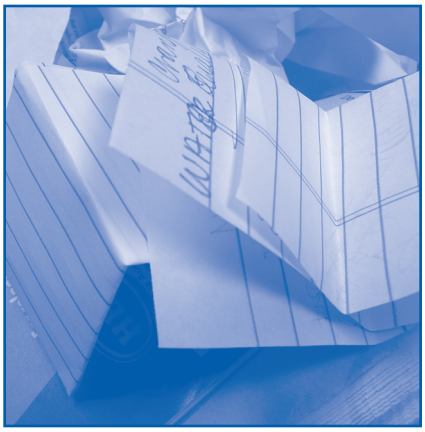
RECYCLING:

A Guide for South Carolina Schools



A Publication of the

S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's
Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling

RECYCLE SOUTH CAROLINA

www.scdhec.gov/recycle

1-800-768-7348

DHEC
PROMOTE PROTECT PROSPER

Why recycle?

Let's count the ways.

Recycling conserves natural resources, saves energy in the manufacturing of new products and reduces or eliminates pollution associated with the extraction and processing of raw materials. Recycling reduces the need for landfills. Recycling decreases greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global climate change.

Recyclables have value. By using recyclables as valuable raw material, recycling creates jobs, strengthens the economy and helps sustain the environment for future generations.

Why recycle? Why not?

Why recycle at school?

Schools are essential in making recycling work in South Carolina.

Recycling and schools make a practically perfect partnership. A school recycling program provides a learning experience for everyone involved. By recycling at school, students, teachers, staff, administration and parents can learn not only the basics of recycling, but of sustainability and environmental stewardship.

School recycling programs also provide opportunities for teachers to offer valuable hands-on, real-life lessons to students.

In addition, recycling may help schools and school districts save money through avoided disposal costs. Remember, the less you throw away, the less you should have to pay to have garbage hauled away. Depending on what and how much is recycled, there may be a chance to earn revenue from the sale of certain collected items (e.g., printer cartridges and aluminum cans).

By recycling, schools can make a significant contribution to South Carolina's recycling efforts while helping the state's economy and protecting the environment.

Need help?

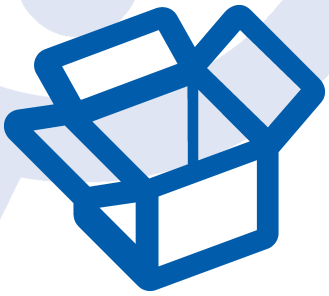
"Recycling: A Guide for South Carolina Schools" – developed by the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's (DHEC) Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling (Office) – can serve as a basic starting point for starting or improving a recycling program.

Beyond this publication, the Office provides grant funding, technical assistance, education programs as well as printed material to support school recycling programs. For more information, see page 6 in this guide, visit **www.scdhec.gov/recycle** or call **1-800-768-7348**.

Four Questions to Answer Before Starting a School Recycling Program

Ready to start a recycling program at school? There are many ways to set up a successful school recycling program. In all cases, four questions need to be addressed at the beginning of the process: (1) what items (e.g., paper, aluminum and steel cans, plastic bottles and cardboard) are available for recycling; (2) how will the items be collected and stored; (3) will a local recycling program or company (or market) accept the collected items; and (4) how will the items get to market (i.e., will they be picked up or will they need to be delivered)? Here are some recommendations to help you answer these and other frequently asked questions about successful school recycling programs.

1. What can be recycled?



Determine what is in the trash and identify recycling opportunities throughout the school (e.g., classrooms, cafeteria, vending areas, library, gym, athletic fields, offices and teachers' lounges). The most common items recycled at schools are aluminum cans, plastic bottles, office and notebook paper, cardboard and printer cartridges. Start small and let the program grow. Choose an item or items (e.g., cardboard, paper or aluminum cans) that are easy to collect and have a market.

2. How will the recyclables be collected and stored?

Determine the type and number of recycling bins or containers that are appropriate for the items that will be collected. Where will the bins be placed? See "Location, location, location" on page 4 for more information. Convenience is a very important factor. The easier it is for someone to recycle, the more likely it is that they will recycle. Determine who will be responsible for emptying the containers and moving the items to storage (e.g., a large recycling container behind the school) prior to going to market.

