gallon containers are ideal for classrooms; 32-gallon containers are best for hallways and the cafeteria. Bins should be consistently color-coded for easy recognition. Inquire with local businesses about any used or surplus containers that they might be willing to donate.

Extensions:

- Hold a “Recycle Right” contest. With the help of a student group, monitor the recycling bins of individual classrooms or grade-levels. The class or grade with the least contamination wins a prize.
- Conduct an audit of the trash to see what materials are still going to the landfill. With a student group, discuss ways to divert some of this waste by encouraging reducing or reusing. Implement a campaign to spread these waste-reduction ideas. (For example, if several plastic baggies are found in the lunch trash, the campaign could focus on how to pack a lunch using reusable containers.) (See Conducting a Waste Audit, Chapter 30.)



Training and implementation:

- Gather samples representing what can be recycled in the school's new program and use them while training a student sponsor group. Have students create posters to be displayed by the new classroom, hallway, and cafeteria recycling bins. Posters featuring 3-D, tangible examples are very effective.
- Meet with the custodians to review the recycling collection schedule (from the hauler) and how the in-school component of the collection will work. To have a successful program, it is essential that the custodians are supportive and that they also feel supported by the rest of the school community.
- Facilitate a 30-minute training with all school staff before the recycling program is launched.
- Prepare a statement for the school's newsletter announcing the implementation of the program to families.
- Prepare and provide a 30-45-minute kick-off assembly to the school community that outlines why the school is choosing to implement this program, what it will look like, and how they can participate. If possible, give the student group a significant role in the presentation. Incorporate eco-facts about landfills, trash, pollution, and natural resource usage. Show examples of recyclable items and non-recyclable items. Indicate locations of the new receptacles on a school map and have example bins on hand. If recycling bins will be placed in the classrooms, have them available for teachers to pick up on their way back to their rooms.
- Have teachers sign their class up for "mini-refresher presentations" to be given one week after the kick-off assembly. These brief, 20-25-minute in-class sessions provide the important opportunity for students and staff to ask more detailed questions.
- If possible, train parent volunteers to assist students with the proper sorting of recyclables in the cafeteria for the first three weeks of the new recycling system. A student group can also help with this.
- Create inspiring announcements to be read during the first few weeks of the program. A student group may assist with the writing and reading of the announcements. Include reminders about recyclable and non-recyclable items, as well as interesting eco-facts.



Maintaining the program:

- Have student or parent volunteers monitor recycling bins in different areas of the school twice per week for six weeks following the kick-off. If repeat issues arise (e.g., paper napkins ending up in the recycling bin instead of the trash or compost), make announcements and include reminders in the school newsletter.
- For the first year of the program, distribute recycling guidelines to teachers and staff each semester. Afterwards, distribute guidelines at the beginning of each school year and by request.
- Provide the school with the landfill diversion rates received in the hauler's volume reports. This can be shared with the school community as a centralized graph (see tree banner on right), announcements, or in the school's newsletter.
- Have a student group conduct an annual audit of the recycling and trash bins (see Conducting a Waste Audit, Chapter 30) to identify what the school is doing well and what might need improvement. Publicize the results.
- Refresher assemblies and/or in-class presentations every school year, especially for the incoming class of students, is extremely beneficial for maintaining knowledge about and enthusiasm for the program.



Assessment:

Track and report the volumes recycled over time. To determine student involvement, quiz or survey students in the classroom or at the cafeteria waste stations. Ask questions, such as:

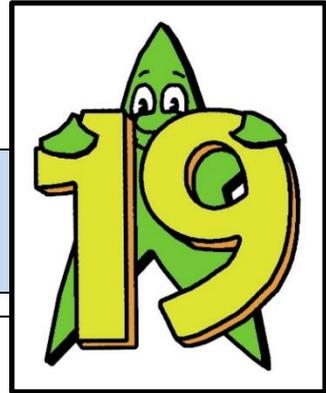
- Name one item that can be recycled at school.
- How does recycling help the environment?
- What do you recycle in your classroom?
- Can a milk carton be recycled?
- What natural resource are you saving when you recycle a can?

Related Activities:

- Schoolwide Compost Collection – Chapter 25
- Reinforcing Collection Programs Over Time – Chapter 27
- Reporting Progress – Chapter 28
- Conducting a Waste Audit – Chapter 30
- Special Considerations for High Schools – Chapter 35



Special Materials for Recycling



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Snapshot

From plastic bags to books to cell phones, students can make a difference by collecting non-traditional items for recycling.

<https://bit.ly/eco-cycle-zero-waste-schools-guide>

Objective: To divert from the landfill a significant number of hard-to-recycle items through an organized recycling collection.

Age Group: K-12th grade

Setting: School building or greater community

Project Duration: One week to ongoing

Materials:

- Collection bins and signage
- Poster-making materials
- Camera
- Scale (optional)



Why This Project Matters:

There are several categories of discarded items within the solid waste stream, such as paper, plastic, metal, etc. The category of “other”, which includes polystyrene foam, shoes, clothing, electronics, wood, rubber, and more, comprises as much as 20 percent of our waste! To achieve a Zero Waste future, diverting these “other” materials from the landfill is essential.

Project Summary:

This activity will outline how to hold a one-time recycling collection of a special material. The chosen material should be one that is not already collected in the community’s regular recycling program, or only collected on a limited basis. Special collections of non-traditional recyclables offer a chance to expand the materials being diverted from the waste stream. In some cases, one-time collections of special materials may lead to a permanent collection of the non-traditional recyclable item. Most collection programs are legitimate, but be wary of ‘too-good-to-be-true’ recycling programs including some fundraisers, mail-in programs, electronic and textile collections, etc. Research the entire process and reviews on the internet before signing on. Find out what happens to the collected materials along their journey, where they are sent for recycling (or reuse), what percentage is actually recycled, and what the final product is. Local programs and businesses that accept used materials are a great place to start. Some support charities or employ people with disabilities, disadvantaged youth, etc. In contrast, some e-waste recycling programs have sent electronics to Asia and Africa where they are being processed in conditions that are unsafe for the workers and the environment. (The Basel Action Network [ban.org] is a reputable source for promoting legitimate e-waste recyclers. They provide a strict set of requirements to verify where and how the electronics are being recycled, and that the process is not causing harm to the environment or human health.) Some textile recyclers and mail-in programs have also been shown to have questionable practices and to be making a high profit on donated materials.

