

# NYC School Recycling Guide

**RECYCLING OVERVIEW • SET UP & SET OUT GUIDELINES  
TIP SHEETS & CHECKLISTS • EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES**



**NYC**  
Recycles

[nyc.gov/recycle](http://nyc.gov/recycle)  
f t i y **NYCRecycles**

# NYC SCHOOL RECYCLING GUIDE

This guide is for NYC public, private, and charter schools that receive trash and recycling collection by the Department of Sanitation, including schools that are receiving NYC Organics Collection. Schools located in leased commercial spaces that are serviced by private waste carters must follow business recycling regulations. For more information about commercial recycling in NYC, visit [nyc.gov/recycle](https://nyc.gov/recycle).

Use our Online Order Form to get free copies of this guide and other materials for your school:

[on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials](https://on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials).

## Recycling Overview

<b>Legal Requirements</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What Can Be Recycled?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>What Happens to NYC recyclables?</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>What Can't Go in the Recycling and Trash for Schools?</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Why Is Recycling Important?</b>	<b>5</b>

## Set Up Your School

<b>Recycling Planning Meeting</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Recycling Setup</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Cafeteria and Kitchen Setup</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Maintain Recycling Areas</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Cafeteria Waste Sorting Station</b>	<b>9</b>

## Set Out Materials

<b>Internal Collection and Storage</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Curbside Setout</b>	<b>10</b>

## Communicate and Educate

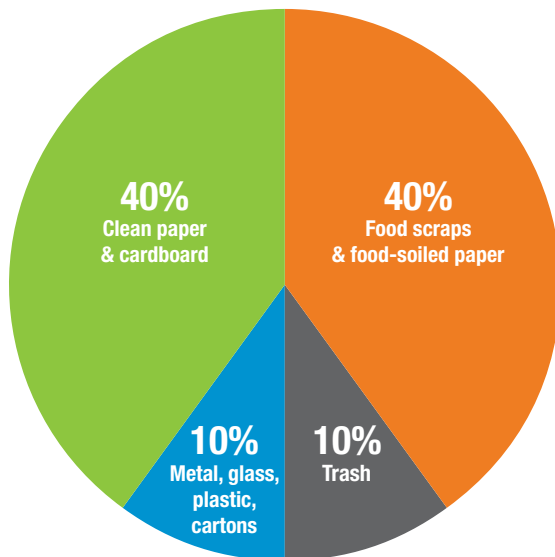
<b>Overview</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Tips Sheets:</b>	
Custodian Tip Sheet for NYC Organics Collection	<b>13</b>
Kitchen Staff Tip Sheet for NYC Organics Collection	<b>14</b>
<b>Checklists:</b>	
Principal and Assistant Principal Checklist	<b>15</b>
Sustainability Coordinator Checklist	<b>16</b>
Custodian Engineer, Building Manager, or Facilities Manager Checklist	<b>17, 18</b>
Kitchen Manager Checklist	<b>19</b>
Teachers Checklist	<b>19</b>
Green Team Checklist	<b>20</b>
<b>DSNY Golden Apple Awards</b>	<b>21</b>
Recycling Activities for Students	<b>22</b>
Cleanup and Gardening Activities for Students	<b>23</b>
Waste Prevention Activities for Students	<b>24</b>
<b>DSNY Resources for Schools</b>	<b>25</b>
Recycling Materials Worksheet	<b>26</b>
Educational Materials Worksheet	<b>27</b>
<b>Additional Resources for Schools</b>	<b>27</b>

# RECYCLING OVERVIEW

## Legal Requirements

- 1. All schools are required by law to recycle. Recycling in schools is mandated by Local Law 19** (1989), Local Law 41 (2010), DSNY Recycling Rules, and the NYC Department of Education Chancellor's Regulation A-850. Local Law 77 mandates Organics Collection in participating schools.
  - Schools must recycle in cafeterias, classrooms, offices, entranceways, common areas, and anywhere else waste is discarded.
  - Recyclables must be sorted into separate bins (see "What Can Be Recycled?", next page).
  - Waste sorting stations and recycling areas must be maintained and clearly labeled.
- 2. To comply with recycling mandates, Principals are required to appoint a school Sustainability Coordinator.**
  - Sustainability Coordinators are responsible for promoting correct recycling procedures among staff and students.
  - For details about appointing a Sustainability Coordinator, visit [schools.nyc.gov/sustainability](https://schools.nyc.gov/sustainability).
- 3. Sustainability Coordinators are required to create an annual sustainability plan that includes waste reduction and recycling goals.**
  - Because school recycling requires coordination between various key staff members, this plan must be agreed upon and signed by Principals, Custodian Engineers, and Sustainability Coordinators every year.
  - For details about developing an annual sustainability plan, visit [schools.nyc.gov/sustainability](https://schools.nyc.gov/sustainability).

### What's in NYC school waste?



*Schools can recycle approximately **50%** of their waste through curbside collection.*

*Schools that are participating in NYC Organics Collection can recycle approximately **90%** of their waste.*

# What Can Be Recycled?

Sanitation collects recyclables in two separate streams:

## Mixed Paper



- newspapers, magazines, catalogs
- white & colored paper
- mail & envelopes
- paper bags
- wrapping paper
- soft-cover books

## Cardboard



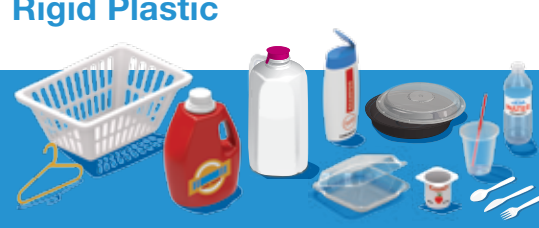
- cardboard egg cartons & trays
- smooth cardboard
- corrugated cardboard boxes

## Metal



- metal cans
- aluminum foil wrap & trays
- metal caps & lids
- other metal items

## Rigid Plastic



- glass bottles and jars
- plastic bottles, jugs, and jars
- rigid plastic caps & lids

## Glass bottles & jars

## Cartons



- rigid plastic containers, housewares & packaging
- food & beverage cartons & drink boxes

If your school receives NYC Organics Collection, Sanitation also collects your school's **food scraps & food-soiled paper** ("organics").

