



**UT-Chattanooga Honors  
Sustainability Team**

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# Recycling Program Manual

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## OVERVIEW

This manual is intended to bring recycling programs within easy reach for any school. It provides a step-by-step guide to setting up recycling pickup and organizing a program that works for each school.

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## THE FIRST STEPS

### Why recycle?

Implementing a recycling program takes time and effort on the part of many people, so it's important to remember why you and your school are doing it. Benefits from a recycling program include:

- Increased student involvement
- Students learn accountability and teamwork
- Students learn to become sustainable citizens and encourage sustainable behavior in others
- By diverting trash to recycling, schools pay nothing extra; you actually save money

Coming up with your own goals as a school can also be beneficial.

### What you'll need to get started

Answering the following questions will give you a good idea of what to do next.

- Do you have classroom recycling bins?
  - Affordable ideas for classroom recycling bins
    - Large cardboard boxes
    - Cheap plastic beach baskets
    - Empty printer paper boxes
    - Storage tubs
- Who will collect the classroom bins and bring them to the main bin outside?
  - Recycling Club
  - Different students designated each day
  - High School Volunteers
- What is recyclable? Common sources of recyclable materials at schools:
  - Cardboard boxes from food shipments
  - Printer paper boxes
  - Paper
  - Plastic beverage bottles
  - Beverage cans

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## SETTING UP

### Who to contact

Reach out to our contact at Republic, Robert Stone, and let him know that you're in the Hamilton County System and would like to receive recycling services.

- Robert Stone
  - (423) 421-4998
  - rstone@republicservices.com

### Spread the word

If recycling is new to your school, you may have to spread the word and provide some general information. Here are a few recommendations:

- Put up posters with pictures to show students what can and can't be recycled
- Hold an assembly and show students what goes where
- Do a demonstration on the morning announcements

### Identify a champion

Each school needs a champion or group of champions to oversee the program and be accountable for the implementation of the program.

A few options:

- Related Arts teacher (PE, Music, Library, etc.)
- Teacher with an extra space in schedule (especially in the afternoon)
- PTA members

### Identify a team

The actual process of gathering classroom recyclables and taking them to the main bin is a crucial step in the process. There are a surprising number of barriers between the classroom and the bin outside. A stronger program forms when the champion works closely with the team.

Team ideas:

- Recycling club
  - Recycling club can be a great opportunity for "green"-minded and creative students, but also for those who aren't on an athletic or scholastic team
- High School volunteers
- Mix of high school students and elementary/middle school students (i.e., a loose mentoring program)

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## UP AND RUNNING

### From classroom to container

Here are a few ideas for ideas for instituting recycling programs within your school that have been used by other schools.

- Two students in each class are in charge of making sure that the recycling bins are placed in the hallway. A group of older students walks by the classroom and collects the bins, and then empties them in the recycling container.
- A recycling club is formed and goes around the school collecting bins and taking them out to the recycling container.

### Keep it going

It can be hard to make recycling a habit, especially if it's something that students and staff are not used to. We suggest starting a competition to get students involved and excited. A few ideas are listed below.

- Grade vs. Grade
- Classroom vs. Classroom
- School-wide competition (try to recycle a certain amount\*)

\*Depending on the size/shape of the bin and available resources, amount recycled can be measured by half and full bins, by weight, or by number of items.

### Troubleshooting

As with any program, difficulties arise. Here are a few common scenarios and ideas for dealing with them.

- There's an event, and visitors are putting trash in recycling bins
  - Students can stand by the bins and remind visitors what goes where. This is a great learning opportunity for visitors, and the students take pride in their knowledge.

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## CASE STUDY: LOOKOUT VALLEY ELEMENTARY

### Idea

The school had previously recycled with the help of a parent. When the bins were full, the parent would take them to a local recycling center. However, when that parent left, the school was left in a tough spot. Lookout Valley needed a recycling bin that could be picked up on a weekly basis from the school.

### What Happened

Republic Services was contacted to see if a recycling bin could be placed at the school. One of the first issues was the location: for the trucks to be able to pick up the recycling bin, there needs to be a cement pad. Usually there is already a pad for the dumpster, so an effort is made to fit the recycling bin on the same pad.



### Troubleshooting and Solution

When the bin arrived, it was clear there was an issue: the opening was too high off the ground for a student to reach, and the sides of the bin didn't open. We contacted Republic, and they sent over a new bin with sliding doors.

Once the proper type of bin was delivered, it was a matter of how the recycling would get there. Lookout Valley Staff put together a program based around a recycling club of fourth and fifth graders. Every week, the students collapse cardboard from the cafeteria and take it out to the bin, and later in the week, a high school student from the local high school comes by to help the students pick up recycling from the classrooms and take it outside. Each pair of students is responsible for one grade level's classrooms.



### Lessons

Even for a school that previously had a recycling program, there were a lot of obstacles to overcome in the process of getting a bin and setting up a system that worked with students and staff.

However, with the dedication of staff and enthusiastic students, Lookout Valley now has a recycling program that works for them, providing an activity for students and a valuable resource for the school. Students and staff alike are learning the benefits of sustainability, and they can take pride in the positive impact they're making on the planet and in their community.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A copy of this manual and more information can be found on our website, <https://utcihsustainability.wixsite.com/recyclingprogram>.

Created in Microsoft Word.

Photos by Madison Chan and Sarah Collins.



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