Implementation:

Planning:

1. A special materials recycling collection makes a perfect project for a student group or club. Identify a group of youth that can help with the collection.
2. Brainstorm possible non-traditional recyclables. Contact local businesses (including those who may be producing an “upcycled” product), charities that collect items, and local trash/recycling programs and facilities for support, ideas, and feasibility. Verify that there is a stable market for the material you decide to collect to ensure it gets recycled. It may also be possible to piggyback on another local collection event (the Lions Club usually has an ongoing collection for used eyeglasses, for example). Other ideas include used clothing, shoes, books, and plastic bags. It is important to consider who pays for the shipping cost (if there is one) when deciding on a material.
3. When considering a material or program, ask what happens to the collected material, where it will be sent for recycling, what percentage is actually recycled, and what the final product is. This information will be useful to verify that recycling of the material is legitimate and beneficial. It can also be used to increase participation when advertising the collection event.
4. Once a material has been chosen, decide on the length and location of the collection event (classrooms, schools, stores within the community, etc.). An event lasting 7-14 days keeps collection time manageable, but if it is a popular item, a weekend may be enough time. The collection may even work better as an ongoing event for the semester or school year. A student group may approach local businesses about sponsoring the expense of shipping the collected materials, and/or for some materials, they could request the usage of their location as a collection site.
5. The material may require cleaning and sorting. Arrange for a method of pick-up from collection points and any storage of the material needed, designate responsibility for collecting, sorting, and shipping, and establish a timeline for each step.
6. With help from students, gather appropriately-sized containers (5-gallon buckets, used boxes, large plastic containers, etc.) for collecting the material. Create standard signage for all collection points throughout the school or community.

Extensions:

- Have students create a life cycle display of the collected material. They can research what natural resources were used to first make the item, how it will be recycled, and what it will become. Ask the material recipient: “What will happen to the new items that are made from our collected material? Will they someday end up in a landfill or could the new items be recycled again?”



Three weeks before the collection:

7. Announce the collection event, including the specific requirements for recycling the chosen material, the date and time duration of the event, and what will happen to the collected material. If it is a school collection where the public will also be allowed to contribute, utilize local media for publicity. When advertising within the school, include mentions on the website and e-newsletters, create and display posters, make announcements, and notify the PTO and student groups. If advertising throughout the local community, request mentions on the town's website and social media, and create newspaper, television, and radio station ads.
8. Students can research and develop short presentations about the chosen material and how it will be recycled. The presentation may be given at an all-school assembly and/or community meetings.

Launching the collection:

9. Distribute collection bins with signage around the school and/or community.
10. Assign responsibility of collection point maintenance to volunteer staff, students and/or families.
11. For a large community event, arrange for local media coverage on kick-off day or take pictures for your own press release.

After the collection:

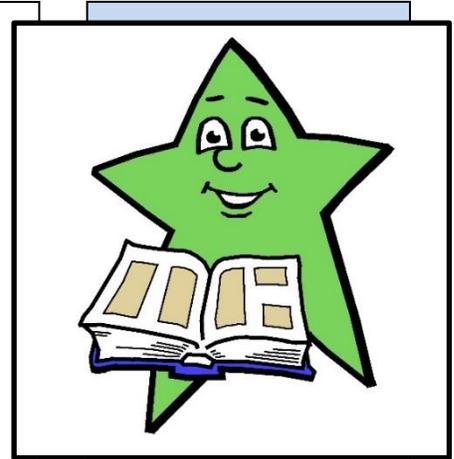
12. Gather all collected material to one location. If possible, wait 2-3 days after the final day for any late material.
13. Process the materials to the collector's specifications.
14. Measure or weigh the amount of the collected material.
15. Send the material off to be recycled!
16. Celebrate and report success to participants.

Assessment:

Success can be measured by the amount of material collected or number of people participating. If the collection event will be coordinated annually, the goal is to see an increase each year in the amount of collected material and/or the number of participants.

Related Activities:

Reusing Children's Books – Chapter 14
Creative Crayon Recycling – Chapter 20



Creative Crayon Recycling

Snapshot

Give old, broken crayons a new life in this hands-on recycling project.



Objective: Students will recycle crayons to demonstrate the three steps in the recycling process: collecting a material for recycling, turning it into something new, and using that new finished product.

Age Group: K-5th grade

Setting: Classroom or other meeting space

Project Duration:

- *Method 1:*
1 week or ongoing
- *Method 2:*
1 hour

Materials:

- *Method 1:*
 - Container for collecting crayons
 - Poster-making materials
 - Shipping boxes
- *Method 2:*
 - Container for collecting crayons
 - Muffin tin/molds
 - Oven

Why This Project Matters:

Children will wear down hundreds of crayons over the years they use them, and those stubs are usually put in the trash. Achieving Zero Waste means thinking about how to reuse or recycle every part of the waste stream, even crayons.

Project Summary:

Crayon collection is a fun activity that can be implemented by one classroom, a student group, or the whole school. It is also an opportunity to teach the recycling process: collecting a material, processing it into something new, and using the new products. The project can be implemented in two ways. One method is to collect crayons on a classroom or school-wide basis and then send them to a crayon recycler. Another method is to collect broken crayons and create classroom-made or home-made new crayons by melting and molding the old ones.

Implementation:

Method 1: collecting and shipping:

1. Establish a time frame for collecting and shipping crayons. This could be a week-long event near the end of the school year to coincide with cleaning out classrooms (see Locker Leftovers/Classroom Cleanout, Chapter 9), or an ongoing collection throughout the year. Allow students to bring crayons in from home.
2. Work with Crazy Crayons or another crayon recycler to learn which crayons they want and how to identify them.
3. Establish used-crayon collection stations for the classroom or entire school (students can help with the creation of collection containers and displays). Specify that only broken or unusable crayons are being collected, not crayons that can still be used.