## Food



- Vegetables and fruit
- Prepared foods
- Baked goods
- Cereal, flour, grains, pasta, and rice

## Food Soiled Paper



- Eggs and eggshells
- Dairy products
- Nuts, meat, fish, and bones
- Paper towels and napkins
- Paper plates
- Coffee filters and tea bags
- Paper bags
- Paper trays and plant-based compostable trays
- Paper food boats

For complete information about what to recycle and other ways to reduce waste, visit [nyc.gov/recycle](https://nyc.gov/recycle).

## What Happens to NYC's Recyclables?

**Clean paper & cardboard** are brought to local paper recycling facilities that separate and sell the baled paper, or directly to a paper mill on Staten Island.

**Metal, glass, plastic, and cartons** are brought to a local Materials Recovery Facility that sorts, bales, and sells the material. This facility offers educational tours (see more info on p. 25).

**Food scraps & food-soiled paper** are brought to regional facilities where the material is turned into compost, a natural soil fertilizer. Organic waste may also be turned into renewable energy.

## What Can't Go in the Recycling and Trash for Schools?

Electronics, fluorescent bulbs, rechargeable batteries, and other hazardous waste items require special handling and disposal, and can't go in regular recycling or trash.

As an alternative to disposal, look into donating working electronics, usable furniture, and other items through NYC WasteMatch, an online materials exchange: **wastematch.org**.

Unless they're donated or resold for reuse, electronics must be recycled. Public schools must follow guidelines for how to dispose of obsolete equipment and furniture described in the **DOE Division of Financial Operations Inventory Standard Operating Procedures**.

Check with your school custodian about proper disposal of items like fluorescent bulbs, rechargeable batteries, and phones.

## Why Is Recycling Important?

- **Sending waste to landfills is expensive.** NYC spends over \$300 million a year just to get rid of trash we don't want. Recycling and Organics Collection lets NYC use taxpayer dollars to fund things we do want.
- **Recycling at school offers hands-on learning in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).**
- **Students learn environmental stewardship and leadership.** Student Green Teams can monitor school recycling efforts, and teach staff and other students about sustainability.
- **Proper waste management keeps schools cleaner,** helps reduce pests, and minimizes neighborhood complaints.
- **It's easy.** Keeping recyclables and food scraps separate very quickly becomes second nature.



# SET UP YOUR SCHOOL

## Recycling Planning Meeting

Principals or Sustainability Coordinators should hold a recycling planning meeting to review school recycling procedures and staff roles.

Discuss the following topics:

- ✓ Legal school recycling requirements.
- ✓ Your school's sustainability plan.
- ✓ What to recycle.
- ✓ Staff roles for setting up and maintaining recycling areas in classrooms, offices, hallways, and auditoriums.
- ✓ Staff roles for setting up and maintaining waste sorting stations in cafeterias and kitchens.
- ✓ Proper storage and setout of material for Sanitation collection.
- ✓ Integrating sustainability into educational curriculums to increase success of school recycling and meet Common Core requirements.
- ✓ View DSNY's school recycling training videos on these topics: **[nyc.gov/recycle](http://nyc.gov/recycle)**.
- ✓ Introduce and share contact information for key people so staff know how to report and resolve potential recycling issues.
- ✓ List next steps and create an action plan.



# Recycling Setup

**Recycling areas should be set up everywhere waste is discarded in your school.** This includes all classrooms, offices, and common areas (hallways, auditorium, gym, library, lobbies, and outdoor areas).

- **All classrooms** need a **trash** bin and a **clean paper & cardboard** recycling bin. Some schools also set up a recycling bin for **metal, glass, plastic, and cartons** in classrooms, or arrange to bring these materials to a hallway recycling bin daily.
- **Schools are responsible for purchasing their own bins.** Public schools can purchase bins through the SDI catalog.
- **Every recycling bin must be labeled.** It is helpful to hang signs or posters above bins, showing what goes in. Use the Recycling Materials Worksheet in this guide when ordering free decals, signs, and posters at [on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials](http://on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials).
- **Always place recycling and trash bins directly next to one another.**
- **Remove any trash or recycling bins that are not part of a recycling area.** Lone bins attract contamination.
- **Use clear plastic bags** to line bins for **metal, glass, plastic, and cartons** and bins for **trash**. Bins for **clean paper & cardboard** do not need to be lined, though most schools do.

## Large bin setup

Good for common areas including hallways, lobby, auditorium, gym, library, and outdoors. Any kind of bin can be used as long as it's labeled clearly.



## Corrugated cardboard boxes

- Flatten boxes.
- Tie in bundles or place in clear plastic bags.



## Small bin setup

Good for classrooms and offices. Any kind of bins (even cardboard boxes) can be used for paper recycling, as long as they are labeled clearly.



Set up bins for **metal, glass, plastic, and cartons** if eating is allowed in classrooms, or arrange to bring these materials to hallway recycling bin daily.

## Cafeteria and Kitchen Setup

**Custodians should set up as many waste sorting stations as needed in cafeterias and kitchens.**

**Every bin should be labeled with a decal and the appropriate poster hung above it.** Use the Recycling Materials Worksheet in this guide when ordering free decals, signs, and posters at [on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials](https://on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials).

- **Any kind of bins can be used to collect trash and recycling**, as long as they are labeled clearly. Schools are responsible for purchasing their own bins. DOE schools: see SDI catalog. For NYC Organics Collection, **food scraps & food-soiled paper** must be collected in the specially designed brown food scraps bins provided by Sanitation.
- **Remove any trash or recycling bins that are not part of a waste sorting station.** Lone bins attract contamination.
- **Cafeterias should have bins for clean paper & cardboard recycling if these are commonly discarded here** (example: if the room is used for meetings). Kitchens must have an area to collect paper & cardboard.

## Maintain Recycling Areas

**Maintain waste sorting stations and recycling areas by keeping them clean and orderly.**

If trash or recycling bins need to be moved, always return them to their original location. This will help prevent people from discarding items in the wrong bins.

Replace bin decals and posters if they tear, become soiled, start to peel, etc. Use the Recycling Materials Worksheet in this guide when ordering free decals, signs, and posters at [on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials](https://on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials).



