



SUSTAINABILITY AND COMPLIANCE

Montgomery County Public Schools

MCPS Recycling Program Best Management Practices

Montgomery County Public Schools | Sustainability and Compliance Team

Use this guide to organize recycling at schools and central facilities, keep materials properly separated, and resolve collection problems. Consistent bins, clear instructions, assigned responsibilities, and routine checks help prevent contamination and missed service. Apply current MCPS guidance for accepted materials and specialized programs.

1. Assign leadership and maintain a facility plan

The principal or facility administrator designates a recycling coordinator and backup. Under MCPS Regulation ECF-RC, submit their names before September 15 and an administrator-endorsed facility recycling plan before September 30 each school year. Coordinate submissions and implementation support with the Sustainability and Compliance Team.

Role	Recommended responsibility
Administrator	Support implementation, designate staff, and endorse the annual plan.
Coordinator	Maintain the plan, arrange education, review concerns, and request assistance.
Building services	Collect streams separately, keep dumpster access clear, and report service and repair needs.
Teachers and other staff	Reinforce sorting and report missing bins, signs, or recurring contamination.
Students	Sort correctly and support supervised outreach and visual observations.

Role	Recommended responsibility

2. Prevent waste before it is generated

- Use digital materials when practical, print only what is needed, and use two-sided printing when appropriate.
- Reuse usable classroom and office supplies. Coordinate eligible donations through Drive for Supplies or other approved MCPS reuse programs.

3. Set up consistent recycling stations

- Provide paper bins in classrooms, offices, and near copiers. Pair trash with the recycling streams appropriate to each shared space.
- Use current MCPS labels and posters at the point of disposal. Match each container and lid to its designated material.
- Provide adequate capacity in cafeterias, breakfast locations, workrooms, and outdoor areas. Adjust placement or collection frequency when bins routinely overflow.
- Keep bins accessible without blocking doors, exits, sidewalks, or accessible routes. Do not use recycling bins to store equipment or supplies.

4 Sort correctly and prevent contamination

Material stream	Handling practice
Paper and cardboard	Keep clean and dry. Flatten cardboard before placing it in the designated dumpster. Remove plastic packaging and other contents.
Commingled containers	Recycle only containers accepted by current MCPS guidance. Click here for list of accepted items
Yard waste	Keep leaves, grass, and brush separate from trash. Request collection through the established MCPS process. Click here to see the established process,
Voluntary Recycling	Use designated programs for lamps, batteries, electronics, toner, ink, and other special items. Keep them out of routine recycling dumpsters. Click here to see current programs

- Keep plastic bags and liners out of paper and commingled recycling dumpsters. If liners are used indoors, empty accepted recyclables loose into the correct dumpster and manage liners separately.
- Keep food, liquids, food-soiled paper, and unaccepted packaging out of recycling. A recycling symbol alone does not establish that an item is accepted.
- Check current guidance for cartons, trays, cups, lids, and other food packaging. Ask the coordinator or Sustainability and Compliance Team when unsure.
- Keep streams separate during indoor collection, transport, and outdoor disposal. Never combine separated recycling with trash.

5. Reinforce sorting in kitchens and cafeterias

Place clearly labeled stations where students and staff finish meals. Teach sorting during lunch periods and provide supervised reminders when needed. Building services staff should coordinate removal of clean cardboard and accepted containers.

Use approved food recovery and composting programs where available. Food scraps belong only in an approved compost collection stream; otherwise, follow the school's trash instructions.

6. Keep dumpsters accessible and serviceable

- Keep dumpster area clear of vehicles, deliveries, snow, loose materials, and other obstructions. Share collection [schedules](#) with staff responsible for parking and deliveries.
- Keep lids closed and locked when not loading, where equipment allows. Use installed locks and gravity bars to secure the dumpster; report missing or damaged hardware.
- Report broken lids, rust holes, leaks, damaged wheels, and unsafe placement promptly through Asset Essentials or by contacting recycling@mcpsmd.org.
- Never enter a dumpster, climb inside, or compact materials by standing on them. Students should not add recycling to the dumpster.

