BEST PRACTICES FOR

SCHOOL RECYCLING CONTAINERS

These guidelines for the proper set-up of Recycle and Landfill (trash) collection containers are based on best practices and apply to any school facility. Properly installed containers will lead to a better experience, greater efficiency for custodial staff, and improved recycling rates for your school.

Twin the Bins

Keep recycling and trash bins together to ensure materials are sorted correctly. Separate bins lead to contamination and missed recycling opportunities.



Consistent, Identifiable Bin Colors

Consistency is important in recycling education, especially when it comes to color. Best practice is to use blue for Recycle and black or gray for Landfill.

Blue for Recycle	Black/Gray for Landfill

Distinct Bags

If using liners in containers, use clear bags for recycling and black bags for landfill. This helps distinguish between them when tossing into carts or emptying into dumpsters. **Pro Tip: Classroom bins do not need liners if collecting paper and cardboard only materials.**

Right-Sized Containers

Ensure the proper sized container is in each collection space. Small containers may work for classrooms that collect mostly paper, large sets of containers may work in a hallway, common area, or cafeteria, and narrow sets may be needed along a short wall or next to a copier.

Unique Openings

Unique lid openings on recycling containers help guide correct sorting.

Lids should be based on the materials being collected: round for bottles and cans and Saturn shaped when bottles, cans, and paper are accepted.





Use circular or Saturn openings for recycling lids.

Proper Signage

Signage should be placed at eye-level or on the container lids for recycling and landfill containers. Use uncluttered images and simple, concise descriptions of what can be placed in each container. In locations where your containers will be placed, identify the most common discarded items and prioritize their images in your signage.



Use uncluttered images and simple descriptions in signage.

To print premade signs, scan the QR code for our school webpage or visit **recycleright.org/signmaker-tool/** to customize your own signs.

Email schools@swaco.org for more information and resources.

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FROM WASTE TO RESOURCES