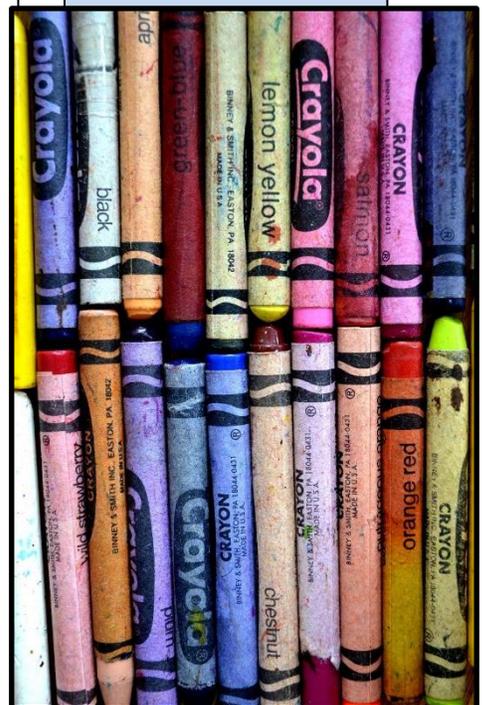
4. Have students write and read announcements during the crayon drive to encourage participation from their fellow students and staff. Students can also create posters showing examples of the kinds of crayons being collected and what they will be made into. These promotional materials should include information about the steps in the recycling process: collecting old crayons, processing them into new, and using the new crayons.
5. Sort through collected crayons, removing unwanted items (pens, trash, etc.). Send the shipment to the recycler.
6. Publicize the results of the collection (amount or weight of crayons collected, participating classes, etc.). A crayon-shaped “thermometer” chart would be a fun way to display this information. As crayons are received, calculate the sums and add to, or color on, the chart to show progress.
7. Find out where new recycled crayon products are sold in your area or on-line. Encourage families to look for recycled crayons (and other recycled school supplies) to “close the loop” of the recycling process by using these recycled supplies (see Eco-Wise School Supplies, Chapter 1).

Method 2: breaking & baking:

1. Establish used-crayon collection stations in the classroom or throughout the school, as described above. The collection could be a week-long event near the end of the school year to coincide with cleaning out classrooms (see Locker Leftovers/Classroom Cleanout, Chapter 9), or an ongoing collection throughout the year. Allow students to bring crayons from home.
2. Find and show students an internet video illustrating the crayon-manufacturing process to better understand what crayons are made from and how they are created in large quantities. Read storybooks about recycling to further their understanding of the process of collection, remanufacture, and using new products made from old (optional).
3. Discuss what natural resource crayons are made from (petroleum or plant-based oil). Bring in other items made from wax for students to examine, compare, etc.
4. Have students help remove all paper wrappers from the crayons. Break crayons into pieces.
5. Preheat the oven to 250 degrees Fahrenheit.
6. Fill the muffin tin with an inch-thick layer of crayon pieces. Colors can be combined or separated depending on your desired finished product.
7. Bake 15-20 minutes, or until the wax is melted.
8. Allow the tin to cool, then pop out the crayons and they’re ready for use.

Extensions:

- To share the class’s newly made crayons with other students, put together a traveling package that can be lent out to other classrooms. Include the students’ drawings of the recycling process.
- After a school-wide collection, investigate the possibility of purchasing some recycled crayons from the recycler. Distribute them as prizes or sell as a fundraiser.



Things to consider:

- If you don't have an old muffin tin to devote to crayon making, you can line your regular muffin tin with foil cups.
- Oven-safe, candy-making molds can also be used to create shaped crayons.
- Recycled crayons make a great no-cost gift or party favor.

Assessment:

- *Method 1:* Record the pounds of crayons collected and sent to the recycler.
- *Method 2:* Have students use their collected or homemade crayons to draw pictures of the steps in the recycling process.

Related Activities:

Eco-Wise School Supplies – Chapter 1
Locker Leftovers/Classroom Cleanout – Chapter 9
Special Materials for Recycling – Chapter 19



Making Recycled Paper

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Snapshot

The classroom becomes a paper recycling factory when students create recycled paper from their discarded worksheets and paper scraps.



<https://bit.ly/eco-cycle-zero-waste-schools-guide>

Objective: Students will learn about the paper recycling process by making their own sheets of paper.

Age Groups: K-12th grade and adults

Setting: Classroom

Project Duration:

- Preparation: 30-60 minutes
- Activity: 45 minutes

Materials:

- Used classroom paper
- Framed screen(s) (purchased or hand-made)
- Cloth towels
- Sponges
- Plastic bins for holding water
- Blender with lid
- Access to water
- Access to electrical outlet
- Measuring cup
- Newspaper (one sheet per student)

Why This Project Matters:

Paper products make up the largest portion of the waste stream generated in the United States. In addition, billions of trees are cut down each year to make paper for the world's consumption. Considering that a paper fiber can be recycled up to 12 times, recycling paper drastically reduces waste and the cutting of forests to produce new paper.

Project Summary:

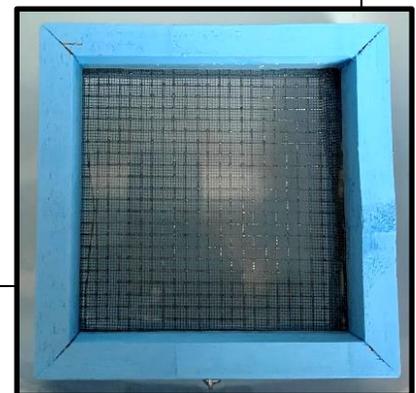
For this project, instead of sending used paper to the recycling centers and paper recycling factories, students will each make a new piece of paper from use scrap paper in their classroom. This hands-on project gives students a close look at how new paper can be made from old paper.



Implementation:

Gather materials (1-7 days prior to activity):

1. Collect used paper from the paper recycling bin. If the school does not have a recycling program, establish a collection box in the classroom for students to deposit their used notebook paper and graded worksheets.
2. Purchase papermaking frames at a local craft supply store or construct some by using deep, wooden-edged photo frames (remove glass and other inserts) and soft hardware cloth (screen fabric). Cut the screen material slightly larger than the size of the frame. Using a staple gun, staple the material tautly along the interior of the frame. Another hand-made option is to use an embroidery hoop and hardware cloth. Cut a round piece of material slightly larger than the hoop and secure it tautly in place between the inner and outer loops using the tightening screw.



- Each papermaking station should have the following: 1 screen, 1 cloth towel (size of a hand towel), 1-2 sponges, and 1 plastic bin. Gather your materials based on the number of stations you need.



