



In-School Recycling Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

How do I order new bins?

There are two methods to ordering recycling bins for your school. The first method is to order your bins using school funds via the FMS system. Use this link for the ordering information. This is a great use for school SERT award funds.

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/facilities/greenschoolsfocus/pdf/Orderrecyclingbins.pdf>

The second method is to have your in-school SERT/recycling coordinator communicate with your building service manager to place an order through the Maximo work order system. Please note: This second method through Maximo can take up to 2 to 3 months depending on available funding.

Where can I find out what is acceptable and not acceptable for recycling to avoid contamination?

For a list of what is acceptable and not acceptable to recycle at MCPS go to:

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/facilities/greenschoolsfocus/pdf/Recyclingitems11.13.pdf>

Are juice boxes recyclable?

Yes, empty juice boxes can be recycled. Please place empty juice boxes in recycling bins marked for paper.

Can the new plastic lunch containers be recycled?

Yes, the new plastic lunch containers can be recycled if they are not contaminated. Please place a trash bin where the left over food can be tapped into and then the containers can be stacked for recycling pick up. **Containers that have sticky food residue can not be recycled and must be put in the trash bin.**

What do I do with recycling material that is contaminated?

If you find a recycling bin with food or spilled liquids (cans, milk, etc.) then this recycling material must be placed in the trash. To avoid contamination and increase your schools recycling rate please make sure that there is a trash receptacle next to all recycling bins. This provides our building occupants the ability to properly dispose of



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recycling and trash. To reduce contamination, consider using restrictive lids for recycling bins.

How do I access my school's recycling data?

Please visit the SERT website to access your data.

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/facilities/greenschoolsfocus/sert.shtm>

How is my percentage figured out?

As recyclable paper and cardboard is picked up at each school they are weighed. Bottles and cans are scientifically estimated or weighed at each school.

The school's trash weight is calculated based on the school population, with an allowance for recycled materials. A calculation is used to determine percentages based on these two weights.

What is the difference between the letter grade we receive and the recycling percentage?

Letter grades are determined by a county inspector that comes to your school to conduct a site visit. Maintaining your recycling program by providing recycling bins next to every trash can, avoiding contamination of paper, posting adequate signage, encouraging active participation in the program, etc. improve your grade. Keep up the good work and ask for help from our office to help improve your grade.

If our school receives a failing grade what should I do?

Please contact the SERT office, by calling or e-mailing, recycling@mcpsmd.org to ask for assistance. The SERT office will provide your school with specialized assistance in raising your grade. Remember that the third quarter SERT energy performance awards are tied directly to the recycling grade. If your school receives a D or lower in recycling this energy performance award will be withheld. We will make every effort to help in raising your grade so your school will receive any awards due. Please try to avoid failing grades by encouraging staff and students to recycle. Ordering bins to support your schools' efforts is the first step in promoting and succeeding in your recycling efforts. Don't forget to include students, staff and leadership in the recycling program.

Who do I contact for answers to questions about recycling?

Please e-mail your questions to SERT at recycling@mcpsmd.org. Several staff members have access to this box and will direct your question to the appropriate member of our team to help you.



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If a liquid beverage is not fully consumed what should my students and staff do with the remaining liquid?

Our new slogan is “drink and drop.” One way to help keep liquids out of the trash is to provide a bucket next to the new milk containers in the cafeteria to encourage students to completely empty their containers before recycling.

4% of our trash (over 450 tons a year) is liquid. By consuming the liquids or keeping them out of the trash we can save the school system unnecessary costs in trash disposal.

What should I do if I suspect my recyclables are not being recycled?

The first step is to discuss your particular situation with your in-school recycling coordinator and building service manager. If your problems cannot be resolved within the school community please contact the SERT office at recycling@mcpsmd.org.

What should I focus my efforts on in recycling?

15% of our trash is recyclable papers. All school occupants are part of the recycling program. Encourage 100% of your school’s community to participate 100% of the time in recycling 100% of their paper.

Where does our trash go?

Our trash is transferred to the Dickerson Incinerator, in Dickerson, Maryland. The operation at the Montgomery County facility burns 1,500 tons of trash per day that is generated into electricity. The burning capacity of the plant is 1,800 tons per day, 365 days a year. For more information regarding the Dickerson Incinerator please click on: http://www.gazette.net/stories/030206/mounnew172212_31941.shtml

Why do we use Styrofoam? Do we recycle Styrofoam?

Currently only Styrofoam products are provided by our vendors. Unfortunately there is not a local facility for recycling Styrofoam. Styrofoam takes up a lot of space but is very light so it is not economical to transfer it to the existing recycling facilities in Florida and Massachusetts.

My school is doing a great job and I want to share our strategies. How do I let others know about what we are doing?

Please send an e-mail to the **SERT_Info** folder which is a public conference folder all schools can access. Visit this folder through public folders (conferences, departments,



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facilities) to learn about what others are doing and for the latest information on recycling initiatives. Some of these great strategies we publish on our website and submit to the Bulletin.

Can we recycle plastic soda/water bottle lids? How about the metal lids on glass bottles?

Yes, plastic soda/water bottle lids are acceptable and so are the metal lids on glass bottles.

Are overhead transparencies recyclable?

No, they are not.

Can we compare the cost of recycling paper verses the cost of trash?

We can not make that comparison directly, because the two programs are different. We pay \$56 per ton of trash, but we pay a flat rate for recycling services, which does not change based on our volume. But, the more we recycle, the less we pay for trash disposal, so you could calculate the cost of disposing that much paper as trash. But there are other unmeasured financial and environmental costs that also exist, that are very significant, such as: trash hauling (fuel) fees, cost of natural resources (trees), costs to process raw materials vs. costs to “recycle” paper (raw materials consume more energy, etc).

Are the 30 gallon trash cans recyclable?

Yes, they are recyclable you could put them in a 2 yard container for commingled material.

Is composting permitted at schools?

Generally, composting is not permitted at the school sites due to safety and pest management concerns. The volume and type of trash generated in a school is considerably greater and different in composition than residential trash. The Smith Center gets a special consideration for composting on their site, because they have continuous staffing and employees dedicated to environmental education.

There are new plastic and aluminum mixed cans in our vending machines. Can these be recycled?

Yes, they can.



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What can the Art Department do with paper in various forms from art class..such as:

Paper with paint, paper mache, paper with glue, oil pastel, crayon?

Paint and crayon on paper is recyclable.

Paper Mache, paper with glue and oil paste are not recyclable.

Please submit your questions to recycling@mcpsmd.org. Questions we receive may be published in future Q&A documents.