



School Recycling Best Practices Guide



A guide from **Anoka County** to help
you improve your waste
reduction and recycling program.



School Recycling Best Practices Guide

This guide is designed for educators and school facility managers to improve your internal waste and recycling programs. This step by step guide will help you achieve best practices for your program. The specifics below are guidelines, each school is different and may require different size bins to fit your space, Anoka County can help you decide what is appropriate for your school.

Bin Placement Best Practices

1. Pair all recycling and trash containers in the school.

- This forces the user to make a conscious choice between trash and recycling.
- Bins should be side by side, but the main goal is to make it look like a well-designed system so the recycling and trash fit well together.
- Work in the space allowed.

2. Color-code all containers.

- Recycling: Blue containers, preferably without a bag

Plastic bags have become a serious problem in recycling facilities, some haulers will not accept them any longer and may start fining schools per bag found. If using bags are absolutely necessary (as may be the case for milk carton



Pro Tip:

Bins should be side by side, as shown in the picture above.

Organics

for Composting

Food &
Napkins



Studies show that consistent, clear labels help people recycle right in public spaces. Simple pictures and words work best.

recycling), after the students empty the cartons or bottles, keep the plastic bag inside to prevent spills, but do not put the plastic bag in the recycling dumpster. Instead empty the loose contents into the dumpster.

- **Trash:** Grey/black containers, black bag
This makes it easy to differentiate between trash, recycling, and organics.
- **Organics:** Green containers, compostable bag (BPI certified)

Plastic bags are **never** to be used for organics collection as they will not break down at the compost facility.

3. Use lids that reflect the recyclables accepted in your program.

- This is one of the best ways to prevent contamination.
- There are lids designed for paper, bottle, cans or single-sort recycling.
- The smaller openings can prevent trash from being thrown into recycling bins.

4. Consistency of labeling

- By using color-coded labels consistently throughout the school, you will reduce confusion amongst students, staff, and visitors.
- Anoka County offers free labels to schools!
Go to anokacountymn.gov/schoolrecycling

5. Place containers in strategic and convenient locations throughout the school.

- Regularly used and highly visible areas are good places to supply bins (doorways of classrooms, entrances/exits, hallways, outdoor fields, etc.)

6. Educate students and staff.

There are many ways to implement educational programs. Focus on identifying a leader for these efforts, some suggestions are below (the person must be motivated and passionate for the project to be successful):

- o Building supervisor, custodial staff, principal/president/director, science teacher, food service director, any other motivated staff member

Custodian Collection

- Use a dual dolly for collection, Anoka County offers a dual bin dolly through its grant program so recyclables can be picked up at the same time as trash.
- Match the color of the main collection containers with those around the school for clarity (blue for recycling, gray/black for trash).



Waste reduction is a smart, easy way to save money and natural resources.





Recommended sizes for custodial collection:

- Recycling: 32 gallon recycling receptacle
- Trash: 32 gallon trash receptacle

We do not recommend lids when collecting around the building, but lids can be used for event recycling (if using the same containers for event recycling, be sure to add labels if they are not already there!)

Container Set-up and Placement

1. Classroom Entrance

Pair a recycling container with a smaller trash container, using blue for recycling and gray or black for trash. Placing these containers right next to the door makes it easy to dispose of waste for users as well as making pick-up quicker for custodial staff.

Recommended sizes for a standard classroom:

- Recycling: 10.3 gallon
- Trash: 7 gallon

It is not recommend to use lids with classroom containers.

2. Teacher's Desk

Pair a labeled recycling container with a smaller trash container. Larger recycling bins encourage teachers to create less trash in their classrooms.

Recommended sizes:

- Recycling: 7 gallon
- Trash: 3.5 gallon

3. Desk-side Office Areas

Make sure all office areas have recycling and trash provided at each desk. Larger recycling bins encourage staff to create less trash. Using lids for desk-side containers is not recommended.

Recommended sizes:

- Recycling: 7 gallon
- Trash: 3.5 gallon



4. Shared Spaces (Examples include Copy Room, Mail Room)

- Pair a labeled recycling container with a trash container.
- Lids can remind people moving quickly through common spaces what is recyclable.

Recommended sizes:

- Recycling: 23 gallon bin with single stream lid
- Trash: 23 gallon bin



Container Set-up and Placement (con't.)

5. Hallways and Locker Areas

- Pair a labeled recycling container with a trash container.
- Lids can remind people moving quickly through common spaces what is recyclable.

Recommended sizes:

- Recycling: 23 gallon bin with single stream lid
- Trash: 23 gallon bin

6. Cafeteria

- Pair labeled liquid container, recycling container, trash container, and organics container into a station (potentially using a sorting table).
 - Signage must be very clear, provide student training
 - Oversight is needed to avoid contamination
 - Sorting tables are available through Anoka County, contact recycle@anokacountymn.gov or 763-324-3400.
- Place containers near entrances/exits of the cafeteria and near vending machines for beverage containers.
- Locate sorting station near kitchen or tray return.