Activity:

- Set up the papermaking station(s), clearing table or desk surfaces of items that you do not want to get wet. Fill the plastic bin with water deep enough to just submerge the screen. Have students tear the used paper into 1-inch pieces. Demonstrate steps 2-8 below before placing students in small groups. If you have enough stations for each group to work simultaneously, you can have older students assist each other at their assigned station. If you only have 1-2 stations, have small groups take turns working at the papermaking station while other groups do seat work as they wait their turn.

- Create paper pulp by placing a handful of 1-inch paper pieces into the blender jar and add water until it is about 2/3 full. Blend at medium speed until paper and water are thoroughly mixed. Continue adding paper in small amounts and blend until pulp looks like watery oatmeal.



- Place the screen flat onto the surface of the water in the plastic bin, making sure any latch is secure. Measure 1 cup of paper pulp from the blender jar and pour into the center of the screen, swirling the pulp gently with your fingertips to make sure the pulp has spread evenly over the surface.

- With both hands, lift the screen out of the water, letting the water drain off. Place the screen flat on the tabletop, paper pulp facing up.

- Open the latch or screw (if there is one) and lay the towel flat along the pulp's surface. Gently, but firmly, press the sponge on top of the towel to absorb water from the paper pulp, wringing water back into the bin. Make sure to lift and press the sponge evenly on all portions of the pulp, do not rub. Repeat until most of the water has been removed.



Extensions:

- Have students estimate how many sheets of used paper it took to make one sheet of recycled paper.
- Encourage students to make posters or signs (on reused paper, of course) about ways to conserve, reuse and recycle paper at school.
- Papermaking can be a starting point for implementing (or improving) a recycling program at your school. Students can make signs to be displayed throughout the school featuring statistics and facts about paper consumption and recycling. Contact your local recycling company to inquire about how much paper recycling is collected from your school. (Continued next page.)



6. To remove the pressed paper pulp from the screen, start at one corner and carefully peel back the towel making sure the pulp fibers are adhered to it. Continue until fully removed. (Hint: If the pulp sticks to the screen instead of the towel, lay it back down and continue pressing water out with the sponge, then try again.)

7. Lay the towel with the pressed paper pulp facing up on the table. Place a piece of newspaper on top of the pressed pulp. Slide one flat hand under the towel, palm up, and place the other hand on top of the newspaper. Gently flip the 'paper sandwich' until the newspaper is on the bottom. Place it flat on a dry area of the tabletop.
8. From the corner, carefully peel the towel off the top of the pressed pulp. This time it should stick to the newspaper. (Hint: If the pressed pulp sticks to the cloth towel, gently loosen it from the towel with your fingers as you pull it away.) The pressed paper pulp will need to dry for 24-48 hours on the newspaper, after which the new piece of recycled paper is ready for use!
9. After the demonstration is complete, have small groups of students work together to make their own sheets of paper at designated stations, or on rotation through one papermaking station using steps 3-8 above.
10. Have students write their names on their newspaper sheets for easy tracking. After the new recycled papers have dried, students may peel them off the newspaper and decorate with markers or paints, cut them into shapes, make cards, create bookmarks, and/or use them for another follow-up activity.



Extensions: (continued)

- To decorate your new paper, add any of the following to the wet pulp on the screen before applying the towel and pressing:
 - small pieces of dark or bright-colored paper
 - dark or bright-colored paper pulp shaped by cookie cutters
 - seeds
 - dried flowers
 - leaves

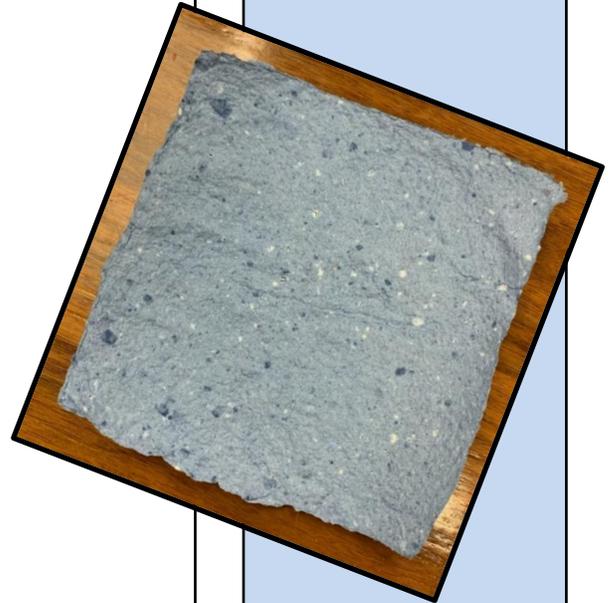


Assessment:

Have students draw a diagram or write a paragraph about the materials and steps needed to make new paper from old paper. Have then write an additional paragraph about why recycling paper is good for the environment.

Related Activities:

- Eco-Wise School Supplies – Chapter 1
- “One or None” Paper Towel Campaign – Chapter 5
- Paper Reduction Campaign – Chapter 6
- Reducing Junk Mail – Chapter 10
- Schoolwide Recycling Collection – Chapter 18
- Creative Crayon Recycling – Chapter 20



Carton/Drink Container Recycling Campaign



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Snapshot

This campaign and prize drawing (conducted with multiple schools or grade-levels within a school) can have a significant effect on the volume of drink containers recycled in the cafeteria and throughout the school building.

<https://bit.ly/eco-cycle-zero-waste-schools-guide>

Objective: Students will learn which drink containers are recyclable and help their grade-level or school increase the volume of containers diverted from the landfill.

Age Groups: K-12th grade

Setting: School building

Project Duration:

- Preparation and campaign: 2 weeks
- Collections: ongoing

Materials:

- Recycling bins
- Posters
- Handouts
- Drink containers (milk/juice cartons, juice box, aluminum can, steel can, plastic bottle, juice pouch)
- Plastic straws from cartons and juice pouches
- Prizes

Why This Project Matters:

The most commonly recycled materials in schools are paper and cardboard. Milk and juice cartons (which are composed mostly of paper fibers) are the most prevalent drink containers in school lunches. To increase the environmental benefits of a school's existing recycling program, adding drink container recycling in the cafeteria and/or classrooms is an important expansion. It greatly increases the variety of materials diverted from the landfill and the types of natural resources saved.

Project Summary:

Through posters, announcements, family letters, and bin distribution, this campaign and prize drawing promotes carton and drink container recycling at school and at home. For significant diversion, cartons are targeted in communities that recycle this packaging. Other drink containers, made of aluminum, steel, and plastic, are usually commingled together with cartons for collection.