*Food scraps and food-soiled paper poster*



*Metal, glass, plastic, and cartons poster*



*Liquids poster*



*Trash landfill poster for schools without NYC Organics Collection*



*Trash landfill poster for schools with NYC Organics Collection*



*Mixed paper and cardboard poster*

Free posters and other materials for setting up your school can be ordered at [on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials](https://on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials).



# Cafeteria Waste Sorting Station

POSTERS



DECALS

## Liquids

Provide a bucket with a strainer for students to pour liquids into before recycling bottles, cans, milk cartons, juice boxes, and cups.

## Metal, glass, plastic, cartons

Bottles, cans, milk cartons, plastic utensils, foil, takeout containers, and yogurt cups are some of the items that go in the blue-labeled bin.

## Trash

**Trash** includes plastic bags, chip bags, plastic wrap, and foam plastics.

Schools without NYC Organics Collection discard food scraps and soiled paper, including compostable trays, in trash.

## Food scraps, food-soiled paper

Only schools with NYC Organics Collection use the labeled brown food scraps bins provided by Sanitation.

Note: Cafeterias should have bins for **clean paper & cardboard** recycling if these are commonly discarded here (example: if the room is used for meetings). Kitchens must have an area to collect paper & cardboard.

# SET OUT MATERIALS

## Internal Collection and Storage

**Never combine recycling streams or trash in the same bag.** **Clean paper & cardboard** should never be mixed with **metal, plastic, glass, and cartons** in the same bag. **Trash** should never be mixed with any recyclables.

**Using a dual-bin dolly helps to collect waste efficiently** and keep waste streams separate.

**Store trash and recyclables in a secure location.** Make sure to keep trash and recyclables in separate piles. For example, don't put bags of **clean paper & cardboard** in the same pile with bags of **trash**.



Dual-bin dolly



Keep bags of recyclables and trash in separate piles

## Curbside Setout

### SCHOOLS WITHOUT NYC ORGANICS COLLECTION

**School truck:** DSNY collects trash from most NYC schools every weeknight. If your school receives daily collection, set out recyclables and trash according to this schedule:

Clean paper & cardboard	Monday, Wednesday, Friday	Set out by 4 pm on day of collection
Metal, glass, plastic, and cartons	Tuesday, Thursday	
Trash	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday	

**Neighborhood schedule:** If your school is not on a daily collection schedule, your recycling and trash are collected on the same schedule as your local neighborhood. Visit [nyc.gov/dsny](https://nyc.gov/dsny) or call 311 for schedule.

**Dumpsters:** Some large schools may use separate dumpsters for **trash** and **clean paper & cardboard**. However, **metal, glass, plastic, and cartons** are always collected curbside in clear bags.



*Set out trash and recyclables in distinct piles on the correct day.*

SCHOOLS WITH NYC ORGANICS COLLECTION

Clean paper & cardboard	Monday, Wednesday, Friday	Set out by 4 pm on day of collection
Metal, glass, plastic, and cartons	Tuesday, Thursday	
Food scraps & food-soiled paper	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday	
Trash	Same as neighborhood schedule. Visit <a href="https://nyc.gov/dsny">nyc.gov/dsny</a> or call 311 for schedule.	Set out after 4 pm the night before, or before 6 am the morning of collection



*Mon, Wed, Fri: set out brown bins and paper recycling*



*Tue, Thu: set out brown bins and bags of metal, glass, plastic, and cartons*

# COMMUNICATE AND EDUCATE

**Make sure all staff and students are familiar with school recycling procedures.** This includes how waste sorting stations work in cafeterias and kitchens, where recycling areas are located throughout the building, and what items go in each bin.

**Educate students about the importance of waste reduction and recycling.** Schools that show students why and how to reduce waste and recycle have more successful recycling programs.

**The following pages contain helpful resources for communicating recycling procedures and educating students:**

- **Custodian and Kitchen Staff Tip Sheets.** These can be photocopied and posted in relevant areas for reference.
- **Checklists.** Distribute to each member of your school (according to who they are) to make sure they know what role they play in making your school's recycling program work.
- **Activity Pages.** Ideas on how to actively engage students in your school's recycling, cleanup and gardening, and waste prevention efforts. More detailed information about student activities can be found on [on.nyc.gov/RRResources](http://on.nyc.gov/RRResources).
- **Golden Apple Awards.** Info on how to win huge cash prizes for your applied-learning sustainability projects.
- **DSNY Resources for Schools.** Find out about DSNY curriculum and other educational materials, online training videos, and field trip and tour opportunities.
- **Recycling Materials Worksheet.** Use this worksheet to figure out how many decals and posters you need to set up your school recycling program.
- **Educational Materials Worksheet.** You can also order free educational materials to be used in the classroom.
- **Additional School Resources.** Discover and learn more about the resources provided by local NYC environmental organizations.





# Custodian Tip Sheet for NYC Organics Collection

## CAFETERIA SETUP

- Set up cafeteria waste sorting stations that include: **liquids bucket**, **blue-labeled recycling bin**, **trash bin**, **food scraps bin**. Use a setup that works for your school.
- Sanitation provides the brown food scraps bins. Liquids bucket, trash, and recycling bins are purchased by the school.
- Make sure all bins in the cafeteria are part of a waste sorting station. Remove bins that aren't part of the setup.
- Label each bin with a decal and hang the appropriate poster above each bin in the waste sorting station. Use the Recycling Materials Worksheet in this guide when ordering free decals, signs, and posters at [on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials](https://on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials).
- Do not double bag or place bags inside other bags. Line each bin in the waste sorting station with clear plastic bags. Make sure bag liners do not cover up bin decals.
- Wash bins as needed.



*Cafeteria Waste Sorting Station*



## INTERNAL COLLECTION

- Tie the food scraps bags closed and secure the lid of the bin shut.
- DO NOT use brown food scraps bins to transport bags of recyclables or trash.
- After emptying bins, always return them to original location.
- Store **clean paper & cardboard**, **metal, glass, plastic, and cartons**, and **trash** in three separate piles.
- Store bags of **food scraps & food-soiled paper** in the brown food scraps bins provided by Sanitation.

