



## Education and Outreach: the Communication Cycle

As your school starts or expands waste reduction and recycling practices, tell students and staff about the changes and how each person can help. Education and regular reminders will help reduce garbage, increase recycling, and reduce contamination in recycling bins.

Use your school's existing communication methods. Share the benefits of recycling and waste reduction, and what materials can be recycled. Also see education and outreach strategies in the Level One Best Practices Guide found on [Waste reduction & recycling \(level one\) - King County, Washington](#).

### Students

- Start a student Green Team to focus on recycling and waste reduction. Invite a staff member to advise the team.
- Ask the student council or ASB to help with education and outreach.
- Announce recycling expectations at assemblies, especially at the beginning of the school year.
- Include messages in morning announcements once each week or month.
- Make recycling and waste reduction announcements at lunch time.
- Write an article for the student newsletter.
- Create posters for classrooms, hallways, and cafeteria.
- Create a 3-dimensional display of materials which can be recycled. Place the display in the cafeteria, in a hallway, or other visible common area.
- Hold a recycling contest during a school event to test recycling knowledge.
- Celebrate America Recycles Day in November and Earth Day in April.

### Staff

- Announce recycling and waste reduction expectations at staff meetings.
- Periodically (quarterly) send emails to staff. See sample emails in the program's [Recycling toolkit - King County, Washington](#).
- At staff orientation, share the school's recycling and waste reduction practices, and include this information in new hire packets.
- Place signs on recycling bins in the staff break room.

# Continue the Cycle

## Seven tips to keep your improved program going strong

1. **Assign leaders.** At the beginning of each school year, make sure there are two staff members and a student team to lead recycling and waste reduction efforts.
2. **Monitor your program and make adjustments.** See the [Recycling toolkit - King County, Washington](#) for tracking worksheets. Note how full outdoor recycling and garbage containers are on pickup day. If garbage volume decreases and the outdoor container(s) is not full on pickup day, call your hauler or the district (depending on who deals with garbage) and reduce the size of the school's outdoor container(s) or the frequency of pick-ups to cut costs.
3. **Note contamination:** Contamination is recyclable materials in garbage, or garbage in recycling bins. Liquids and food scraps do not belong in recycling bins because they contaminate the recyclable materials. (Food scraps can be collected separately for composting at a regional composting facility.) Use the tips in this guide to regularly educate and remind students and staff about "recycling right" - only placing accepted recyclable materials in recycling bins.
4. **Continue school-wide education.** Use morning announcements to update students. Include recycling education in teacher training and student assemblies. Periodically send an email to remind staff about the benefits of recycling and what materials can be recycled.
5. **Continue to train and praise.** Whether custodians or students collect your school's recyclable materials, check with them two or three times each year. Find out if there are any problems. Recognize their efforts. Ultimately, their work can make or break the program.
6. **Track successes and promote them!** When you make changes, announce them. Calculate your recycling rate to find out the percentage of materials diverted from garbage due to recycling. See recycling rate calculation worksheets in the [Recycling toolkit - King County, Washington](#). To encourage continued success, tell students and staff about the school's improved recycling rate and any garbage volume decreases.
7. **Go to the next level.** There always are more ways to reduce waste. Observe what's still being thrown away, locate resources on the Green Schools Program website, and ask for help!



**King County**

Department of  
Natural Resources and Parks  
**Solid Waste Division**

September 2022