



Carton Council

Best Practice Guide: For Successful School Milk & Juice Carton Recycling Programs

Dear Custodial Staff:

Congratulations on your school carton recycling program! Our elementary, middle and high schools generate over 23 million milk and juice cartons every year. That's a lot of cartons! Thanks to your assistance in this program, we are able to divert more of those cartons from going to the landfill. Since recycling milk/juice cartons takes a little extra effort than other types of recycling, we have put together a Best Practice Guide to help you achieve a successful milk/juice carton recycling program.

We know that some of you have successful programs right now and we would appreciate hearing from you about what is working at your school so that it can be shared with other custodians. Please direct all helpful tips for a successful milk/juice carton recycling program to Trey Miller at Mecklenburg County (Trey.Miller@MecklenburgCountyNC.gov).

As mentioned above, recycling milk/juice cartons does take some extra effort. In order for the cartons to be recycled back into paper products it is very important that the cartons be empty of all liquids and that no food, straws or other trash be thrown into the carton recycling container. Wet cartons that are contaminated with food and other garbage will jeopardize the recycling program for the entire school district. If a school has excessive liquid or garbage in their milk/juice carton recycling containers they will not be able to participate in this program.

Getting Started

SUPPLY LIST:

1. **Recycling Container** – For students to toss empty milk and juice cartons into. (Provided by Mecklenburg County, The Carton Council and State Grant)
2. **Bucket/Container** - For students to empty any leftover milk that they don't drink. This container should be small enough for the custodian to handle once it is filled with residual milk. Using too large of a container may result in a container too heavy to lift. (Provided by school)
3. **Poster** - To display in the area where students are recycling their milk and juice cartons. (Provided by Carton Council)
4. **Empty Here Sign** – To be pasted to bucket for residual milk that students don't finish drinking. (Provided by Mecklenburg County, The Carton Council and State Grant)
5. **Recycle Here Sign** – To be pasted on the recycling container that students will toss their empty carton into. (Provided by Mecklenburg County, The Carton Council and State Grant)





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SET UP:

We understand that every school has a slightly different set up for their cafeteria, but these guidelines will help ensure that the school milk/juice cartons that are recycled are empty of all milk and free of food contamination and other garbage.

1. Set up your trash and recycling stations so that students must disassemble their food trays in the following order:
 - a. A Bucket/Container for Leftover Liquids - Students must empty their residual milk/juice into this container.
 - b. Recycling Container - Students should then toss their empty milk or juice carton, as well as recyclable plastic bottles into the recycling container.
 - c. Garbage can - Students must empty all food waste and trash into the garbage can.
2. It is important that a student, volunteer, parent or someone from the custodial or cafeteria staff monitor the recycling station to make sure all students are recycling their cartons correctly.
3. The residual liquids bucket should be emptied before it gets too heavy to lift.
4. The carton recycling container may have to be emptied after breakfast, in between meal periods, or after lunch.
5. All residual milk buckets and recycling containers should be emptied and rinsed at the end of the day.
6. Once the recycling container is full, or at the end of the day, the container should be taken to the outside recycling dumpster and emptied. If you use a plastic bag to line the recycling container, **do not** place this plastic liner in the outside recycling dumpster. Place it in the garbage. **Cartons must be loose in the outside recycling dumpster so that they have a chance to air-dry.**

Examples of Good and Bad Programs:

GOOD-Container with clean, empty cartons



BAD – Container with food-contaminated cartons and residual milk



Thank you for making your school's milk/juice carton recycling program a great success!

