



Best Practices: School Recycling Container and Label Set-up and Placement Guide

Top 5 Best Practices to Improve Your Recycling Program

1. Pair all recycling and trash containers in all areas of your school.

- Recycling and trash containers should be close enough to touch, as even a few feet apart will not be as effective.
- Recycling collection in the County has transitioned to a model of “single stream,” meaning all recyclable items can be collected in one recycling container (e.g., paper mixed with bottles, cans, etc.). Trash must always be collected in a separate container.

2. Color-code all recycling, trash, and organics containers and bags.

Recycling: Blue containers; clear or no bag (required)

- Using no bag is ideal (as it is a contaminant at the recycling facility).
- If using bags is necessary, make sure recycling bags are clear-not black. Black bags at a recycling facility are considered dangerous as the contents are unknown.
- If bags are used for recycling, make sure that bags are not tied when placed in the recycling dumpster and items are able to fall out loosely.

Trash: Grey/Black containers; black bag (recommended)

- Black bags for trash can make it easy for staff to keep everything separate.

Organics: Green containers; green compostable bag (required: BPI certified)

- Never use regular plastic bags for organics collection, as regular plastic bags are not compostable and will not break down at the compost facility.



3. Ensure consistent color-coded labels with images are visible from all sides of a container.

- This will reduce confusion, and help you get the most out of your recycling program.

4. Place containers in strategically and conveniently located areas for staff and students.

- High traffic, highly visible, and convenient to use locations are best for containers.

5. Educate students and staff on what can be recycled.

- Annual staff and student trainings help to create a successful recycling program. This saves money, boosts student and staff morale, and creates a positive public image.

Details on recommended container set up by location and label placement tips are provided in this guide. For more information on how to improve your recycling program, visit www.dakotacounty.us, search *school recycling*.

Containers: Set-up and Placement

1. Classroom Entrance and Teacher's Desk

- Pair well-labeled larger recycling container with smaller trash container, using standardized colors blue for recycling and grey/black for trash.

Classroom Recommendations:

- 10 gallon recycling
- 7 gallon trash
- Lids not recommended in classrooms.
- 2 sets of recycling and trash containers recommended per classroom:
 - 1 set at the classroom entrance
 - 1 set at the teacher's desk



2. Office Areas

- Pair well-labeled deskside and office area recycling and trash containers, using standardized colors blue for recycling and grey/black for trash.

Deskside Recommendations:

- 7 or 10 gallon recycling (preference based)
- 7 gallon trash
- Lids not recommended for deskside containers.

Shared Office Area Recommendations (e.g., copy room):

- 23 gallon recycling with lid
- 7 gallon trash
- Lids recommended for shared office area recycling containers only:
 - Recycling: Round with single-sort opening



3. Hallways and Locker Areas

- Pair well-labeled recycling and trash containers, using standardized colors blue for recycling and grey/black for trash.

Common Area Recommendations:

- 23 gallon recycling with lid
- 23 gallon (or smaller) trash with lid
- Lids recommended for common area containers:
 - Recycling: Round with single-sort opening
 - Trash: Swing lid



4. Cafeterias

- Pair well-labeled liquids, recycling, trash, and organics containers into station(s), using standardized colors yellow for liquids, blue for recycling, grey/black for trash, and green for organics.



Cafeteria Recommendations:

- 5 gallon bucket or 20 gallon on dolly for liquids collection
- 32 gallon recycling with lid
- 32 gallon trash
- 32 gallon organics
- Lids recommended for cafeteria liquids and recycling containers only:
 - Liquids: Grate recommended
 - Recycling: Round with single-sort opening
- Collect all recyclables in one recycling container (including milk cartons).
- Locate stations near kitchen or tray return areas.
- Dispose of liquids collection down a sink drain.
- Make sure signage is very clear, and provide student training.
- Pair recycling and trash containers near entrances/exits and vending machines.

Follow this order in your cafeteria sorting line:

START

- Liquids
- Recyclables (milk cartons, bottles/cans, etc.)
- Trash
- Organics (if applicable)

FINISH



5. Kitchen

- Pair well-labeled recycling, trash, and organics containers, using standardized colors blue for recycling, grey/black for trash, and green for organics.

Kitchen Recommendations:

- 23 or 32 gallon recycling, trash, and organics containers (preference based)
- Lids not recommended in kitchens.
- Make sure signage is very clear, and provide staff training.



6. Staff Lounge

- Pair well-labeled recycling, trash, and organics containers, using standardized colors blue for recycling, grey/black for trash, and green for organics.

Staff Lounge Recommendations:

- 23 gallon recycling with lid
- 23 gallon (or smaller) trash with lid
- 12 or 23 gallon organics with lid (preference based)
- Lids recommended for all staff lounge containers:
 - Recycling: Round with single-sort opening
 - Trash: Swing lid
 - Organics: Solid lid (lift lid or step on container)
- Make sure signage is very clear, and provide staff training.



7. Restrooms

- Organics containers can often replace restroom trash containers. Transition trash container to organics collection if paper towels are provided, using standardized colors green for organics and grey/black for trash.

Restroom Recommendations:

- 23 gallon organics
- 8 gallon (or smaller) trash with lid
- Lids not recommended for paper towel collection
 - For restrooms with diaper-changing stations, keep small trash with lid.
- Consider using no liner (or reusing plastic liners) for paper towel collection, but empty contents into a compostable bag. As the contents are light, multiple containers can be combined into one compostable bag, and compostable bags are not wasted lining each container.
- Make sure signage is very clear
 - Label paper towel dispenser, as well as containers.



8. Custodial Collection

- Use tandem dollies with well-labeled recycling and trash containers, using standardized colors blue for recycling and grey/black for trash.

Custodial Collection Recommendations:

- 44 or 55 gallon recycling and trash (preference based)
- Lids not recommended for collection.
- Individual bag liners only need to be changed when dirty, as all materials are collected in large containers.
- Use at school events, to ensure well-labeled recycling and trash containers stay paired.
- Lids recommended for event recycling use only:
 - Recycling: Round with single-sort opening



Labels: Placement

Overview

Labels are durable, self-adhesive and available to all schools in Dakota County. There is no cost.

In general, you will use:

- One lid label per container; and
- Two-four labels total per container
 - Labels should be placed on all visible sides of the container
 - Consider the container may not always be facing the same direction.
 - Place labels 1/3 of the way down to ensure the label is not covered by a bag liner.
 - It is important to cover up an embossed recycling symbol if the container is specified for anything other than recycling (including organics).

Labels can vary based on the collection process and needs at your school. Order your labels at www.dakotacounty.us, search *school order form*.

Label Sizes

- 3" x 3"- for lids.
- 8.5" x 11"- for the wider side of containers, or to post on walls above containers at eye-level.
- 5" x 14" – for the narrow side of containers.
- 3" x 12" – for bottle-shaped containers.

For additional information on how to improve your recycling program, visit www.dakotacounty.us, search *school recycling*.



Updated: November 2017

Free Labels Available to All Schools in Dakota County!

3" x 3" Labels



8.5" x 11" Labels



5" x 14" Labels



3" x 12" Label