3. Where will the recyclables go?

Remember, collection is only part of the program. Determine what markets are available locally. The quickest way is to contact your city or county recycling coordinator (visit **www.scdhec.gov/HomeAndEnvironment/Recycling/WheretoRecycleLocally/** for contact information) or call the Office at **1-800-768-7348**. Depending on the items collected for recycling, more than one market may be needed. Some markets may require items to be sorted while others may allow them to be mixed.

4. How will the recyclables get to market?

Does your community have a recycling program or company that picks up material? Will staff or parent volunteers have to take the material somewhere (e.g., a recycling drop-off site)?

Take the next step.

The homework is finished – that is, the four questions previously listed have been answered. What's next? Here are additional recommendations to start or improve a school recycling program.

Build a team.

The key to any successful school recycling program is to have everyone participate. That involvement starts at the beginning. Establish a team to design the program that would be best for the school. A good team can help build a sustainable program. Ideally, the team should include a representative from each group within the school (e.g., teachers, students, parent/teacher organizations, administrators and housekeeping staff). The person(s) responsible for specific tasks should be identified. Select one person to be the team leader.

Who's going to pay for this?

First, talk with your county or city recycling coordinator or solid waste director about recycling services that may be available. Look for funding from the school and parent/teacher organizations. You also may want to consider partnerships with school vendors, local businesses and civic groups. In addition, consider applying for grant funding from the Office and other organizations. See "Resources from DHEC" on page 6 for more information on available grant funding. Remember that the school may potentially save money on avoided disposal costs and may even generate revenue from the sale of recyclables. Recycling will reduce the school's waste stream, so look into decreasing the frequency of garbage pickups or number of dumpsters on campus and allocate any savings towards the recycling program.

Choosing bins and containers ...

How many? What type? Can you reuse something you already have? Converted waste baskets or small cardboard boxes with signage can be used as recycling containers. The right container makes a big difference. Choose one that is not too big, but is able to hold several days worth of material. For high-traffic areas, consider larger containers with restricted openings – like round holes on lids for aluminum cans and slots for paper – to reduce contamination (i.e., keeping out garbage and recyclables that belong in other containers).

Location, location, location ...

Place the recycling bins and containers in areas where recyclables are generated. Each classroom and office should have at least one recycling container – maybe more depending on the items collected and whether they need to be separated. Don't forget the library, teachers' lounges and cafeteria. Larger collection bins should be placed in hallways and other high-volume areas (e.g., vending or copy rooms). Place the recycling bins and containers near trash containers and copy machines to make recycling the easy choice.

Recycle and buy recycled, too.

Collecting recyclables is only part of the recycling process. Recycling also involves processing the recyclables, making them into new products as well as purchasing and using the recycled-content products. When people buy products made from recycled materials, they are closing the recycling loop. If no one buys recycled-content products, recycling will not work. Schools are encouraged to do their part. South Carolina has an environmentally preferred purchasing policy as well as a guide for recycled-content products at **http://procurement.sc.gov/PS/PS-latest-news.phtm#Environmentally Preferred Purchasing Policy**.

Clearly label recycling bins and containers.

Each container should be clearly marked indicating what item(s) should be placed inside. You may want to consider bilingual signage and use graphics to show what material is to be placed in each container.

Students need to be involved.

It is important for students to recycle and help run the program from the beginning. This reinforces the hands-on emphasis of the program with students learning new habits and values. Select student monitors or volunteers to assist housekeeping staff: (1) empty the bins and containers; (2) oversee the containers to check when they are full or have contaminants; and (3) educate other students about the program and encourage participation. Environmental or recycling clubs, after-school programs and student councils provide volunteer options. For information on environmental clubs, see the Office's "Environmental Clubs: A Guide for South Carolina Schools" at **www.scdhec.gov/recycle**.

Communicate and educate.

