

# RECYCLING IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

## FACT SHEET

### CORRUGATED CARDBOARD DISPOSAL BAN

Corrugated cardboard is not garbage. Starting **April 1, 2018**, the landfill will **not accept** clean and dry corrugated cardboard.<sup>1</sup> It must be reused or recycled. Corrugated cardboard (pictured below) is defined as three or more layers of paper with the middle layer rippled or corrugated.



### CHALLENGES TO RECYCLING IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

This fact sheet provides useful information to help educational institutions keep corrugated cardboard out of the landfill and overcome typical recycling challenges, including: infrastructure challenges, adequate bin labelling and capacity, training, and buy-in of students and staff.

### VALUE OF RECYCLING FOR THE EDUCATION SECTOR

- **Impact Lincoln.** Lincoln Public Schools found that schools that separate recyclables and compostable waste from their garbage have an average diversion rate of 52%, meaning over half of their waste is kept out of the landfill.<sup>2</sup>
- **Save Energy and Protect the Environment.** The energy spent to recycle materials like aluminum, plastics and paper is far lower than the amount of energy it takes to produce these products from raw materials.
- **Educate Staff and Students on Environmental Stewardship.** Teaching staff and students how and why to recycle gives them a valuable lesson in caring for the Earth and an opportunity to make a difference every day.

### OVERCOMING RECYCLING CHALLENGES IN EDUCATION

- **Develop a Plan for Cardboard.** If your business does not currently recycle corrugated cardboard, begin planning as soon as possible (corrugated cardboard disposal ban effective as of April 1, 2018). Discuss convenient options to contract on-site recycling with your current garbage or recycling collector, or search for better services by contracting a new collector. Every [garbage collector](#) is required to offer recycling services to their commercial customers at least twice per year. You may also choose to self-haul cardboard to a recycling processor (see Links & Resources below). Public recycling sites are provided for **residential** use and should not be used by commercial establishments.

<sup>1</sup> LMC 8.32.040, Sect. C / Recyclable cardboard\* shall not be accepted by the City for disposal in the City's public sanitary landfills effective April 1, 2018. (\*Clean and dry corrugated cardboard.)

<sup>2</sup> <http://home.lps.org/recycling/composting/>

- **Inspect Your Garbage.** Assess your garbage and make a list of recyclables, organic and landfill items that are being generated by your facility. If you have a recycling program in place, inspect recycling for contamination - the presence of garbage in recycling bins. Inspect all areas of your property, noting where certain types of recyclables are generated. You may uncover opportunities to reduce garbage at the source (i.e. reduce Styrofoam use or junk mail).
- **Assess Indoor Bin and Labeling Needs.** Walk through your facility and assess your needs for recycling / garbage bins and labels. It is sometimes convenient to mark up a copy of your floor plan with the needed locations for bins. The best practice is to have one recycling bin for every garbage bin. It should be just as easy for someone to recycle an item as it is to throw it in the garbage.
- **Assess Your Outdoor Containers.** Your facility should have separate bins or dumpsters for garbage and recycling. Ensure they are clearly labeled so that staff know which materials go where. Check your outdoor dumpsters to make sure they handle the volume your school generates and that they are being pulled with the right frequency. Talk to your garbage/recycling collector to make necessary adjustments. Consult the [Guide to Selecting / Contracting for Garbage and Recycling Collection](#) to determine whether your current garbage/recycling collector will meet your needs.
- **Make a Plan with Your Collector.** A number of factors may impact the type of recycling collection system best implemented at your education facility. If your facility generates unique recyclable items (i.e. printer or toner cartridges), check with your recycling collector on proper handling -- these items may not be included in single-stream recycling.



Make separate recycling bins available both outside your school (left) and inside (right).

- **Use Consistent Bin Colors and Labelling.** Color coding of recycling and garbage bins is important. The industry standard is that garbage bins are black and recycling bins are blue. This color coding helps people know which materials go where. Uniform bin size is also important. Deskside recycling bins in classrooms, offices, and staff rooms should all be the same size. Each bin should be labeled with a color-coded sign that includes images of what is recyclable. Including images of acceptable materials for each container will help overcome language barriers. For more information on best practices for signage, refer to this [guide on Signage and Labels Information](#). This will assist staff, students and visitors in putting garbage and recycling items in the correct bins. [Recycle Across America](#) provides free labels for schools. Your garbage collector or district recycling coordinator may provide labelling for exterior dumpsters.
- **Recycle Organic Waste in the Cafeteria.** School cafeterias generate a substantial amount of organic waste every day, including food and paper products that can be diverted from the landfill through composting. To implement, contract with a compost collector who will supply you with 60-90 gallon bins for students to dump food into each day. The resulting reduction in garbage may allow you to reduce your frequency of trash pick-ups, which could help offset the cost of the new compost collection service. Contact a [local compost facility](#) for more information.

