

School recycling guide

Aim of the Guide: To assist schools with setting up a viable recycling collection programme

Introduction

A school recycling programme is a hands-on, interdisciplinary lesson that educates learners about the environment and how to reduce waste (including valuable recyclable materials) going to landfills while ensuring personal responsibility and pride is taken for the pristine upkeep of the school grounds.

However, the benefits of a well-run school recycling programme go far beyond the actual school grounds. The surrounding communities can also benefit from drop-off sites or recyclable collection drives since the learners can transfer and pass on newly learnt recycling behaviour to their families.

Getting Started

DO THIS HOMEWORK FIRST: Before your schools can start on a practical level with a recycling programme there are four vital steps that need to be completed first and which are described in more detail below, before any recyclable materials should be practically collected:

1. Identify a project champion
2. Set up a waste management committee for the school
3. Conduct a waste audit
4. Assess and prepare the recycling location and logistics

STEP 1: Identify a Project Champion

It is vital to obtain top-level support from the school's principal who should at the least "endorse" the proposed recycling initiative at his/her school. To obtain buy-in, it is useful to highlight and discuss how the proposed recycling programme can generate additional revenue and possibly reduce costs for the school by lowering their disposal costs.

The principal is likely to hand down the actual project champion to an administrative staff member or a teacher who has the capacity and is passionate enough to oversee the project and act as a champion for it. The champion will elect suitable candidates for a Waste Management Committee to assist with the day-to-day activities required to keep the recycling programme feasible and generally successful.

The leading project champion should:

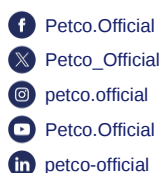
- Take overall responsibility for the project
- Drive the implementation of the project

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- Provide training for all involved where and when required
- Conduct regular meetings with the committee
- Keep the governing body and management team informed
- Keep the local media and surrounding community informed on progress, special events and opportunities to become involved.

STEP 2: Set up a “Waste Management Committee”

It is important to ensure that all interested parties (school management, teachers, learners, parents, and the local community) buy into the idea of recycling at the school and become committed to helping it succeed. One of the ways to do this is to include representatives of all those groups in the school's waste management committee.

This committee is there to jointly drive the project, give multi-stakeholder input and ensure that available expertise is utilised. The committee should ideally include (but need not be limited to) a:

- **Representative from top management:** It would be ideal if the school's principal could be directly involved as it would ensure the project receives full support from the leadership.
- **Representatives from educators:** The committee should include at least 3 educator representatives.
- **Representative from the governing body:** The support from the governing body is crucial for the success of the project.
- **Representative from the administrative staff:** A person who has a good overview of the school's finances including key expenditures and can capture earned revenue in a professional and transparent format to be communicated to learners and parents alike to maintain high motivational levels.
- **Learner representative:** This is vital as learners will assist in generating awareness and support amongst their peers.
- **Representative from the school cleaning staff:** Although learners, educators and parents can do a great deal to ensure the success of the project, the support and buy-in of the cleaning staff is essential, as they are likely to be instrumental in the additional recovery of recyclable materials from waste that ends up erroneously in rubbish bins.

STEP 3: Conduct a Waste Audit

Before starting the recycling programme, you should know how much recyclable materials you are likely to collect, but also what minimum quantity of recyclable materials you need to collect. For most schools, you most likely have to collect more than one type of recyclable materials in order to produce the volumes required for a collection company to come and collect from your school. Therefore, you will need to know how much recyclable materials are currently ending up in your rubbish bins and bags.

First, do your homework to establish the minimum quantities that you need to supply to a recycler before they will collect from your school. Contact local collectors and recyclers. As a start, you could visit Petco's list of recyclers, buy-back centres or drop-off sites.



Second, obtain – with the help of the cleaning staff and administration – the following information to assess whether there is really a financial business case for your school to recover recyclable materials:

- What are the main types of waste generated at your school? How much of it is packaging material, and what kind(s) of packaging is there?
- How many recyclable materials (PET plastic and liquid board cartons) does your school generate per week/month?
- Where does your school produce the most waste (classrooms, sports fields, offices, tuck shops), and what are the key activities linked to the creation of waste materials?
- If applicable: how much of the food and drinks sold at your school's tuck shop results in recyclable materials and non-recyclable materials? You need to know how much of what is generated will need to go to landfill (mostly food waste).
- Are waste items being produced at your school for which you could possibly source alternative materials?

Are there possibilities to work with the local community to collect enough recyclable materials to make your project viable?

STEP 4: Assess and prepare the recycling location and logistics

Only after you have undergone steps 1-3 (and established that there is the support of a project champion and a motivated committee in place, and you know through the waste audit that a recycling project is feasible for the school) it is time to learn about the space requirements and logistic consideration that need to be taken into account when setting up your recycling collection programme.