The success of the program depends on how well everyone participates. Tell students, teachers, administrators and housekeeping staff about the program, what is accepted, how the items need to be prepared and so on. Make announcements. Make and hang signs, posters and banners throughout the school. Write stories for the school newspaper. Place the information on the school's Web site and in the handbook. Present information about the program at school orientation, assemblies and parent/teacher meetings. Have guest speakers (e.g., local recycling coordinator or solid waste director) visit the school. Start or work with a recycling or environmental club. Take advantage of Earth Day (April 22) and America Recycles Day (November 15) to reinforce the recycling message.

Keep records and set goals.

Track how many pounds or tons of material is recycled to help evaluate the program's performance and set benchmarks for improvement. Records also will help determine cost savings (from avoided disposal costs) as well as revenue generated (from the sale of recyclables). Share the results. Promoting how much was recycled and the economic benefits may encourage increased participation in the program.

Reward the doers.

Let students know that everyone wins in recycling. Incentives – such as T-shirts, recycled-content pencils and posters – can be given to students or classes that participate. Other incentives include field trips to a local recycling center or a pizza party.

Additional Guides Available ...

In addition to this recycling guide, there are two additional publications that may assist in your school's sustainability efforts – "Composting: A Guide for South Carolina Schools" and "Environmental Clubs: A Guide for South Carolina Schools." Both are available at **www.scdhec.gov/recycle** or by calling **1-800-768-7348**.

Resources from DHEC

DHEC can help any K-12 public or private school set up, maintain and expand recycling programs through technical assistance, educational material and grant funding. The Office provides hands-on technical assistance (e.g., finding markets, providing information on bins and containers) to start or improve recycling programs as well as posters, signage and other material.

DHEC offers "Action for a cleaner tomorrow: A South Carolina Environmental Curriculum Supplement" ("Action"). Developed by teachers and DHEC in conjunction with the S.C. Department of Education, "Action" can serve as a starting point for introducing environmental education in the classroom. The award-winning, activity-based interdisciplinary curriculum supplement is correlated to the state's science standards. "Action" is only available as part of a FREE training provided by DHEC. For details, call **1-800-768-7348**. In addition, DHEC's "Action in the Classroom" provides fifth- and seventh-grade as well as high school students an overview of recycling, buying recycled, waste reduction, reuse and landfill disposal in South Carolina.

DHEC's Recycling Education Grant Program provides funding – when available – to any K-12, public or private school or school district. The funding may be used for recycling containers, composting projects as well as supplies to support "Action" lessons and school recycling or environmental clubs.

Take Action Today Awards

Each year, DHEC recognizes innovative and successful school recycling, composting, waste reduction and reuse programs as well as a recycling teacher of the year.

Call **1-800-768-7348** for more information.

Success Stories ...

Many schools throughout the state have implemented successful recycling programs. A few of these are highlighted below.

- **The City of Rock Hill** (City) provides schools in **York County School District Three** with free bins, dumpsters and roll carts for the collection of paper, cardboard, plastic, aluminum and steel cans, chipboard, glass and cartons. The City collects the material and tracks the amount recycled by each school, providing monthly reports to the district. During the 2012-2013 school year, Rock Hill schools recycled about 1,100 tons of material, earning schools nearly $34,000 in recycling credits.
- **The Horry County Solid Waste Authority** (HCSWA) provides containers and collection services for mixed paper at no cost for all of the schools in the county. The HCSWA also provides containers to schools throughout the county that wish to recycle cardboard, steel cans and plastic bottles from their cafeterias. The HCSWA offers environmental grants, field trips and recycling competitions to encourage schools to recycle. More than 2,200 students participated in these field trips during the 2013-2014 school year. For fiscal year 2014, more than 200 tons of material were recycled, saving Horry County Schools more than $40,000 in disposal and service fees.
- During the 2013-2014 school year, **Sandlapper Elementary School** in Columbia recycled more than 8 cubic yards of cardboard, paper, plastics bottles and aluminum cans through its local recycler. In addition, the school earned nearly $350 by recycling small electronics, ink cartridges and other non-traditional recyclables including 50 pounds of chip bags, nearly 2,000 lunch kits, 219 pounds of personal care items and more than 8,000 drink pouches. The school also recycles school supplies, light bulbs, batteries, plastic grocery bags and shoes.

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