



How to Have a Successful Recycling Kick-off Event

Are you ready to make the changes you've been working on through the Green Schools Program? A kick-off event is an effective way to educate students and staff about waste reduction and recycling and to promote the new or improved practices.

Setting a date for the kick-off event will generate excitement and give the Green Schools team a goal. Follow these steps to plan, hold, and follow-up on a kick-off day!



What You Will Need

Material Resources

1. Recycling containers for every classroom and office. For cafeterias: Recycling container(s) with lid(s) – and each lid should have a hole in the middle for placing bottles, cans and cartons. Ask your Green Schools representative about these materials.*
2. Signage on all recycling containers listing what can and can't be recycled. The Green Schools Program provides stickers.*
3. Dump buckets for excess or leftover liquids. You can use empty 5-gallon buckets from the school kitchen.*

*Visit the [Recycling Toolkit](#) page to find out more about the recycling containers and stickers provided by the Green Schools Program.

Place one or more “stations” throughout the lunchroom. Each station should have one bucket for leftover liquids, one recycling container (with a lid that has a hole cut in the center), and one garbage container. If your school will collect food scraps for composting, include a composting container at each station. Consider adding a “tray stacking station” for stacking polystyrene disposable trays. When trays are stacked, space is conserved in garbage dumpsters.

People Resources

1. A team member to lead the effort.
2. Custodial support for collection of materials.

Preparation for the Kick-off

1. **Assign a team member to lead the effort.** This person needs to be available during lunch hours on the kick-off date.
Your team leader: _____.

November						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

2. **Set a date for the event.** If the timing works for your schedule, consider November 15 (America Recycles Day), or Earth Week (end of April).
Your kick off date: _____.
3. **Know what can and cannot be recycled in the classroom and lunchroom.** Ask your Green Schools representative about milk cartons, juice boxes or other materials specific to your school. To verify what your school can recycle, call your recycling hauler.
4. **Work with your custodian and lunchroom staff** to determine:
 - (a) The location of recycling stations in the cafeteria and other areas of the school. Each station should include one garbage container, one recycling container, and one container for leftover liquids. Ask lunchroom staff the best way to direct the “flow” of students to the new stations.
 - (b) If the custodian will empty containers when they are full and take the materials to the outdoor recycling dumpster(s). The buckets of leftover or excess liquids will need to be dumped down an interior drain, not outside. Schools typically use a floor drain in the kitchen or custodial area.

For more guidance, visit the [Recycling Toolkit page](#) on the Green Schools website to see *Recycling Collection Options*, *Milk Carton Recycling*, and *Q& A on Common Recycling Questions*.

5. **Work with your Green Schools representative** to coordinate where and when to get recycling containers, dollies and stickers. To see the *Recycling Container* and *Recycling Sticker* offerings, visit the [Recycling Toolkit page](#) on the Green Schools website.
6. **Announce the event and the upcoming changes.**

Generate excitement and educate students and staff by:

- Making announcements at assemblies or on the PA system.
- Creating posters.
- Holding brief classroom visits leading up to the kick-off.



For more ideas, see *Communication Cycle* on the [Recycling Toolkit page](#).

The publicity should:

- Include information about waste reduction and recycling.
- Mention the kick-off event, including the what, when, and where.

If your school has a student Green Team or environmental club, get them involved. Student enthusiasm is contagious!

To receive recognition beyond the school, invite the district Director of Communications or Public Information to promote the event and the school's conservation achievements on the district's website and by sending press releases to local and regional newspapers.

7. **Train monitors for lunchroom recycling.**

Find monitors for lunchroom recycling stations, and show the monitors what can and can't be recycled. Ask a student club, a classroom, or parent volunteers to serve as monitors.

The monitors will remind students about what materials can and can't be recycled and get the program off to a strong start. Monitors should not handle others' waste; rather, the monitors inform students about proper sorting and answer questions.

Helpful tools: (a) nametags to identify the monitors as official helpers; and (b) gloves.

On the Kick-Off Day

1. **Display posters** or other engaging material at the school entrance to remind students and staff about the event.
2. **Make announcements**, both in the morning of the kick-off day and during each lunch, to remind students and staff about the new procedures.
3. **Remind lunchroom monitor about what materials can and can't be recycled.** Monitors should arrive 10 - 15 minutes in advance of the first lunch. Each station (with a dump bucket, recycling container and garbage container) should have a monitor to remind students about proper sorting. If possible, have a monitor at the leftover liquids bucket as well.
4. **Award prizes.** Consider giving out prizes to students who do a good job with recycling. Ask your Green Schools representative for ideas.
5. **Hold a competition.** Consider starting a classroom or grade level competition on the kick-off day to see which class or grade generates the most recyclable materials, the least amount of garbage, or the least amount of contamination in the recycling containers.



After the Kick-off

Remember, the kick-off is just that – a beginning. A successful program requires regular reinforcement and reminders.

1. **Continue lunchroom monitoring** for a minimum of two weeks but ideally for three or more weeks. Forming good habits at the beginning will pay off in a successful long-term program.
2. **Provide feedback** through competition results, updated garbage and recycling volumes, and comments (both constructive criticism and positive reinforcement) from monitors or Green Team members.
3. **Regular reminders.** Use lunchroom, assembly, and PA announcements, school newspaper and newsletter articles, the school website, posters, emails to staff, or other means, to regularly remind students and staff about the following:
 - What's recyclable and what's not
 - Waste reduction practices such as using both sides of paper, double-sided copying, taking only what one will eat, and similar messages

Visit the [Recycling Toolkit page](#) for sample PA announcements, sample emails, and facts about waste reduction and recycling.

4. **Recognize staff and student helpers.** Thank staff and students that helped make the kick-off event possible. Use PA or assembly announcements, notices in school newsletters or newspapers, and other methods to acknowledge everyone who contributed to the improved program.

Use the Green Schools Program online [certificates of recognition](#) to congratulate students, staff, and parents that helped to set up, promote, and monitor.

Also thank the entire school for doing a good job recycling!