## CURBSIDE SETOUT

- Set bags of **trash** at the curb in distinct piles after 4 pm the night before collection.
- Set food scraps bins at the curb by 4 pm every weekday.
- Set appropriate recyclables at the curb in distinct piles by 4 pm the day of collection.
- Retrieve bins after they have been emptied.



## ISSUES

- Missed collections are extremely rare if bins are set out on time. If the bin was set out by 4 pm and was not emptied overnight, please notify your local DSNY district office.
- For night and weekend events, hold food scraps over until next collection day or discard food scraps with the regular trash.
- To request a new bin, follow the Bin Replacement Protocol listed on [on.nyc.gov/schoolrecycling](https://on.nyc.gov/schoolrecycling).



## Kitchen Staff Tip Sheet for NYC Organics Collection

## CAFETERIA SETUP

- Waste sorting stations include:  
**liquids bucket**, **blue-labeled recycling bin**, **trash bin**, **food scraps bin**.
- Arrange the sorting stations in the same place every day. Make sure that they are orderly and neat.
- Remove any lone trash or recycling bins that are not part of a station.



### Cafeteria Waste Sorting Station

## MAINTENANCE

- Empty the liquids buckets when they are full.
- As usual, wipe down the tables in the cafeteria before and after lunch periods.
- Keep floors, walls, and signage clean and free of food spillage.



## BIN LINERS

- Line each bin in the waste sorting station with clear plastic bags. Make sure bag liners do not cover up bin decals.
- Do not double bag or place bags inside other bags.

**Collect food scraps and food-soiled paper in the brown food scraps bin.**

## Food



## Food Soiled Paper



## IN THE KITCHEN

- Every day after meal preparation, prepare trash and recyclables for collection. Tie bags of food scraps closed, and shut the lid of the bin securely. Stack full bags of food scraps in the food scraps bins. Don't place bags inside other bags.

## ISSUES

- To request a new bin, ask the Custodian Engineer to follow the Bin Replacement Protocol for schools listed on **[on.nyc.gov/schoolrecycling](https://on.nyc.gov/schoolrecycling)**.
- Questions? Contact your supervisor or visit **[on.nyc.gov/schoolrecycling](https://on.nyc.gov/schoolrecycling)**.

# Principal and Assistant Principal Checklist

## Recycling planning meeting

- ☐ Make sure your Sustainability Coordinator schedules and coordinates the recycling planning meeting. Request key staff attend: Principal, Assistant Principal, Sustainability Coordinator, Custodian Engineer, Kitchen Manager, and Teachers.
- ☐ Communicate recycling plans to teachers and staff.

## Recycling setup

- ☐ Take a moment when you enter a room or common area to check that there are properly labeled recycling bins.
- ☐ Be a model recycler. Set up your own office properly for recycling.

## Maintain recycling areas

- ☐ Regularly evaluate recycling areas and waste sorting stations, especially at the start of the semester, or when beginning a new recycling initiative at your school.
- ☐ Encourage parents, teachers, Green Teams, and cafeteria aides to teach students how to separate recyclables and food scraps, and to help monitor waste sorting stations.
- ☐ Address any problems such as items being discarded in wrong bins or incorrect setups.

## Internal collection and storage

- ☐ Confirm that trash and recyclables are kept separated as they're collected from bins around the school.
- ☐ Make sure a secure location is designated to store bags of trash and of recyclables until they are set out at the curb for collection.
- ☐ Check that **clean paper & cardboard, metal, glass, plastic, and cartons**, and **trash** are stored in three separate piles.

## Curbside setout

- ☐ Spot check to make sure materials are set out at the curb **ONLY** according to the DSNY collection schedule. It is illegal to store trash or recyclables at the curb.
- ☐ Check that **clean paper & cardboard, metal, glass, plastic, and cartons**, and **trash** are set out in separate piles. If YOU can't tell whether a pile is trash or recycling, neither can the Sanitation workers.

## Communicate

- ☐ At the beginning of the school year, explain recycling procedures to all students and staff.
- ☐ Throughout the school year, make announcements as needed to reduce contamination (items in the wrong bins) and improve your school recycling program.
- ☐ Let staff and students know who to contact about recycling questions or issues.
- ☐ Make sure the Parents Association and other organizations that use your school building after school and weekends know what and how to recycle.

## Educate

- ☐ Encourage teachers to provide recycling education to students and support their efforts. This improves participation and reduces problems in your school recycling program.

# Sustainability Coordinator Checklist

## Recycling planning meeting

- ☐ Educate yourself about your school's recycling plan; be a resource on what and how to recycle.
- ☐ Schedule and coordinate the recycling planning meeting. Request key staff to attend: Principal, Assistant Principal, Sustainability Coordinator, Custodian Engineer, Kitchen Manager, and Teachers.

## Recycling setup

- ☐ Survey your school throughout the year to make sure recycling areas are set up properly.
- ☐ Take a moment when you enter a room or common area to check that there are properly labeled recycling bins.
- ☐ Use the Recycling Materials Worksheet in this guide when ordering free decals, signs, and posters at [on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials](https://on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials).
- ☐ Be a model recycler. Set up your own room for recycling properly.

## Cafeteria and kitchen setup

- ☐ Make sure Custodial Staff and Kitchen Staff have everything needed to set up waste sorting stations (bins, posters, decals).
- ☐ Use the Recycling Materials Worksheet in this guide when ordering free decals, signs, and posters at [on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials](https://on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials).
- ☐ Make sure waste sorting stations are set up properly.

## Maintain recycling areas

- ☐ Regularly evaluate waste sorting stations and recycling areas, especially at the start of the semester, or when beginning a new recycling initiative at your school.
- ☐ Recruit teachers, Green Teams, cafeteria aides, and/or parent volunteers to teach students how to separate recyclables and food scraps, and to help monitor waste sorting stations.
- ☐ Address any problems such as items being discarded in wrong bins or incorrect setups.

## Internal collection and storage

- ☐ Confirm that trash and recyclables are kept separated as they're collected from bins around the school.
- ☐ Check that bags of trash and of recyclables are stored in separate piles until they are set out at the curb for collection: **clean paper & cardboard**, **metal, glass, plastic, and cartons**, and **trash** in three distinct piles.