Implementation:

This recycling campaign can be conducted as a district-wide project where individual schools participate, or as a school-wide project where individual grade-levels participate. Either way, the project incentivizes schools to fully implement drink container recycling by providing infrastructure (collection bins) where needed, educational messages (posters, announcements, letters), and a motivational prize drawing.

Many schools in the U.S. provide Breakfast in the Classroom programs, which generate more drink containers (usually cartons) in the classroom than schools without the program. Emphasize drink container collections in classrooms if a Breakfast in the Classroom program is in place.

Ways to involve a student group:

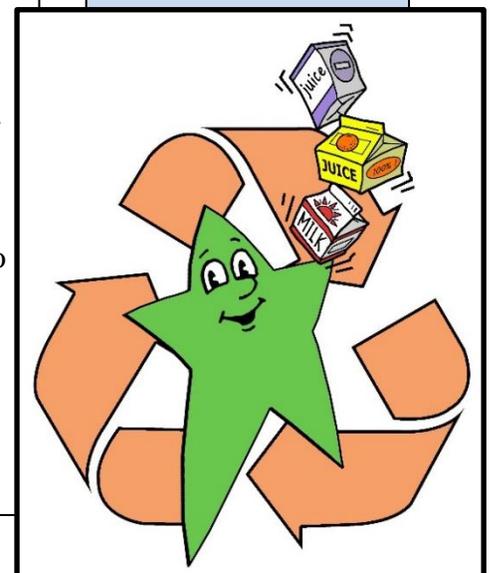
A student sponsor group can help promote the campaign within an individual school, whether the contest is being conducted between several schools or between grade-levels in one school. Find a student group that is interested, such as student council, eco-club, a science class, or a leadership group.

Project tasks:

1. At the district level, survey all school head custodians to determine current participation in drink container recycling and if they need additional bins to enhance collections. For a grade-level contest, determine which classrooms and other areas of the school already collect these materials and which need bins. Ideally, collection bins will be placed in classrooms (5 gal.), kitchens (11-20 gal.), staff lounges (11-20 gal.), cafeterias (32 gal.), and school hallways with vending machines (20-32 gal.).
2. Acquire funds or donations to provide the needed containers and prizes for the contest. Determine the prizes based on what will motivate the schools or grade-levels to participate (\$200-\$500 cash prizes for winning schools; pizza party, principal recognition, or \$50-\$100 for classroom supplies for winning grade-levels).
3. Distribute a promotional flyer (see sample below) to all schools in the district or all grade-levels in the school.
4. Once all schools/grade-levels have registered, provide them with a prize-drawing checklist (see sample below) and a container-order form. Order the containers and classroom/cafeteria posters needed for all participants.
5. Meet with participating custodians to discuss the specifics of bin placement and emptying procedures. Provide hall, kitchen, cafeteria, and staff lounge recycling bins for distribution, cafeteria poster, and Carton Council's *Carton Recycling in Schools Best Practices Guide* (see below).
6. Provide a family letter and student activity sheets (see below) to each participating school's office manager for distribution to families the week before the contest begins. Include a link to your local recycling center's guidelines. This will encourage more home recycling.
7. Provide PA system announcements (see sample below) to each school's office manager or grade-level coordinators to be read during the contest.
8. If working with a student group, schedule and facilitate 30-60-minute meeting(s) to cover the following:
 - Inform and motivate students by sharing why this campaign matters using the meeting-presentation outline (see sample below).

Extensions:

- Have students write an essay or paragraph describing their experiences when promoting recycling at home, to their friends, or to a scout or other youth group.
- Find more information at Carton Council's website:
<https://www.cartonopportunities.org/schools>



- Explain that the students are critical to promoting the campaign to their school community. Supply them with the prize-drawing checklist, PA system announcements, and sample posters (see below).
 - Create a timeline to accomplish promotional tasks.
9. For a district-wide or school-wide campaign, coordinate with each school's administration to provide a 15-minute training at an upcoming faculty meeting. Show examples of recyclable and non-recyclable drink containers, the new classroom bins, and classroom-sized posters. Explain the prize drawing (see meeting-presentation outline sample below). Teachers may take their classroom bins and posters when exiting the meeting, or the student group members may distribute them later. Emphasize the importance of distributing the containers and posters, sending out the family letter (with activity sheets attached), and reading the announcements to enable the school to qualify for the prize drawing. (A student group can help with these tasks.)
 10. Once each school or grade level has completed the required tasks, have them turn in their checklist as their prize drawing entry. Randomly draw and award the prizes. Announce the winners through school newsletters and social media.
 11. Check in for the first several weeks with the administration, custodial staff, and teachers to make sure the ongoing collection system is working. Offer additional support as needed.

Assessment:

Track the number of participants who are recycling cartons and other drink containers by surveying students in the lunchroom and classrooms. Interview custodial staff about changes they see in student and staff behavior, and if they can provide data for the volume of drink containers now being recycled.

Related Activities:

- Waste-Free Lunch 1: Classroom Challenge – Chapter 2
- Waste-Free Lunch 2: School Contest – Chapter 2
- Refillable Water Bottle Project – Chapter 3
- Schoolwide Recycling Collection – Chapter 18

Note: When using the following documents to create your own, **green text refers to the district-wide version** of this project, while **blue text refers to the grade-level version**.



Sample Promotional Flyer for Campaign:



Boost Recycling of Drink Containers for a Chance to Win (Prize) for your School/Grade!

(Sponsor) is partnering with your **district/school** to save natural resources by increasing drink container recycling at home and at school.

The prize drawing is simple, with a 1-in-___ chance to win!!

Register by (insert date here)!

Call or email (insert contact information here) to register today!