Recommended sizes:

- Liquids: 5 gallon bucket (yellow or white) (Strainer recommended, to order contact recycle@anokacountymn.gov)
Pour liquids down a sink drain.
- Recycling: 32 gallon recycling receptacle
- Trash: 32 gallon trash receptacle
- Organics: 32 gallon organics receptacle

Don't forget waste and recycling bins in your staff lounge and kitchen.



- Order of sorting line for efficiency
 - 1) Liquids
 - 2) Recyclables (including emptied milk cartons, bottles)
 - 3) Trash
 - 4) Organics
 - 5) Trays

7. Kitchen

- Pair a labeled recycling container, trash container, and organics container. It is not recommended to use lids in the kitchen.
- Make sure signage is very clear and provide staff training.
- Adding dollies in the kitchen can be very helpful as bins are often moved around during lunch preparation.

Recommended sizes:

- Recycling: 32 gallon recycling receptacle
- Trash: 32 gallon trash receptacle
- Organics: 32 gallon organics recycling receptacle



Kitchen Waste Station



Cafeteria Sorting Table

Container Set-up and Placement (con't)

8. Staff Lounge

- Pair a labeled recycling container, trash container, and organics container.

- Make sure signage is very clear and provide staff training.

Recommended sizes:

- Recycling: 23 gallon Bin with single stream lid
- Trash: 23 gallon Bin
- Organics: 23 gallon Bin with hinge Bin lid

9. Restrooms

- Paper towels are compostable. If you use paper towels in your restrooms, consider replacing your large trash containers with organics containers.

- Label the paper towel dispenser as well as the containers.



- Use compostable bags for collection. The contents are light, sometimes multiple containers can be combined into one compostable bag.

- Another option is to use no liner at all (or reusing plastic liners) for collection, but the contents must still be emptied into a compostable bag.

Recommended sizes:

- Organics: 32 gallon organics receptacle (or work with what you already have). Size here depends on how many paper towels are used in your school, how often the container will be emptied, and how much space is available for the container itself.
- Trash: 7 gallon wastebasket. Size here depends on the space.

10. Gymnasium

- Pair a labeled recycling container with a trash container. Good labeling and restricted openings will be very important in areas with public access.
- Depending upon the size of the space, you may consider ordering additional containers for special events, contact Anoka County (763-324-3400) for assistance.

Recommended sizes:

- Recycling: 25 gallon square can or 50 gallon square can with corresponding lid, differs based upon size
- Trash: 23 gallon Bin or 38 gallon square can

11. Library

- Pair a labeled recycling container with a trash container. Lids can remind people moving quickly through common spaces what is recyclable.
- Remember to place a recycling bin by the Librarians desk!
- If your library has a printer, add an additional recycling bin there.



Gymnasium Waste Stations



Gymnasium Waste Stations



11. Library (con't.)

Recommended sizes:

- Recycling: 23 gallon bin with single stream lid
- Trash: 23 gallon bin

12. Outdoors

• Pair a labeled recycling container with a trash container. The number of containers will be different for each school, depending on how large the outdoor space is. Additional containers for special events, contact Anoka County (763-324-3400) for assistance.

• Rolling carts are very useful in outdoor spaces, especially for big tournaments, games, etc.

• Some areas to consider placing containers are:

- Main and side entrances
- Soccer and baseball fields, bleachers, tennis courts, etc.
- Stadium
- Playground

Signage Best Practices

The right label on your recycling, trash or organics container is worth a thousand words and helps keep your containers clean and tidy.

- Anoka County has self-adhesive labels for your recycling, organics, and trash containers. They are free to schools.
- Labels should be placed on all visible sides of a container, this means the number of labels per container will differ.
- Label Sizes
 - o 8.5" x 11" – to post on containers or walls above the containers. Available as both a poster and self-adhesive decal.
 - o 5" x 14" – for the narrow side of containers.
- You will need 1-4 labels per container (don't forget about labeling the lids!)
 - o Remember the container will not always be facing the same direction.
 - o Place labels 1/3 of the way down from the top (to ensure the entire sign is visible.)
 - o It is important to cover up an embossed recycling symbol if the container is specified for anything other than recycling.

To request free labels, contact:
Anoka County
Recycling & Resource Solutions
Main: 763-324-3400
Email: recycle@anokacountymn.gov



Signs Available From Anoka County

Bin signs are available in a variety of sizes and can be translated into additional languages. Below are a few examples of signs available for schools and can be used on various types of bins and carts.

“No Bags” to help you deal with contamination issues:



11" x 3"



8.5" x 11"



11" x 17"

8.5" x 11" Recycling, Organics and Trash Labels:



Free help is available. Get started today!

Contact Anoka County Recycling & Resource Solutions for:

- Waste reduction, reuse, recycling and organics collection information.
- Fluorescent lamp, electronics, battery and printer cartridge recycling information.
- On-site technical assistance is available.
- Container/equipment grant program, up to \$10,000 per school.
- Free organics, recycling and trash container signs.
- Tips for working with your hauler.

Email: recycle@anokacountymn.gov

Call: 763-324-3400