7. Resolve service problems promptly

Concern	School response
Missed pickup	Check for blocked access or visible contamination. Report the missed service and any urgent capacity needs to recycling@mcpsmd.org or 240-740-3210
Overflow or extra volume	Request additional collection. Plan ahead for book cleanouts, moves, deliveries, and end-of-year projects.
Contamination	Remove contamination from the dumpster before adding new recycling.
Damaged or misplaced dumpster	Submit a repair or placement request through Asset Essentials. Identify any blocked sidewalk, unsafe access, or leak.
Repeated problems	Keep dates and request details; follow up on unresolved issues.

8. Plan for events and community use

Before an event, place recycling beside trash at appropriate locations, including concession and outdoor areas. Explain expectations to visiting groups and community users. Empty containers after the event, and restore stations before the next school day.

For large cleanouts, request service in advance and follow applicable MCPS procedures for books, records, equipment, and surplus property. Keep reusable items separate from disposal material.

9. Coordinate special programs

Food recovery and composting: Contact the Sustainability and Compliance Team before starting or changing a program. Use approved equipment, signs, and program procedures. Identify a coordinator, collection responsibilities, cleaning arrangements, and ongoing funding. Follow the current food recovery [toolkit](#) for food eligibility, storage, temperature logs, and disposal.

Toner and ink: Follow the current MCPS [flyer](#). Return HP Original toner using the HP return-label process and enter MCPS in the name field. Under current program guidance, dispose of aftermarket toner cartridges as trash and recycle accepted clean cardboard packaging. Send ink cartridges through Pony to John Meyer, Building A, using current packing instructions.

Lamps, batteries, and electronics: Follow approved facilities, technology, and property-disposal procedures. Confirm collection and packaging instructions before transport. Obtain specific direction for broken lamps or damaged batteries. Do not place these items in standard recycling containers.

10. Educate and monitor performance

- Introduce sorting at the start of the school year and reinforce it with staff, students, substitutes, and facility users. Request demonstrations and current outreach materials as needed.
- Identify missing labels, containers, and lids by doing a [recycling audit](#)
- Review monthly school recycling data. Investigate any unusual changes.
- Set a practical improvement goal, assign an owner, and check progress. Recognize participation and share success.

Routine operating checklist

When	Check
Daily when in use	Stations are accessible and labeled; streams remain separate; bins are not overflowing; surrounding areas are clean.
Before pickup	Dumpster approaches are clear and visible; service concerns have been reported.
After events	Bins are emptied, and stations restored.
Monthly	Review recycling data, recurring contamination, supplies, and unresolved service requests.
Annually	Update the facility plan, coordinator and backup, training, and event responsibilities.

School recycling implementation worksheet

School or facility: _____

School year: _____ Review date: _____

Coordinator: _____ Backup: _____

Administrator: _____ Building services lead: _____

Action	Owner and due date	Complete
Confirm coordinator, backup, and annual plan submissions.	_____	_____
Review station locations and order needed bins, lids, labels, and signs.	_____	_____
Confirm dumpster service schedules.	_____	_____
Train staff and students; include evening and community users.	_____	_____
Review dumpster access, condition, and unresolved work orders.	_____	_____
Confirm responsibilities and instructions for special programs.	_____	_____
Select an improvement goal and a date to review progress.	_____	_____

Priority concern: _____

Action and responsible person: _____

Follow-up date and result: _____

Supplies and support

Collection service and missed pickups: 240-740-3210 | recycling@mcpsmd.org

Program assistance: sustainability@mcpsmd.org

Order bins, lids, labels, and posters through the supply order form on the MCPS Recycling and Waste Reduction webpage. The form requires an MCPS Google account. Use the same webpage for current program resources and school recycling information.

Reference documents

MCPS Recycling and Waste Reduction

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/facilities/sustainability/recycling-waste-reduction/>

MCPS Regulation ECF-RC Recycling

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/siteassets/district/departments/professionalgrowth/admin/ecfrc.pdf>