- **Set a Goal.** Set a goal to increase your facility’s recycling rate. This is not only important for tracking purposes, but can also get the whole school excited about recycling. In order to set a goal, it’s necessary to establish your baseline waste diversion rate. Estimate your diversion rate using the handy [Waste Diversion Rate Calculator](#).
- **Get Financial Assistance.** Take advantage of the City’s [Waste Reduction and Recycling Assistance Program \(WRRAP\)](#), which provides rebates of up to \$750 to start a recycling program. Look for local or state grants to help with additional funding if needed, such as those provided by the [Nebraska Recycling Council](#).
- **Educate, Communicate and Repeat.** Conduct an annual education campaign over a specific period of time (4-6 weeks). During this time, communicate about recycling in every way you can: in school assemblies, videos, classroom curriculum, presentations and one-on-one communication. Distribute and discuss the [Recycling Guidelines by Material](#) and the [Corrugated Cardboard Disposal Ban FAQ](#). Custodians often have the most hands-on knowledge of your facility’s garbage and recycling -- ask often for their valuable feedback. Use translators if language differences are a barrier. [Multilingual resources](#) are available through the City. Cafeteria monitors can direct students to which bin is correct when disposing materials. Make a communications plan for ongoing updates, reminders and progress reports about recycling throughout the year. A particular classroom that is studying garbage and recycling may make a presentation to the school.
- **Create a School Green Team.** Create an entity within your school or facility to take primary responsibility over garbage reduction and recycling efforts. Include students, staff, and administrators to help solidify the program. Students who join the green team can help collect recycling on a daily or weekly basis. Refer to the [Guide to Commercial Green Teams](#) for some tips. Giving students the authority to champion the program and support recycling efforts in their classrooms will support your facility’s recycling program success.
- **Monitor and Measure.** Measuring your garbage and recycling streams is vital not only for grant



Clearly label recycling bins with images of what is recyclable (left) and give students and teachers the opportunity to champion your school’s recycling efforts (right).

reporting, but for identifying improvement opportunities in your program. Work with your custodial staff and garbage/recycling collector to obtain measurements, monitor contamination (garbage mixed with recyclables) and focus your educational efforts where needed.

- **Celebrate Success.** Create an atmosphere of pride by continually promoting the success of your recycling program. Report the amount of recyclables diverted from the landfill to faculty, students, staff and families. Apply to the [Recycle Lincoln Leadership Recognition Program](#) and earn public recognition for your efforts.

## LINKS & RESOURCES

- **Commercial Recycling Self-Assessment and Waste Diversion Rate Calculator**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/commercial/self-assessment.htm>  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/commercial/waste-diversion-calculator.htm>
- **Corrugated Cardboard Disposal Ban FAQ**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/corrugated-cardboard.htm>
- **Guide to Commercial Green Teams**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/commercial/fact-sheets/pdf/green-teams.pdf>
- **Guide to Selecting / Contracting for Garbage and Recycling Collection**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/commercial/fact-sheets/pdf/collection-contracting.pdf>
- **Local Composting Facilities**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/business-composting.htm>
- **Local Garbage and Recycling Collectors**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/collectors.htm>
- **Multilingual Resources**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/multilingual-resources.htm>
- **Nebraska Recycling Council**  
<http://www.nrcne.org>
- **Nebraska Recycling Council: Recycling in Schools Case Study**  
[http://nrcne.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/LPS\\_Case\\_Study.pdf](http://nrcne.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/LPS_Case_Study.pdf)
- **Recycle Across America**  
<http://www.recycleacrossamerica.org/>
- **Recycle Lincoln Leadership Recognition Program**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/wrrap/recognition.htm>
- **Recycling Guidelines by Material**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/pdf/guidelines-by-material.pdf>
- **Recycling Processing Centers**
  - Firstar Fiber, 402-894-0003, <https://firststarrecycling.com/>
  - Mid-America Recycling, 402-476-8502, <http://www.midamericarecycling.com>
  - Recycling Enterprises, 402-421-6655, <http://www.recyclelincoln.com/>
- **Recycling Signage and Labels**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/commercial/fact-sheets/pdf/recycling-signage.pdf>
- **Waste Reduction and Recycling Assistance Program (WRRAP)**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/wrrap/>

For more information about recycling and Lincoln's corrugated cardboard diversion efforts, visit [recycle.lincoln.ne.gov](http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov), email [recycle@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:recycle@lincoln.ne.gov) or call the Recycling Office at 402-441-8215.