What do you need?

- **Space** – sufficient, enclosed, undercover, and secure space to store and separate the recyclable materials until the minimum amount is reached for collection (ideally by a local collector who provides a “one-stop-shop” service for all recyclable materials)
- **Access** – your site should be easily accessible to both the collector and people from the surrounding communities, who could be given permission to drop off recyclables in order to significantly boost your collection volumes and in order for your school to provide a very valuable public service. **Note, however**, that this access should not interfere with normal school operations and should not endanger the safety of the staff and learners.
- **Security** – to prevent vandalism or illegal dumping, you should restrict access to your collection area after hours. It may be necessary to arrange for appropriate security measures such as supervision by staff, volunteers or a security company.
- **Health and safety** – consider the possible odour (if wet and/or dirty recyclable materials are included among the materials collected), the effect of insects (bees in particular), keeping the recyclable materials collection area away from high traffic areas, as well as the possibility of creating a fire hazard. Your school's health and safety officer will have to give input on these matters.



- **Protection from the elements** – ensure that your recyclable material sorting/pre-processing area (if required by the collector) and storage area is enclosed and that materials collected will not blow around the school when it is windy.
- **Bulk bags** – you will need bulk bags to store recyclable materials for collection. You can ask your collector to supply you with those if it is part of their service. You could also contact PETCO in this regard.
- **Protective clothing** – ensure that all volunteer staff and other cleaning staff have the necessary protective clothing (gloves in particular if you co-collect other recyclable materials such as breakable glass bottles, in addition to PET bottles and liquid board cartons)

Growing your recycling revenue

The sale of recyclable materials can become a source of revenue for your school and be used to fund sports tours, books, computers, computer programmes and more. By organizing competitions between classes, year groups and even nearby schools, participation can be increased, and revenue increased.

You should acquire a scale so that existing office administrators can do some simple record keeping making sure the collector pays you a fair price for the recyclable materials you collect. It is best to focus on one type of recyclable material at a time and grow your collections from there. Focusing on one recyclable material type allows you to work out the difficulties that may arise with contractual, collection, sorting and educational components.

The team can create signs or contact local businesses as corporate sponsors and alert the local media of the programme. Considering holding a kick-off event at your school site and perhaps tracking and graphing your recycling success to share with your students every month.

Based on the waste audit, the team may suggest revising existing procurement policies. They may request replacing non-recyclable items with ones that can be recycled or reused. The team can educate students and staff through in-class presentations or a school-wide assembly.

Also, consider the way you will **communicate about the programme** or **raise awareness**. The recycling team could, for instance, do the following:

- Create signs or posters to alert people to the programme.
- Contact local businesses as corporate sponsors to assist with some of the infrastructure and other items you will need to start the programme.
- Holding a kick-off event at your school when the project starts operating and alerting the local media about the event. Ensure that someone is available to talk to the media and give accurate information about it to the local community.
- Tracking and graph your recycling success and sharing it on notice boards or at regular assembly meetings with staff and learners every month.
- Based on the waste audit, the waste management committee may suggest revising existing procurement policies. They may request replacing non-recyclable items with ones that can be recycled or reused. The team could educate students and staff about these decisions through presentations in class or at a school-wide assembly meeting



- Organise competitions between classes, year groups and even nearby schools, which could help to increase participation and revenue. Inform the local media about the results of such inter-school competitions.

Who is Petco and how can we help you?

Discover how Petco, a trusted Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO) since 2004, can empower your school to kickstart and enhance collection and recycling efforts. Petco administers Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes for various packaging products, serving as a national organisation dedicated to keeping valuable recyclables out of the environment where they don't belong and back into the economy. With a proven track record in designing and implementing effective systems, Petco is well-equipped to support schools in preparing and implementing waste minimization measures.

Petco acknowledges the challenges faced by schools, including busy teachers, understaffed schools, insufficient resources and priorities other than litter and waste awareness. Leveraging its experience and success, Petco is positioned to provide practical support to schools. This assistance extends beyond systems implementation to include educational materials such as posters, curriculum-aligned content, and recyclable material collection bags. Schools can also apply for banners and bins, as well as the setup of recycling stations, by reaching out to info@petco.co.za and viewing our free resources. With Petco's support, your school and community can take meaningful steps towards a more sustainable and environmentally responsible future.

Useful Contacts

Visit www.petco.co.za for a list of collection points, drop-off sites and buy-back centres.

You could also contact some other industry bodies for general assistance or information about other material streams. Here are some of them:

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| • Institute of Waste Management | www.iwmsa.co.za |
| • National Recycling Forum | www.recycling.co.za |
| • Packaging SA | www.packagingsa.co.za |
| • Plastics SA | www.plasticsinfo.co.za |

Contact Petco

Call toll free:	011 615 8875 (JHB)/ 021 794 6300 (CPT)
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