Program Requirements:

Once registered, complete these simple steps to qualify for the prize drawing:

- Identify areas in your **school/grade-level** that need additional drink container recycling bins.
- Order and place additional drink container recycling bins in desired locations.
- Send a letter home to families that promotes container recycling (provided).
- Display posters in the cafeteria and classrooms (provided).
- Read three announcements reminding students and staff to recycle containers (provided).
- Schedule a 15-minute recycling refresher presentation **as part of an upcoming faculty meeting/for your class.**

*That's it! When these tasks are completed, your **school/class** will be entered into the prize drawing!*

Sample Faculty/Grade-Level or Student Group
Meeting-Presentation Outline:

Drink Container Recycling Prize Drawing

Materials:

- Carton and drink container recycling props
- Collection containers for cafeteria, classroom, etc.
- Posters for cafeteria and classrooms
- Prize drawing checklist

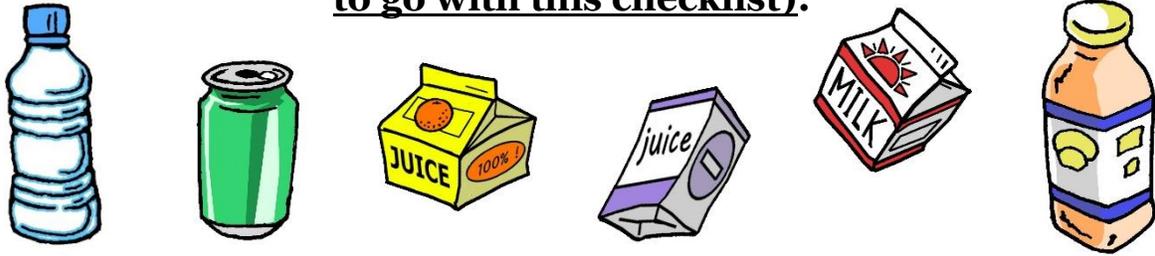
I. Your school/grade-level is participating in our drink container recycling promotion and prize drawing!

- A. I'm here today to talk about the prize drawing and to tell you about important/new materials that can be recycled at your school.
- B. Lunch is the biggest garbage-producing time of day in most schools, so recycling drink containers is very important. Cartons are the most frequently used drink containers in schools nationwide, so recycling milk and juice cartons at school really helps the environment.

II. Prize Drawing

- A. This project is designed to increase awareness about drink container recycling by providing collection bins (if needed), and by sharing reminders and guidelines about what containers are or are not recyclable.
- B. The prize drawing is open to all schools in our district/grade-levels in our school. Any school/grade-level that completes a set of promotional activities for drink container recycling will be able to enter. The prizes are (prizes). The winners will be randomly drawn from all entries submitted.
- C. The following are the promotional activities required of each participating school/grade-level (a check list of these activities is provided). In the next few days, new collection bins will be put in place, letters about container recycling will be going home to families, announcements will be read to promote the recycling of cartons and other drink containers, and posters will be displayed in the cafeteria/classrooms.
- D. Let's go over how to recycle drink containers properly. (Show and discuss all drink containers that are recyclable in your community, including plastic bottles, steel cans, aluminum cans, and milk/juice cartons. Also, show the project posters and new collection bins that will be placed around the building. Explain that juice pouches and straws are not recyclable. Emphasize that all liquids must be emptied from any drink container before recycling it. In some communities, plastic bottle lids can be put back on the bottle for recycling.)
- E. After completing the promotions, your school/grade-level will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win a prize (**\$300 for one school in the district-wide prize drawing/\$50 for two grade-levels in school-wide prize drawing**). Prize winners will be announced by: (date).

Sample Prize-Drawing Checklist (create a container-order form to go with this checklist):



Drink Container Recycling Prize Drawing

- Complete these steps to qualify for the **\$300(school) / \$50(grade-level)** prize drawing.
- Once all the steps are completed, email this document to (contact).
- Winners will be announced on (date).
- Prize-drawing requirements and checklist should be completed and submitted to (contact) by (date).

For school-wide campaigns:

- ___ Ordered and placed drink container recycling bins in staff lounge, cafeteria, and all classrooms. (Contact (contact) for a form with bin size choices, descriptions, and suggested uses.)
- ___ Large posters were displayed in the cafeteria.
- ___ Family letter was sent home to all families (including activity sheets).
- ___ Three announcements were read to the entire school.
- ___ Mini-posters for the classroom were distributed to all staff.

For grade-level campaigns:

- ___ Ordered and placed drink container recycling bins in staff lounge, cafeteria, and all classrooms. (Contact (contact) for a form with bin size choices, descriptions, and suggested uses.)
- ___ Mini-posters were displayed in the classrooms.
- ___ Family letter was sent home to all families (including activity sheets).
- ___ Three announcements were read to each class.

That's it!

Your **school/grade level** is now qualified for the prize drawing!

Sample PA System Announcements:



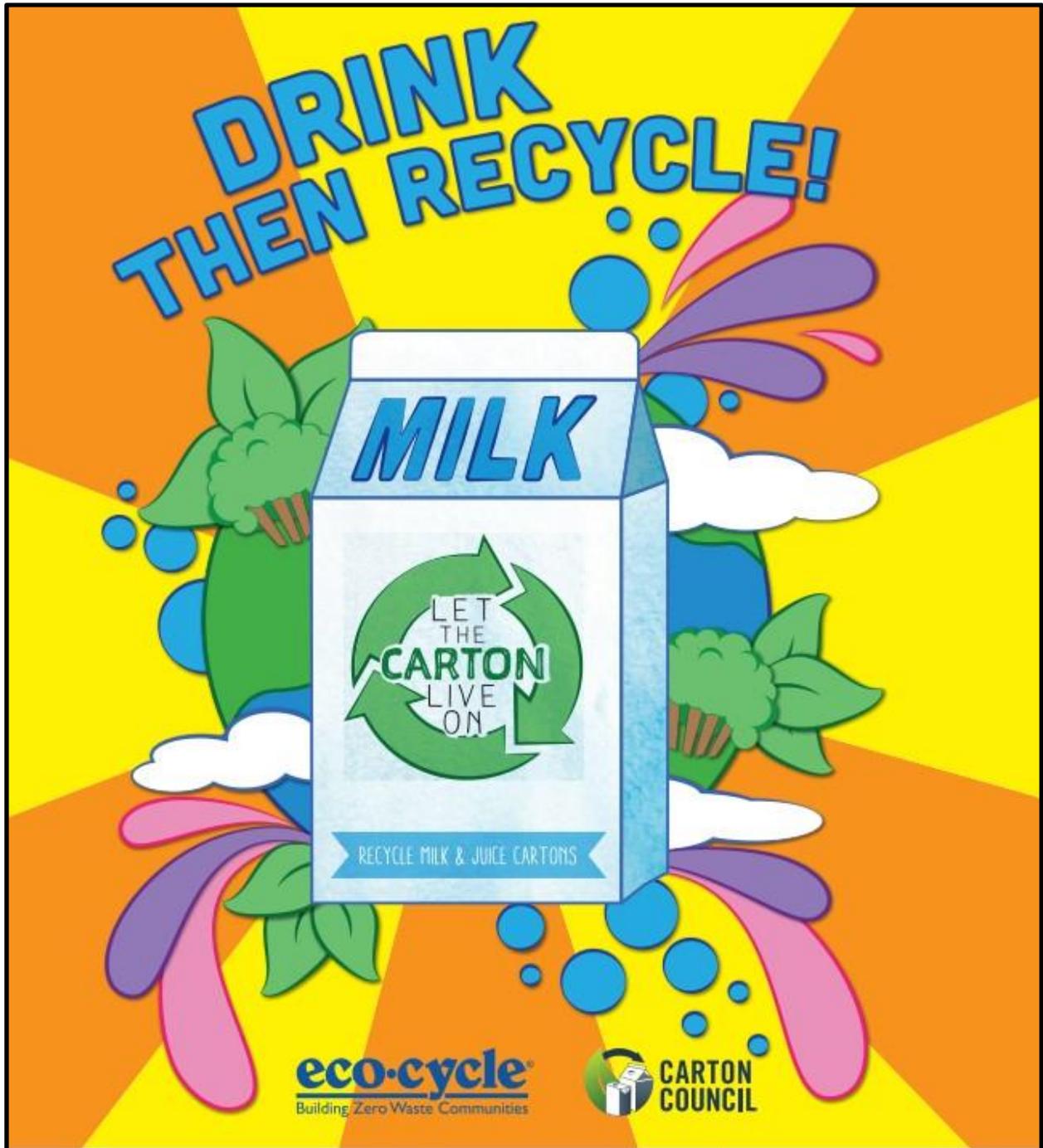
Drink Container Recycling Prize Drawing

These announcements promote drink container recycling at home and at school. Please read one per day to the entire school/grade level during the contest week.

This is one of the steps that must be completed to qualify for the prize drawing!

1. Did you know that all types of cartons and juice boxes can be recycled? Put them in the recycling bins at school or at home, along with aluminum cans, steel cans, plastic bottles, glass bottles, and aluminum foil. The paper inside the cartons and juice boxes will be recycled into new tissues, office paper, and even ceiling tiles!
2. Did you know that the average U.S. elementary school uses 53,200 cartons every year? Any cartons or juice boxes that we have at school can be recycled! Lots of foods that you consume at home also come in cartons, including milk, juice, soup, and broth. These cartons can also be recycled, but please make sure that all cartons are empty first! Also, please put any straws in the trash. Straws and juice pouches can't be recycled. Teach your family about recycling cartons and other drink containers at home tonight!
3. Making new paper from the used paper in milk cartons, instead of making paper from trees, makes 74% less air pollution and 35% less water pollution. Of course, recycling cartons and juice boxes also reduces trash. If you like breathing clean air, drinking clean water, and making less trash, put empty cartons and juice boxes in the recycling bin. And, for the sake of the Earth, remember to recycle plastic bottles, glass bottles, steel cans, aluminum foil, and aluminum cans too!

Printable High School Poster:



Remember to recycle these :



And landfill these:



Printable Elementary Poster:

**DRINK,
THEN RECYCLE!**



**HELP THE EARTH!
RECYCLE YOUR DRINK CONTAINERS!**

Remember to recycle these containers:



And landfill these:



eco-cycle
Building Zero Waste Communities

**CARTON
COUNCIL**

Sample Family Letter:



Dear Families,

Did you know that cartons for milk, juice, soup, soy milk, cream and more are recyclable at home *and* at school? Your school is partnering with (sponsor) to raise awareness about *recycling all drink containers- from milk cartons and juice boxes to plastic bottles and aluminum cans*. Your school/grade-level is participating with other schools/grade-levels by displaying posters, making informative announcements, and promoting drink container recycling throughout the school building to qualify to enter a prize drawing for (prize) !

Cool Carton Recycling Facts:

- Recycling the paper fiber in cartons results in 74% less air pollution and 35% less water pollution than producing new paper from trees.
- The company ReWall recycles cartons into ceiling tiles, wall panels, and other materials without using glue, chemicals, or water. Each truckload of ReWall building products represents about 300,000 recycled cartons.
- Cartons that contain a layer of aluminum are shelf stable, meaning the food or drink inside doesn't need to be refrigerated, saving energy during transportation and storage.

Recyclable Cartons Include:



Make sure cartons are
empty and rinsed.

Please don't flatten!



No straws in recycling, please!

Help your family recycle as much as possible by following the current guidelines for recycling in your area. If packing a lunch from home, consider including a reusable or recyclable drink container in lunches. (Include a link to local recycling guidelines.)

In addition, check out the just-for-fun carton recycling activities for kids following this letter!

Sponsored by:

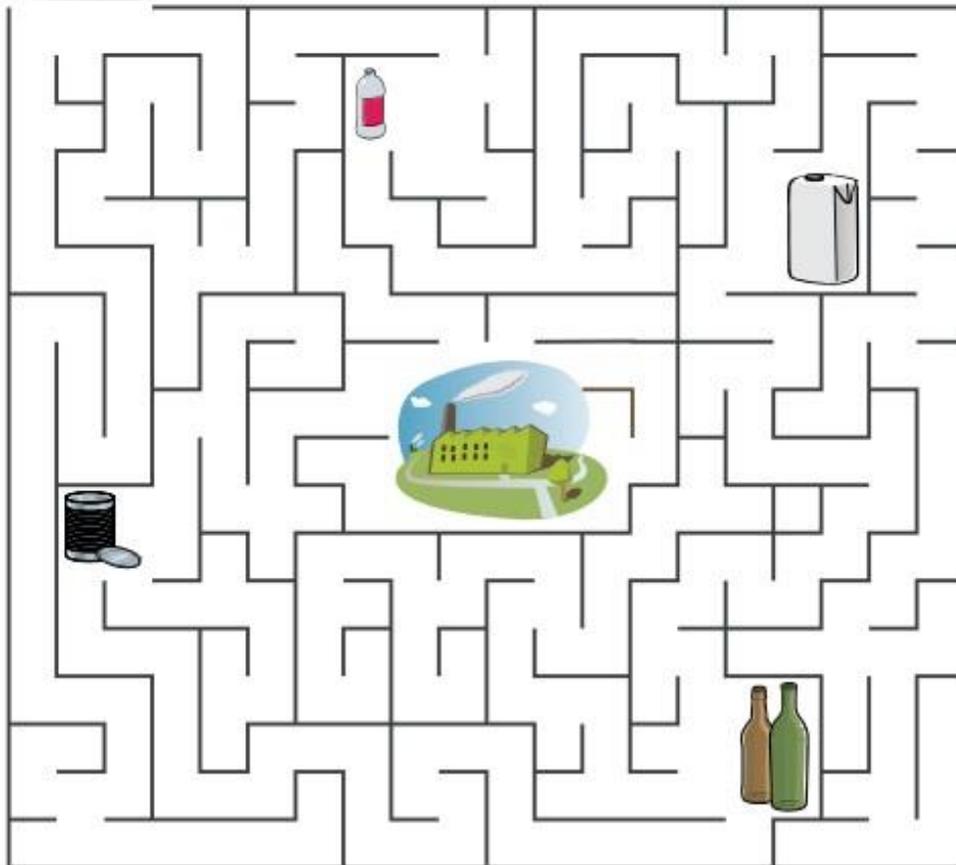
Printable Upper Elementary Activity (see more Carton Council activities at <https://www.cartonopportunities.org/schools/>):



