SUSTAINABILITY AND COMPLIANCE
Montgomery County Public Schools

MCPS Recycling Program: Frequently Asked Questions

REQUIRED RECYCLING

Who coordinates recycling at each school or facility?
Montgomery County regulation 1-15 requires every MCPS facility to have a designated recycling coordinator. At each site, the principal or facility administrator assigns this role. The coordinator maintains the facility's recycling plan, supports education, reviews concerns, and works with the Sustainability and Compliance Team (SCT).

Where should recycling bins be placed?
- **Paper Bins** should be placed in classrooms, offices and near copiers.
- **Commingled** recycling containers should be beside trash bins and paper bins as part of recycling stations in shared spaces such as the cafeteria and hallways.

Use clear MCPS labels on bins and keep stations clear of doors, exits and walkways.
Visit our website for instructions on bin placement and ordering supplies (see below).

How can we order recycling bins, lids, labels, or posters?
Use the supply order form on the MCPS Recycling and Waste Reduction webpage. An MCPS Google account is required to access the form.

What can go in recycling bins?
- **Paper & Cardboard:** Place clean, dry paper and flattened cardboard in paper bins.
- **Commingled Recycling:** Place accepted containers in marked commingled bins.
    - Check current MCPS guidelines for rules on cartons, trays, cups and lids.
    - A recycling symbol ♻ on packaging alone does not mean an item is accepted.

How can students help improve recycling?
Students can:
- sort correctly;
- lead peer outreach;
- participate in supervised observations of recycling stations;
- help identify missing labels or recurring contamination.

Older students can help provide guidance to younger students.
Note about student safety: Students should not place materials in outdoor dumpsters.

What should we do for events and community use?

MCPS facilities recycle every day of the year, and all community user groups are expected to comply with district recycling rules.

- **Setup:** Place clearly labeled recycling containers beside trash bins in appropriate locations.
- **Communication:** Inform event organizers and visitors of sorting expectations prior to the event.
- **Post-Event:** Empty containers and restore stations before the start of the next school day.

DUMPSTERS

Why wasn't our recycling collected?
Collections are typically missed due to blocked access (parked vehicles, deliveries, snow accumulation) or dumpster contamination. Inspect the dumpster area for physical obstructions first. Report missed service and urgent collection needs to **recycling@mcpsmd.org** or **240-740-3210**.

What should we do if a recycling dumpster is full?
Request additional collection before materials overflow. Plan ahead and schedule extra service before major facility events like book cleanouts, office moves, large deliveries, or end-of-year projects. **Safety Warning:** Never enter a dumpster or stand on materials to compact them.

How should cardboard boxes be prepared?
Empty boxes, remove plastic packaging and other contents, and flatten them before placing them in the designated dumpster. Never enter a dumpster or stand on materials to compact them; this is unsafe.

Can plastic bags or liners go in recycling dumpsters?
No. Keep plastic bags and liners out of paper and commingled recycling dumpsters. If plastic liners are used for indoor collection, empty accepted recyclables loose into the correct dumpster and dispose of the liners separately.

Can food or liquids go in recycling bins/dumpsters?
No. Food scraps, liquids and food-soiled paper contaminate recyclable materials.

- **Food scraps:** route food waste to an approved compost collection stream where one is available.
- **Wastewater & Chemicals:** dispose of milk, beverages and cleaning chemicals in a drain with an interceptor (such as trash room drains). **Never** dump liquids outside or in a regular drain, as this will lead to clogs and other concerns.

How do we report a damaged or improperly placed dumpster?
Submit a request through **Asset Essentials** or email **recycling@mcpsmd.org**. Provide specific details, such as broken lids, rust holes, leaks, damaged wheels, missing hardware, or improper placement that blocks a sidewalk or creates unsafe access.

What should I do if the community is contaminating my dumpsters?
Keep outdoor dumpsters locked at all times when not actively being loaded. If you need new dumpster locks or your locking hardware is broken, contact recycling@mcpsmd.org.

SPECIALIZED RECYCLING:

How should toner and ink cartridges be handled?
Follow established MCPS toner recycling procedures illustrated on this flyer:

- **Original HP Toner:** Return using the HP return-label process, entering "MCPS" in the name field.
- **Aftermarket Toner:** Dispose of cartridges as trash and recycle accepted clean cardboard packaging.
- **Ink cartridges:** Send through Pony to **John Meyer, Building A**, **Turkey Thicket Drive**, following current packing instructions.

How should schools handle yard waste?

- **On-Site Options:** Where possible, mulch organic materials or move them to an unobtrusive area.
- **Off-Site Pickup:** Keep leaves, grass, and brush separate from trash and recycling. Request collection through the established MCPS process. Never place yard waste with other bulk trash or in black plastic bags. Do not place yard waste piles on loading docks or against buildings where they can be a fire hazard.

How can our school start food recovery or composting?
Contact the Sustainability and Compliance Team at **sustainability@mcpsmd.org** before starting or changing a program. The Food Recovery or Composting Coordinator will work with administration and SCT staff to manage the program including approved equipment, procedures, cleaning, collection responsibilities, and ongoing funding.

For missed pickups, additional collection, or service concerns, contact 240-740-3210 or recycling@mcpsmd.org. For education, program assistance, food recovery, or composting, email sustainability@mcpsmd.org.