

How To Start A Successful School Recycling Program



CleanRiver
RECYCLING SOLUTIONS



How Do We Create A More Sustainable Society?

Simple.

We start with our children.

We know this is easier said than done, but what we CAN do is make small changes today for a better tomorrow. And where we SHOULD start putting our focus is in teaching our kids.

If we want to raise our youth to be environmentally responsible individuals we need to instill good sustainable habits at an early age.

That's why we believe that schools should be ground zero when it comes to producing sustainable and environmentally "active" members of society.



The North American School System

generates a large amount of waste and pollution including, paper, food, cleaning products, water, etc.

There is tremendous potential for your school to not only become more resource efficient but also begin generating revenue for your school simply by implementing an effective recycling program. Recycling is an educational opportunity and it encourages sustainable behaviour that students can take outside the classroom.

With a strong and consistent recycling program in place combined with the ability to teach, our schools can become key drivers in developing sustainable models within our communities.

So don't waste another minute and get started today with CleanRiver's

5 Simple Steps To Start A School Recycling Program.

Step 1: Build Support For Your Program

It pays to do your research.

When it comes to initial funding to start a school recycling program, you may not have the budget available, that's why it is so important to look into start-up grants that are available through your state or province.

Whether it's a government green grant for recycling businesses or other types of programs that are more generic, there is lots of money out there for the taking, you just have to do a little bit of research on which funding programs you may be eligible for.

Use this Grant Finder Search Tool to help get you started:

<https://www.grants-loans.org/database/index.php>



Get Everyone's Buy-In!

Get janitorial staff, teachers, students and active parents such as lunch and cafeteria monitors

ON BOARD & PASSIONATE

about the school recycling program.

Conduct staff, student and PTA meetings to discuss the importance of an effective program, potential ROI, opportunities for funding, identify any past efforts (what worked, what didn't work) and first steps.

"The first thing for an effective recycling program in any school is culture. It's the number one driver of program participation"

"Essentially recycling programs must be driven from the top down. It's nearly impossible for the sustainability team or a student led initiative to drive culture change from the bottom up. You need to work with your administration to get them to lead by example. Then everyone else will fall in line."

- Bruce Buchan, CleanRiver CEO



Step 2: Start A Green Team

- Put together a school **Green Team** with various stakeholders across the school. Include teachers, parents and custodial staff. Remember that the custodial team may need to renegotiate their contracts and this will make it much easier if you have their buy-in from the beginning. We also highly recommend including students. It's important to be inclusive to build ownership for the program and shared responsibility.
- Conduct your own waste audit here's how using our **Waste Audit Toolkit**.
- Create a list of recyclables and compost at your school.
- Discuss the recycling program with your waste hauler and determine any ROI through diversion, labour costs and community rebates. Check out: **Questions To Ask Your Waste Hauler**.



Step 3: Plan The Recycling Program

Determine collection points, how many different streams you will be collecting, and how many recycling bins you will need throughout the school including both indoors and outdoors.

Recycling and waste should ideally be collected in one unit. The issue with having separate waste and recycling containers is that they can become physically separated.

For example, during facility cleaning bins become separated and students and staff don't have the choice of where to throw away their garbage so they often toss it into the closest bin.

This causes contamination in your recycling and waste streams which is detrimental to your sustainability goals because contaminated recycling will often end up being sent to landfill rather than be sorted.



LARGE TOP LOADING

Future Ready

Choose your recycling bins based on capacity, location, whether they are Future-Ready and remember to be consistent.

Change is constant so the ability to add, remove or right-size containers is critical to the success of any school recycling program. Transition® Recycling bins allow you to change streams as needed to fit the collection needs of your recycling program, or just for a specific area within the school.

Some schools for example, will most likely generate more recyclable and compostable waste in the cafeteria than in the classrooms. When you understand the waste flow in your school it will help determine the right bin for the right space and the necessary collection streams.