## Curbside setout

- ☐ Spot check to make sure materials are set out at the curb **ONLY** according to the DSNY collection schedule. It is illegal to store trash or recyclables at the curb.
- ☐ Check that **clean paper & cardboard**, **metal, glass, plastic, and cartons**, and **trash** are set out in separate piles. If **YOU** can't tell whether a pile is trash or recycling, neither can the Sanitation workers.

## Communicate

- ☐ At the beginning of the school year, explain recycling procedures to all students and staff through memos, flyers, posters, assembly programs, and announcements. Green Teams can help.
- ☐ Throughout the school year, make announcements and run campaigns as needed to reduce contamination (items in the wrong bins) and improve your school recycling program.
- ☐ Let staff and students know who to contact about recycling questions or issues.

## Educate

- ☐ Encourage teachers to provide recycling education to students and support their efforts. This improves participation and reduces problems in your school recycling program.
- ☐ Faculty PD: Ask your Principal for time to speak with all staff.
- ☐ Start a Green Team! See Activities for Students.

# Custodian, Building Manager, or Facilities Manager Checklist

## Recycling planning meeting

- ☐ Attend and participate in recycling planning meeting.
- ☐ Train staff on school recycling plan, including what and how to recycle.
- ☐ Be a model recycler. Set up your own room properly for recycling.

## Recycling setup

- ☐ Set up recycling areas beside every trash bin in classrooms, offices, hallways, and other common areas (auditoriums, library, gym), with recycling bins for any materials that are usually discarded there. *DOE: Bins are available for purchase through the SDI catalog.*
- ☐ Make sure there are no lone trash or recycling bins. Always place garbage bins and recycling bins together.
- ☐ Label each bin with a decal and hang the appropriate poster above each bin. Use the Recycling Materials Worksheet in this guide when ordering free decals, signs, and posters at [on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials](https://on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials).
- ☐ Use only clear plastic bags to line bins. Paper bins do not need to be lined.
- ☐ Survey your school throughout the year to make sure recycling areas are set up properly.
- ☐ Take a moment when you enter a room or common area to check that there are properly labeled recycling bins.

## Cafeteria and kitchen setup

- ☐ Provide a blue-labeled bin for **metal, glass, plastic, and cartons** in each waste sorting station. *DOE: Bins are available for purchase through the SDI catalog. (Note: Kitchen Staff provides the liquids bucket and trash bin.)*
- ☐ Schools with NYC Organics Collection: set up brown food scraps bins for **food scraps & food-soiled paper** at each waste sorting station.
- ☐ Set up a green-labeled bin for **clean paper & cardboard** if these are commonly discarded here (example: if the room is used for meetings).
- ☐ Work with Kitchen Staff to label all bins, set up waste sorting stations, and hang posters above each bin. Apply posters to the wall, or display posters using poles or music stands. Alternatively, stands can be constructed or purchased.
- ☐ Remove any trash bins or recycling bins that are not part of a waste sorting station.
- ☐ Get decals and posters from your Sustainability Coordinator, or order them for free at [on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials](https://on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials).

*continued on next page*

# Custodian, Building Manager, or Facilities Manager Checklist

continued

## Maintain recycling areas

- ☐ Ensure bins are all lined with clear plastic bags.  
*Note: Bins for **clean paper & cardboard** do not need to be lined.*
- ☐ If bins are moved, return them to original location. Switching the order of bins could cause confusion.
- ☐ Order new bin decals and posters if needed at **on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials**.
- ☐ Wash trash and recycling bins as needed.

## Internal collection and storage

- ☐ Keep trash and recyclables separated as they're collected from bins around the school. Use a dual-bin dolly or other system to keep waste streams separate.
- ☐ Never combine recycling streams or trash in the same bag: **clean paper & cardboard** should never be mixed with **metal, plastic, glass, and cartons** in the same bag. **Trash** should never be mixed with any recyclables.
- ☐ Store trash and recyclables in a secure location. Place bags of **clean paper & cardboard, metal, glass, plastic, and cartons**, and **trash** in three separate piles.
- ☐ For schools with NYC Organics Collection, store bags of **food scraps & food-soiled paper** in the brown food scraps bins provided by Sanitation.

## Curbside setout

- ☐ Know your collection schedule and post a copy where staff can refer to it.
- ☐ Set bags of recyclables and trash at curb in separate piles according to your collection schedule.
- ☐ Schools with NYC Organics Collection: set brown food scraps bins at the curb by 4 pm every week day.
- ☐ Check that **clean paper & cardboard, metal, glass, plastic, and cartons**, and **trash** are set out in separate piles. If YOU can't tell whether a pile is trash or recycling, neither can the Sanitation Workers.
- ☐ Follow the DOE/DSNY Communication Protocol for any collection issues: **schools.nyc.gov/sustainability**.



## Kitchen Manager Checklist

### Recycling planning meeting

- ☐ Attend and participate in recycling planning meeting.

### Cafeteria setup

- ☐ Provide a liquids bucket and a trash bin for each waste sorting station.
- ☐ Work with Custodial Staff to label all bins, set up waste sorting stations, and hang posters above each bin in the sorting stations.
- ☐ Line bins with clear bags, daily.
- ☐ Remove any trash bins or recycling bins that are not part of a waste sorting station.
- ☐ Get decals and posters from your Sustainability Coordinator or Custodian.

### Kitchen setup

- ☐ Set up a blue-labeled bin for **metal, glass, plastic, and cartons**.
- ☐ Set up a green-labeled bin or designated area for **clean paper & cardboard**.
- ☐ Schools with NYC Organics Collection: set up brown food scraps bins for **food scraps & food-soiled paper** near food prep areas.
- ☐ Hang posters above each bin, where possible.
- ☐ Line bins with clear bags, daily.

### Maintain recycling areas

- ☐ Ensure bins are all lined with clear plastic bags. *Note: Bins for **clean paper & cardboard** do not need to be lined.*
- ☐ If bins are moved, return them to original location. Switching the order of bins could cause confusion.
- ☐ Empty liquids bucket from the cafeteria as needed.
- ☐ Wash bins as needed.
- ☐ Schools with NYC Organics Collection: tie bags of **food scraps & food-soiled paper** closed. Stack full bags in the brown food scraps bins. Don't place bags inside other bags.

