

DEVELOPING A SCHOOL WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

WHERE IS SCHOOL RECYCLING REQUIRED?

Public and private schools, institutions of higher education in Pennsylvania and any other educational institutions are required to recycle where *buildings are located in mandated municipalities*, as defined by Act 101 of 1988, the "Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act."* *All state-owned institutions of learning* must implement waste reduction and recycling programs in compliance with Commonwealth Management Directive #205.22 (8/7/89).

At a minimum, high-grade office paper, corrugated paper and aluminum must be recycled. Recycling programs are required in buildings located in municipalities required to recycle under Act 101. Additional materials such as glass, newsprint, plastics, steel and bimetallic cans, and leaf waste may be required by each municipality. The recycling coordinator should check with the municipality to find out the requirements of the municipal recycling ordinances.

PLANNING A RECYCLING PROGRAM

Successful program planning includes (1) appointing a recycling coordinator, (2) assembling a task force, (3) conducting a preliminary waste audit, (4) researching available markets, (5) developing a collection method, (6) revising procurement policies, and (7) developing an education program.

RECYCLING COORDINATOR

The coordinator administers the overall program. To ensure program stability and continuity, the coordinator should be a permanent employee. This function should NOT be assigned as a student project. Coordinator's duties should be included in their job descriptions.

TASK FORCE

The primary function of the task force is to assist the coordinator in developing the initial program; however, it can become a permanent advisory body. Task force members should represent: (1) CUSTODIAL STAFF experienced in trash removal, to offer practical guidance; (2) ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF, to ensure top-level support and participation incentives; (3) TEACHERS, to develop motivation techniques and an educational program; and (4) STUDENTS, to provide peer leadership.

WASTE AUDIT

Planning begins with a waste audit to determine waste composition and volume; the point of origin; what portion could be recycled, re-used, reduced or eliminated; and what recyclable/reusable materials could be substituted for materials currently in use. Audited areas should include offices, classrooms, cafeterias, lounges, vending machine areas, boiler rooms, maintenance areas, storage areas and dormitories.

AVAILABLE MARKETS

Recyclable materials are marketed by collectors through brokers, intermediate processors, or end users. Brokers link customers with businesses that accept recyclables. Intermediate processors accept recyclables and prepare them for end use; some pick up materials, others require delivery. End users are manufacturers who use recyclables in their processes; sufficient volumes of a material may justify direct contact with an end user. Research local markets to discover (1) what materials each business accepts, (2) how to prepare the materials, and (3) if the business will pick up the materials (and the charge), or if they must be delivered (and the rate of payment).

COLLECTION

In developing a collection system, the main points to consider are containers, a central storage area, personnel, and materials preparation.

Containers for recyclables can range from corrugated boxes designed by students to those made of a variety of materials designed specifically for recycling. Consider where containers should be placed, the quantity needed, size and shape, and a design that conveys the intended purpose.

The central storage area should be clean, dry and free of fire hazards. If located outside, covered storage bins are necessary to prevent litter and protect quality.

Collection personnel are designated to collect recyclables from various areas of the building and deliver them to the central storage area. If the school must deliver recyclables, delivery personnel also must be designated. A collection schedule is helpful, especially if recyclables are picked up on a regular basis.

If marketing requirements include materials preparation such as crushing or bundling, consider further staffing requirements. Remember, maintaining good quality is essential for ensuring that the materials are marketable and for obtaining the highest prices possible.

PROCUREMENT

Based on the waste audit, the task force may decide to substitute products that are recyclable and/or made of recycled content and to revise existing procurement policies. Act 101, §1508 provides that standards for minimum recycled content may be established for bid specifications. When determining bid awards, schools may grant a 5% preference to vendors who meet the recycled content specifications.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The task force should design an ongoing educational program to inform staff and students about the program, program goals, and the value of waste reduction and recycling. This could include an initial assembly; newspaper or newsletter articles; signs, posters and fliers, possibly designed by students as contest submissions; and incorporating waste reduction and recycling activities in lesson plans, such as a math class calculating the amount of waste generated before and after program implementation. This information can be used as a classroom exercise to determine the amount of waste diverted from the landfill.

*Reference §1501, §1503, §1507, §1508 & §1509.