The **ALL NEW Flex E™** Bin can be easily changed from a single -stream to a two, or three-stream bin in a snap.



FLEX E™ BIN

The right recycling bin for the right room is an integral part of effective school recycling programs. The **Three-Pack BevvBin™** was designed with classrooms in mind. Ideal and inexpensive for any school, the BevvBin™ comes colour coded with restrictive openings to guide students to effectively separate their waste, recyclables and compost (most elementary students still eat in their classrooms so food waste is a necessary stream to collect). Plus they are easy to service and clean for custodial staff with our unique bag-tie system.





Get the GRAPHICS right!

A study performed by University of Toronto showed that effective signage can increase diversion rates by up to 163%.

Bin signage should include school specific waste images to help students/staff make the right choice, as pictures are more effective than text alone.

But be careful! Don't go overboard on the number of images because then it becomes too confusing. Remember to keep updating your graphics as your program changes. Communication is key in helping everyone use the bins effectively.

From showing students exactly what goes where, to communicating your sustainability message, graphics are a powerful component of any school recycling program. CleanRiver has developed new and innovative ways to use graphics, such as diorama graphic displays, that showcase the actual waste generated, or branding for recycling programs to take pride and ownership.

Take the time to design your own graphics based on items your Green Team has identified as problematic in your waste audit. Include students in choosing items represented on the bin graphics to help guide them in making the right decision. Talk to us about custom graphics that can help your school program make a bigger impact.

See our Guide to **Recycling Graphics**.

Step 4. Promote the Program

Be sure to communicate the upcoming roll out of your school recycling program through:

Assemblies

Newsletters

Tent cards in cafeterias

Educational posters in classrooms and hallways
to support the program (CleanRiver has a wide range of resources available online including eBooks, blogs, case studies and videos with tips and best practices to help you get started and promote your recycling program)

Emails to staff and parents

CleanRiver Tip:

Powder-coated metal recycling containers are ideal for hallways, meeting rooms and washrooms. They can be wall-mounted or free-standing. The CleanRiver TMF features stream-specific interchangeable openings. The internal dividers adapt to support up to three separate types of waste and recyclables in a single unit.





Encourage teachers to set clear expectations of how to properly separate waste with their students and the role of the recycling program in their classrooms.

Include lessons and activities on the importance of recycling, sustainability and waste diversion.

Check out [OntarioEcoSchools](#) for some great teaching resources and tools to help get started.

Step 5.

Analyze,

Adjust,

and

CELEBRATE!

"We worked with CleanRiver on developing graphics that show the kind of items that students might typically have and want to get rid of."

The signage helps eliminate any confusion as to what is compostable, recyclable and so forth."

-Beth McKay
St. Andrew's College



FRONT LOADING
ST. ANDREW'S COLLEGE

Check in regularly with your janitorial team on how the recycling program is working from their perspective.

Are they having challenges with staff and students not sorting their recycling effectively?

Do you need to tweak the capacity of certain streams?

If you've selected flexible recycling bins that allow you to increase or decrease the volume of streams you'll be able to adapt your program as it develops.

Be sure to schedule regular follow ups.

CleanRiver Transition® TIM

The TIM is the most flexible recycling and waste bin available. Heavy-duty casters allow the bin to be moved for cleaning. The front opening doors mean servicing is quick and easy. The Transition® divider allows you to change number and volume of streams. The high impact backboard graphics increase the effectiveness of your recycling program.



CUSTOM TIM

Celebrate and communicate the success of any small wins of the recycling program with students, staff and parents.

If your school is even beginning to produce a profit or save extra money, use the funds for school trips, special guests and family fairs.



For more information on implementing successful recycling programs, check out our blogs:

5 Risks To Consider Before Starting A Recycling Program

3 Ways To Protect Your Recycling Program From Failure

If you'd like more information on how to implement a successful school recycling program, please call us at 1-888-646-4246 or email solutions@cleanriver.com.