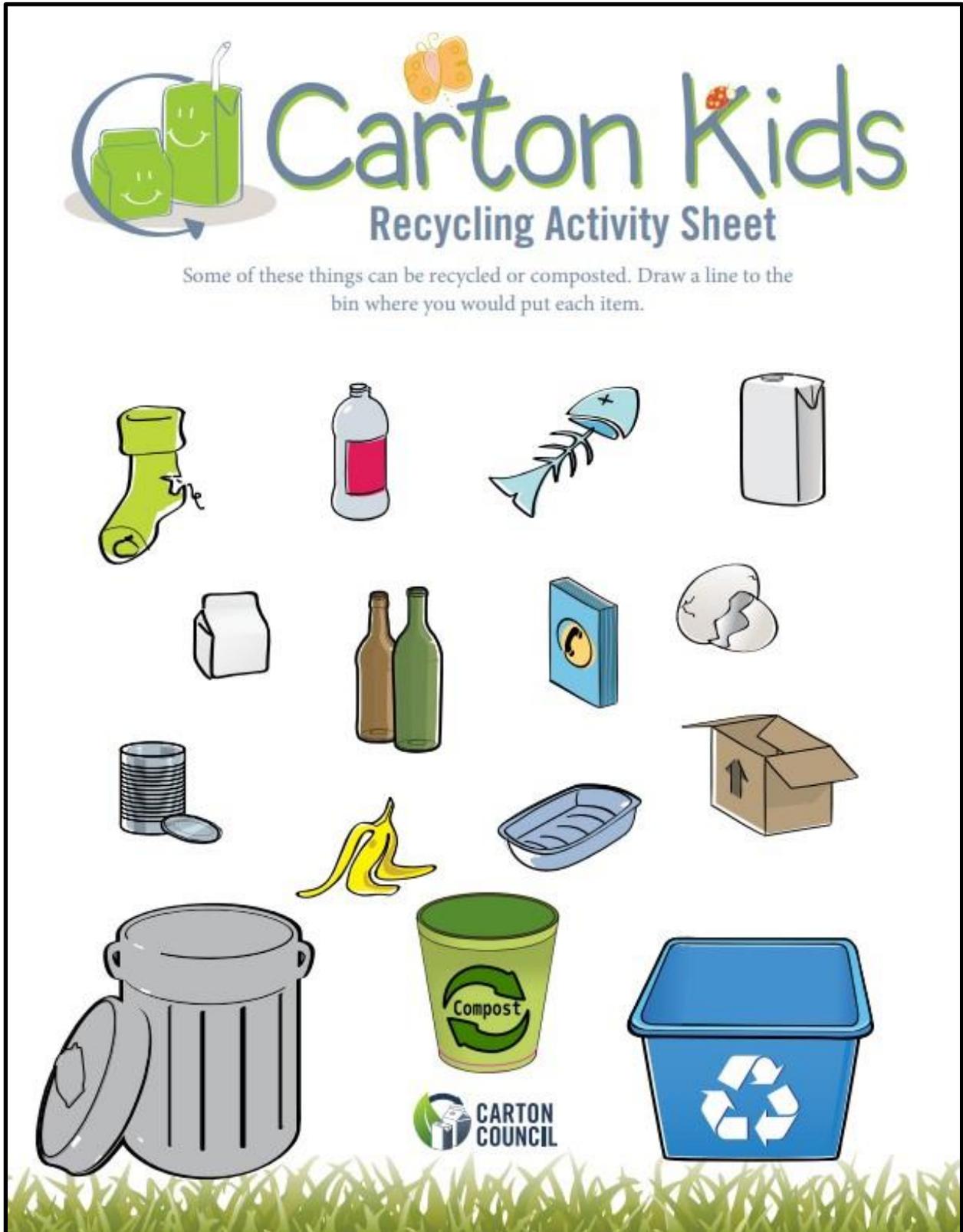
Carton Kids

Recycling Activity Sheet

Help our truck pick up all the recyclables and get them to the recycle factory.



Printable Primary Activity (see more Carton Council activities at <https://www.cartonopportunities.org/schools>):



Carton Kids
Recycling Activity Sheet

Some of these things can be recycled or composted. Draw a line to the bin where you would put each item.

The activity sheet features a grid of 15 items for classification: a green boot, a plastic water bottle, a fish skeleton, a metal can, a carton of milk, two glass bottles, a CD/DVD case, an eggshell, a stack of coins, a banana peel, a metal tray, and a cardboard box. At the bottom, there are three bins: a grey trash bin, a green compost bin with a recycling symbol and the word 'Compost', and a blue recycling bin with a recycling symbol. The Carton Council logo is also present at the bottom center.

Sample Pages from *Carton Recycling in Schools Best Practices Guide* by Carton Council (see full guide and other resources at

<https://www.cartonopportunities.org/schools>):



CARTON RECYCLING IN SCHOOLS

Best Practices Guide



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.***



PROGRAM TIPS

1. 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

6. Find your champion



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



CartonOpportunities.org

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