## Teachers Checklist

### Recycling planning meeting

- ☐ Attend and participate in recycling planning meeting.

### Recycling setup

- ☐ Be a model recycler. Set up your own room for recycling properly.

### Maintain recycling areas

- ☐ Regularly evaluate waste sorting stations and recycling areas, especially at the start of the semester, or when beginning a new recycling initiative at your school.
- ☐ Address any problems such as items being discarded in wrong bins or incorrect setups.

### Communicate

- ☐ At the beginning of the school year, explain recycling procedures to students.
- ☐ Contact the Sustainability Coordinator if any questions or issues arise about what or how to recycle.
- ☐ Throughout the school year, make announcements as needed to reduce contamination (items in the wrong bins) and improve your school recycling program.

### Educate

- ☐ Promote recycling and proper waste sorting in your classroom by assigning recycling monitors or through a schoolwide Green Team.
- ☐ Integrate recycling and waste prevention activities into your classroom curriculum that fulfill Common Core requirements.
- ☐ Consider taking students on field trips to learn about waste prevention and recycling.

# Green Team Checklist

## Recycling planning meeting

- ☐ Schedule and coordinate recycling planning meeting. Invite other school civic clubs, honor society, interested teachers.

## Recycling setup

- ☐ Do a bin survey of every room and common area in your school: are there enough labeled bins for **paper & cardboard**; for **metal, plastic, glass, and cartons**; and for **trash**? Report your results to the Sustainability Coordinator and Custodian.
- ☐ Help apply blue or green decals on recycling bins, and “Trash Only” decals on trash bins. Put GREEN decals on bins for **paper & cardboard**; BLUE decals on bins for **metal, plastic, glass, and cartons**.
- ☐ Survey your school throughout the year to make sure recycling areas are set up properly.
- ☐ Take a moment when you enter a room or common area to check that there are properly labeled recycling bins. Fix or report any problems you find.

## Monitor recycling areas

- ☐ Regularly assess classroom recycling areas and cafeteria waste sorting stations. Keep records on a chart.
- ☐ Award classrooms with a star or grade that are sorting their trash and recyclables properly.
- ☐ Post results publicly on a bulletin board in the lobby.
- ☐ Rather than compare how much paper is in the classroom recycling bins, which may encourage wasteful practices of using more paper than necessary, focus competitions on reducing paper use and measuring contamination rates (items in wrong bins).

## Communicate

- ☐ Make reminder announcements about what and how to recycle at your school, the success of your school’s recycling program, and the importance of recycling.
- ☐ Notice and report any problems such as items being discarded in wrong bins or incorrect setups.
- ☐ Be a model recycler. Set an example for other students.

## Educate

- ☐ Retrain those that need more help, and reward the best recyclers.
- ☐ Rotate days to assist in the cafeteria during lunch. Monitor the waste sorting stations and demonstrate how to sort properly.
- ☐ Mentor younger—or older—classes, explain why and how to recycle.

## DSNY Golden Apple Awards

The NYC Department of Sanitation's **Golden Apple Awards** offer substantial cash prizes in three contests for NYC DOE schools: *Super Recyclers*, *Reduce & Reuse*, and *Team Up to Clean Up*.

For complete information on how to enter, and to see prior winners' projects, visit [nyc.gov/goldenapple](http://nyc.gov/goldenapple).



### CONTEST ENTRY QUESTIONS: FOR ALL CONTESTS

#### IMPLEMENTATION

- **Why this?** What did you target in this project? Explain why.
- **What did you do?** What changes and improvements were made?
- **Before and after.** Before you implemented these projects, what was it like? Describe and include photos before, during, and after your efforts. (*Submit project plans if your project is not completed by contest entry deadline.*)
- **Project planning.** Your objectives, and the planning and organization that drove this project.
- **Student involvement.** All student efforts to plan and implement the project. Include activities conducted by classrooms, cluster, grade, school wide, team, club, or afterschool program.
- **Promotion.** Efforts to promote this project. Include copies of announcements, memos, flyers, posters, letters, web pages, skits, songs, assembly programs, media coverage, or other special events.
- **Collaboration.** Any corroboration with other schools, professionals, businesses, or community organizations on this project. How did you solicit donations or help?
- **Educational components.** Include learning standards met, lesson plans, and exemplary samples of student work.

#### PROJECT ANALYSIS

- **What worked?** What were the most successful aspects of this project?
- **What didn't work?** What were the least successful aspects of this project?
- **Applicability to other schools.** What advice would you give to other schools with similar populations who want to replicate your project?
- **Measuring success.** Describe how you measured the success of your project. Explain any impact on the students or community.
- **Future plans.** How would these prize funds be used to further enhance your school recycling program, waste prevention initiatives, or beautification projects?

### GOLDEN SHOVEL: MASTER SCHOOL COMPOSTER

- If your school composts outdoors, or indoors with worm bins, you may also enter the **Golden Shovel Award** competition for your borough's Master School Composter, selected by the NYC Compost Project. For complete information on how to enter, visit [nyc.gov/goldenapple](http://nyc.gov/goldenapple).



# Recycling Activities for Students

## START A GREEN TEAM

Hold an essay competition to select Green Team members. Limit participation to two students per classroom to excite interest. Identify Green Team members by designing special aprons, t-shirts, buttons, or hats.

## DECORATE RECYCLING CONTAINERS

Create and decorate lids for recycling containers to encourage proper recycling and reduce contamination. Cut a circular hole for bottles & cans, a wide slit for paper.

## RECYCLING MONITORS AND MENTORS

Recycling monitors can make sure every classroom recycles properly. Post weekly results to reward the best, and retrain the rest. Students can count how many bins are needed, apply recycling labels and signs, make reminder announcements, and show other students how to sort their waste and recyclables at lunch. (Monitors should never separate or collect the school's recyclables.)

## SCHOOL RECYCLING ASSEMBLY

Present an assembly program dedicated to recycling, or bring in outside performers who engage students in environmental education.

## INCORPORATE LITERACY AND ART

Read books about recycling, the environment, sustainability, and waste prevention. Write essays, poems, or persuasive letters. Draw or paint posters or a mural.



