



# SERT Spotlight

Educate, motivate, and make recycling bigger and better.

#AmericaRecyclesDay  
November 15, Every Year

**AMERICA RECYCLES DAY** was introduced to the American public more than 30 years ago and November 15 was selected as the annual day for observance. Although millions of conscientious citizens recycle wisely every day, celebrations and activities are held on this particular November day to raise awareness about the importance of recycling and purchasing recycled products.

Thousands of events are held across the country in connection with the *Keep America Beautiful* nonprofit organization. *Presidential proclamations* are usually released encouraging Americans to make personal pledges to commit to recycling and buying products made from recycled materials.

Recycling is a huge part of the culture of environmental sustainability that exists throughout Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). Each school has an active recycling program for mixed paper and commingled items. Additionally, MCPS voluntarily recycles more than 20 other items such as motor and vegetable oil, printer cartridges, batteries, light bulbs, anti-freeze, and various other materials related to construction. A total of 63,306 tons of materials were recycled by MCPS during FY19. Furthermore, MCPS purchases items made from recycled materials as often as possible. #MCPSrecycles!

Visit [www.AmericaRecyclesDay.org](http://www.AmericaRecyclesDay.org) to register, organize or attend an event, pledge to #BeRecycled, and to get more information about America Recycles Day.

NOVEMBER 2019



# SERT's Shut Down Form Gets a Makeover

**SINCE 2011**, school-based School Energy and Recycling Team (SERT) members and building service personnel have been using SERT Energy Shut Down Forms to document their efforts to save energy during long weekends and extended winter, spring, and summer breaks. For the most part, the fillable PDF form has worked well, but we felt it was time to give the document a makeover. Here's what we've changed and why.

## NEW NAME

Because SERT's primary focus is not only saving energy but also effective recycling and water conservation, the name of the form has been changed to reflect our overarching theme: conservation. Our new School Conservation Shut Down Checklists include all of the areas that need to be checked.

## NEW FORMAT

While the original shut down forms can be completed online, we found that many schools print out copies and fill them out by hand. Then completed forms are faxed or sent to SERT via pony. Completing the shut down form using a mobile phone or tablet is nearly impossible. And unless you're working in Windows Explorer, the form just won't work. The new checklist is a mobile-friendly Google Form which can be easily completed and submitted using any browser on any device, and it works without the use of paper, printers, fax machines, or Pony. We are, after all, always trying to conserve resources!

## TARGETED QUESTIONS

The newly-updated checklist begins with questions that everyone can answer, then has an added section for building service staff only. The multi-section questionnaire will save time for teaching staff and students, while still providing the important questions that are relative to building service staff.

## AUTOMATIC RECORDING

Now when you hit "submit" after completing the new checklist, SERT will receive your answers immediately and your school will get "credit" for completing the checklist. You'll no longer have to wait for someone to help you send a fax and there'll be no more confusion over whether or not the form has actually been submitted or not. On the SERT program side of things, the new checklist will help us greatly improve our efficiency, allow us to easily sort and store the data received, and address common concerns quickly.



*Use your mobile phone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer to complete the new conservation checklists!*

While the form itself has been given a major makeover, the general shut down concept and procedure remain unchanged.

Prior to each long weekend or break, all SERT team members and building service managers will be reminded via email to complete the conservation checklist. [Click here for the checklist](#) for our upcoming Thanksgiving break. Your @mcps.net Google login will be required to access the checklist.

Another thing that has not changed is that the SERT program will still review your checklist answers and track your progress, and if necessary, assist with correcting any problems or issues that are found. As always, we welcome your feedback and appreciate your participation as we transition to the new conservation checklists.

# Important Recycling Reminders for Fall

**PLASTIC BAGS ARE NOT RECYCLABLE** in *Montgomery County*.

It's understandable that some building service managers may prefer to line their recycling bins with plastic bags to keep them clean, but these liner bags should never be placed in recycling dumpsters. Recyclables in plastic bags are not accepted by the recycling facility. When this happens, the full content of the truck may be rejected, forcing it to be dumped as trash. In addition to losing the load of recyclables, MCPS ends up paying twice for the removal—once for the recycle pickup and then again for the weight of the trash. Don't waste our resources by putting plastic bags in recycling dumpsters!



You've heard the phrase "**DO NOT BLOCK THE DUMPSTERS**" many times before, but we need to say it again.

Please remember to keep all areas near the dumpsters clear at all times. If your recycling dumpster is blocked, it cannot be serviced. If your dumpster isn't serviced on time, problems related to pests, overflowing containers, and scheduling may arise.

[Click here](#) to find out when your school's dumpsters will be serviced.

Make sure to **FLATTEN ALL CARDBOARD BOXES** before putting them in your recycling dumpster. This simple action maximizes the space in your dumpster while making the cardboard easier to transport to the recycling facility.



**AVOID CONTAMINATION** by keeping your recycling dumpsters locked at all times.



Fall has brought cool temperatures, beautiful colors, and lots of leaves and brush on the ground to be raked!

Remember that **YARD WASTE IS RECYCLABLE** but it does not get placed in your recycling dumpsters.

Yard waste (grass, leaves, and brush) should be put in paper or clear plastic bags and set aside in the designated area. (It's okay to use plastic bags for yard waste because it does not go into your recycling dumpsters.) Use [Maximo](#) to place a work order for yard waste to be picked up.



# ANS Offers Nature-based Learning Opportunities



Visit [www.ANShome.org/teachers](http://www.ANShome.org/teachers) for more information about ANS' programs.

The environmental science programs held by the **AUDUBON NATURALIST SOCIETY (ANS)** are designed to meet Next Generation Science Standards and Maryland Green School certification requirements. Programs highlight ecological systems and environmental stewardship for Grades PreK-8. Programs are also available in Spanish. Visit the ANS website for more information about their programs and related fees.

DISCOVERY HUNT   LIFE CYCLES   COMPOST & DECOMPOSERS  
 LEARNING GARDEN   WONDERFUL WORMS   PAPERMAKING  
 HABITATS   GREEN CLEANERS   GARBOLGY   WATERSHEDS

GEOLOGY AND ROCKS   WEED WARRIORS  
 STREAM FRIENDS   WEATHER AND CLIMATE  
 LITTER BUSTERS   MICRO ODYSSEY

*Make your outing extra special by having ANS transport your students to the sanctuary via their Nature Bus!*

## TWO OPTIONS FOR SCHOOLS:

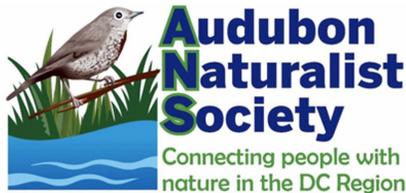
Visit the Woodend Nature Sanctuary, the 40-acre headquarters of the Audubon Naturalist Society, located in Chevy Chase. The sanctuary is open Monday-Friday.

OR

Skip the field trip travel costs and invite a naturalist to visit your class at your school or a nearby park.



Email [Serenella.Linares@ANShome.org](mailto:Serenella.Linares@ANShome.org) if you have questions or need assistance.



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**SERT SPOTLIGHT** is produced by the School Energy and Recycling Team (SERT) program and distributed to school-based SERT leaders and team members, building service personnel, and many others who are interested in conservation and environmental sustainability.

As part of the Montgomery County Public Schools Department of Facilities Management, the SERT program provides opportunities for all schools to participate and receive incentives and recognition for their energy conservation and recycling efforts. The SERT program supports a balanced environment for the integration of all students to work together in a culturally diverse environment. Our goal is to provide the resources, support, and vision of the future for a successful conservation program at each school. SERT's motto, "It's your world. Choose to conserve!" promotes the connection between human behavior and its impact on the environment. It reinforces our culture of conservation and encourages participation in our mission to conserve resources and recycle actively.