## MATH & SCIENCE APPLICATIONS

Conduct waste audits of each classroom and office. Count bags of paper recycling compared to bags of trash, then graph recycling rates. Examine the decomposition rates of different items.

## HELP OTHER SCHOOLS RECYCLE

Expand your recycling successes by mentoring another school that shares your campus or neighborhood.

## INVOLVE NYC'S ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

Take advantage of the many local, state, and national environmental organizations. Find out about their educational opportunities and go on local field trips.

## ENTER THE GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS

*Super Recyclers* rewards NYC schools with cash prizes for implementing exemplary recycling programs in compliance with NYC regulations. Show off your school's recycling program! For complete information, visit [nyc.gov/goldenapple](http://nyc.gov/goldenapple).



# Cleanup and Gardening Activities for Students

*Note: Do not encourage students to undertake tasks that are normally the responsibility of paid custodial or maintenance staff.*

## COMMUNITY CLEANUPS

Locate an area within the community that needs cleaning up. Students measure, map, and grid the area, observe and record types and amounts of waste removed, and display findings in charts and graphs.

DSNY supports local community groups and block associations in their volunteer efforts through local block and street area clean ups. For more info about free loans of clean-up tools and equipment, call 311.

## GRAFFITI REMOVAL

Adopt a public area or get permission from a local building owner and remove unsightly graffiti from walls, benches, tables, etc.

## WALL MURAL

Students design and create murals for large interior or exterior walls of the school. Solicit lesson plans from teachers in all subject areas. Research and write essays describing themes, ideas, process, and results.

## GARDENING AND COMPOSTING PROJECTS

Design, plant, and maintain a garden on school grounds or local public area. Partner with an existing community garden or seek help from Grow to Learn for mini-grants, technical assistance, and curriculum guides. Work with the NYC Compost Project to learn how to incorporate composting in your school garden. See the inside back cover for more info on programs and organizations that can help!

## TEAM UP WITH OTHER SCHOOLS

Work with another school that shares your campus or neighborhood to clean up or beautify an area in your community.

## PARKS DEPARTMENT VOLUNTEERS

Apply to become Parks Department volunteers at a local playground or park. Get gardening resources from GreenThumb.

## ADOPT A TREE

Plant trees with MillionTreesNYC, sign up for TreesNY street tree stewardship program, or educate your family, friends, and neighbors about the importance of our city's urban forest.

## PREPARE A PROPOSAL

Come up with a detailed action plan to reclaim open space in your neighborhood or school grounds. Analyze existing conditions and identify the resources needed to make improvements.

## ENTER THE GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS

*Team Up to Clean Up* rewards cash prizes to NYC schools that conceive, design, and implement innovative cleanup, beautification, or reclamation projects in their boroughs. Show us your school's community cleanups, reclamation, or gardening project! For complete information, visit [nyc.gov/goldenapple](http://nyc.gov/goldenapple).





## Waste Prevention Activities for Students

### REDUCE WASTE AT LUNCH

Pack a waste-free lunch by using reusable containers for food and beverages, and packing reusable utensils. If you buy lunch in the school cafeteria, take only what you need so you don't end up throwing away food or extra condiments. Don't forget to recycle your milk and juice cartons, bottles, cans, rigid plastic, and foil!

### REDUCE PAPER WASTE

Create a scrap paper reuse bin for paper that has only been used on one side, ask teachers if you can hand in homework on the back of used paper or email it, and always print double sided. Don't forget to recycle any paper and cardboard that cannot be reused again!

### SCHEDULE AN EXCHANGE EVENT

Ask your school's Parent Association or environmental club to help coordinate an event for trading items you no longer want—like sporting goods, books, CDs, games, or clothes.

### ORGANIZE A DONATION DRIVE

Your school or club can collect needed goods from parents and the local community. Visit NYC Stuff Exchange to find where to donate stuff in your neighborhood: [nyc.gov/stuffexchange](http://nyc.gov/stuffexchange).

### GET DONATED GOODS

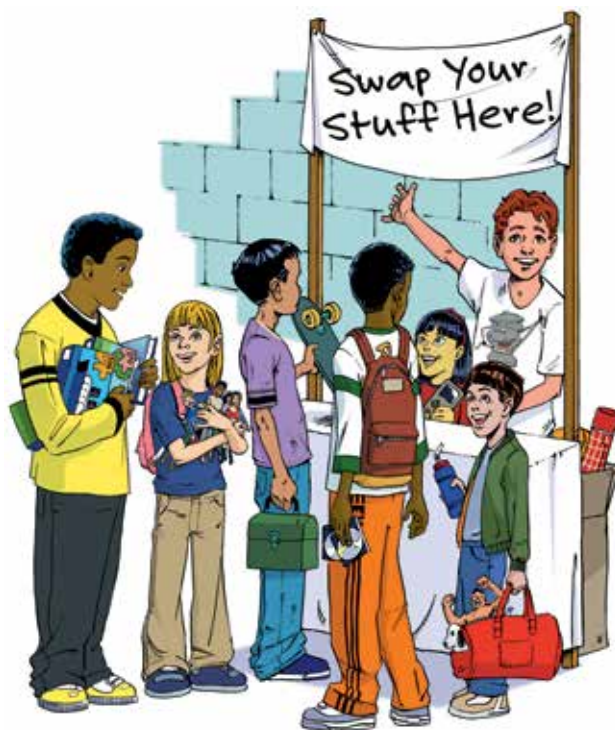
Public school teachers and principals are encouraged to contact DSNY's list of organizations and reuse programs to get donated goods including new and used computers, art materials, furniture, and other supplies. Start with Materials for the Arts at [nyc.gov/mfta](http://nyc.gov/mfta).

### COMPOST AT SCHOOL

Recycle food scraps from school lunches and other organic material, like leaves or plant clippings, into nutrient-rich compost. Worm compost bins or an outdoor compost system make great science projects. Learn all about composting in our **K-12 School RRRResource Guide: RRR You Ready?**

### ENTER THE GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS

*Reduce & Reuse* rewards NYC schools with cash prizes for implementing successful waste prevention practices. For complete information, visit [nyc.gov/goldenapple](http://nyc.gov/goldenapple).



# DSNY Resources for Schools

## CURRICULUM

Our **K-12 School RRResource Guide: RRR You Ready?** was designed to help educators implement the three R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) in NYC schools.

The **RRR Guide** includes:

- Lesson plans and activity sheets for grades K-12 that help schools comply with current Common Core, Scope and Sequence, and other Department of Education standards.
- Ideas for hands-on projects and long-term activities.
- Extensive background information, including glossary sheets.

## COLORING AND COMIC BOOKS

Order free DSNY coloring and comic books for elementary students. The literacy component to our RRR Guide is available in three different reading levels:

- Grades PreK-1 coloring book (pre-literate)
- Grades 2-3 comic book (emerging readers)
- Grades 4-6 comic book (fluent readers)

## ONLINE TRAININGS

Watch our training videos and school recycling webinar to learn what to recycle and how to set up school recycling programs: [on.nyc.gov/RRResources](http://on.nyc.gov/RRResources).

## FIELD TRIPS AND TOURS

Your school can tour Pratt Industries paper recycling mill, visit Sims Municipal Recycling Education Center, and take a tour of the Freshkills Park site. For more info about these and other environmental field trips, assembly programs, and resources from other organizations, visit on [on.nyc.gov/RRResources](http://on.nyc.gov/RRResources).



# Recycling Materials Worksheet

To set up your school for recycling and order free educational materials, use the online request form on the DSNY website: [on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials](https://on.nyc.gov/recycling-materials).

Use the worksheets below to calculate the quantities you will need.

## Recycling Collection Areas (add more areas as needed)

		Classrooms	Main Office	Other Offices	Entrance / Lobby	Hallways	Teachers Lounge	Library	Auditorium	Gymnasium	Cafeteria	Kitchen / Food Prep	Storage Area						Total #
how many of each area?																			
Paper bins per area																			
MGPC bins per area																			
Trash bins per area																			
<b>Calculate how many to order: use TOTAL # column to multiply items needed for each type of bin, OR calculate area by area</b>																			
<b># to order</b>	<b>CLEAN PAPER &amp; CARDBOARD</b>																		
2 per bin	green decals																		
1 per bin	letter-size sign																		
OR	small poster 11x17																		
OR	large poster 18x24 laminated																		
2 per lid	lid text decal																		
<b>METAL, GLASS, PLASTIC, CARTONS</b>																			
2 per bin	blue decals																		
1 per bin	letter-size sign																		
OR	small poster 11x17																		
OR	large poster 18x24 laminated																		
2 per bin	lid text decal																		
<b>TRASH ONLY</b>																			
2 per bin	Trash Only decal																		
1 per bin	small poster 11x17																		
OR	large poster 18x24 laminated																		
<b>CAFETERIA WASTE</b>																			
1 per bucket	Liquids small poster 11x17																		
OR	Liquids large poster 18x24 laminated																		
<b>OTHER RECYCLING INFO</b>																			
	Recycling Area Decal																		
	Checklist Removable Sticker																		
	Recycling Checklist																		
<b>ORGANICS (only for schools with NYC Organics Collection)</b>																			
2 per brown bin	Food Scraps decals																		
as needed	Food Scraps Only lid text decal																		
1 per brown bin	Food Scraps small poster 11x17																		
OR	Food Scraps large poster 18x24 laminated																		

## Educational Materials Worksheet

Item	Count	Order Quantity
<b>CURRICULUM MATERIALS</b>		
<b>NYC K-12 School Resource Guide</b>	# of teachers	
<b>DSNY Coloring Book, Grades PreK - 1</b>	# of Prek & 1 Graders	
<b>DSNY Comic Book, Grades 2-3</b>	# of 2nd & 3rd Graders	
<b>DSNY Comic Book, Grades 4-6</b>	# of 4th - 6th Graders	
<b>RECYCLING INFO</b>		
<b>School Staff Guide</b>	# of staff who need info	
<b>Checklist Removable Sticker</b>	# of staff, students	
<b>Recycling Checklist</b>	# of staff, students	
<b>Bookmark - NYC Recycles</b>	# of students	
<b>Harmful Products Brochure</b>	# of staff, students	
<b>COMPOSTING INFO</b>		
<b>NYC Compost Project brochure</b>	# of staff who need info	
<b>Outdoor Composting Guide</b>	# of staff who need info	
<b>Indoor Composting With a Worm Bin</b>	# of staff who need info	
<b>T-SHIRTS: RECYCLE MORE, WASTE LESS!</b>		
<b>Gray T-shirts</b>	# Child L	
<b>Gray T-shirts</b>	# Adult L	
<b>Gray T-shirts</b>	# Adult XL	
<b>White T-shirts</b>	# Child L	
<b>White T-shirts</b>	# Adult L	
<b>White T-shirts</b>	# Adult XL	

## Additional Resources for Schools



The **NYC Compost Project** provides compost education to students and teachers, including workshops and tours of NYC's many community composting sites: [nyc.gov/compostproject](http://nyc.gov/compostproject).



**GrowNYC Recycling Champions Program** develops model recycling programs in NYC schools by involving students, staff, and custodians in training and hands-on education. Download free resources from their online toolkit: [grownyc.org/rcp](http://grownyc.org/rcp).



**Materials for the Arts** offers field trips, professional development, and in-school residencies focused on creative reuse: [nyc.gov/mfta](http://nyc.gov/mfta).



**NYC Department of Education Sustainability Initiative** provides info on waste, energy, and conservation for schools: [schools.nyc.gov/sustainability](http://schools.nyc.gov/sustainability).



NYC Department of Sanitation  
**Recycling & Sustainability**  
PO Box 156  
Bowling Green Station  
New York, NY 10274-0156

PRSRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
DEPARTMENT  
OF SANITATION

# NYC School Recycling Guide

## Free RRResources for Schools

**Bin decals and posters:** to label bins and set up recycling areas and waste sorting stations.

**NYC K-12 Schools RRResource Guide:** acclaimed NYC-based lesson plans and activities that help you meet current Common Core and other educational standards.

**Educational coloring and comic books:** for different reading levels, PreK-6.

Order online at [nyc.gov/recycle](http://nyc.gov/recycle)



**NYC**  
Recycles

[nyc.gov/recycle](http://nyc.gov/recycle)

