Sustainable Recycling For Schools

Building or Re-building self-sustaining school recycling programs
Positive Change Begins with Personal Choice

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Question:

- Why Schools?
- What is it about recycling at schools that has attracted your attention?
Why Schools?

• Can be the largest waste generator in a town…
• Students are highly motivated…
• Builds for a future of well educated consumers and recyclers…
• Very real Social, Economic, and Environmental Benefits= Good ROI
Question:

• What does “Sustainability” mean in the context of a school recycling program?
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Sustainability

• For our purposes, “sustainability” for a school recycling program means that each stakeholder is satisfied with the Return on Investment (ROI) they see in each of three “bottom lines”

• i.e. It will go on and grow…
Sustainability

• Each stakeholder may have different thresholds for “satisfaction”
• Everyone must “Buy In”
• ROI does not necessarily mean a profit or net-gain. Rather, “satisfaction threshold” may be at a reasonable loss…
Triple Bottom Line Theory

• Rather than looking at simply Economic Costs, 3BL suggests that all endeavors have costs and benefits in three areas:
  • Economic; Social; Environmental
  • Stakeholders may place different importance on each area
  • People, Planet, Profit
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**Economic Bottom Line**

- Most common “traditional” thinking.
- Economic Bottom Line is defined by financial cost/benefit analysis
- What does it cost? What do we get back?
- Measured in Dollars (or monetary units…)
- Can be measured in TIME…
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Social Bottom Line

• Measured in costs and benefits to the community.
• Commonly includes fair labor practices, healthcare, community improvements, education.
• For our purposes, it includes educative improvements, community, community action, facilities, happy students and employees, etc.
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Environmental Bottom Line

- Costs and benefits to environment
- Always measured in units… tons, Carbon, MMTCE, gallons, cars, BTU’s etc.
- Usually measured in terms of reduction (trees saved, cars off the road, etc.)
- Includes both the immediate environment (air quality in the school) through to the planet.
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Stakeholders in School Recycling

- Students
- Teachers
- Administration/ Facilities
- Parents & The Community
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Students

- K-12, with occasional exception of College students
- Students are the masses in School Recycling
- Highly motivated/Activists
- Like hands-on, fun, important work
- Must have their buy-in or programs will fail
- Most likely to adopt new behaviors for life
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Special Note on Student Development

- Students’ motivations and interests vary widely from K-12/College.
- Roughly, at younger ages, fun & positive associations are more important.
- Roughly, at older ages, social concerns (both individual and at-large), self-efficacy, and self-direction are more important.
Teachers

• In-Class Teachers/ Faculty
• Motivated by meeting curricular guidelines, engaging students, ensure educative experiences, efficiency
• Typically the key facilitator of recycling programs and/or curriculum tie-ins
• Often engaged in extra-curriculars & community - They are idealists and leaders
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Administration & Facilities

• Principals, Administrators, Custodial Staff, Central Office Staff (School Boards)
• Motivated by costs, ease of program implementation, benefits to school/students, enforcing the will of the community- under pressure to meet social responsibility demands of the town…
• They are the Gate Keepers- but often can be motivated by students and faculty
Parents & Community

- Could be split into two/three groups: POYC, PWOCs, and CAVEs…
- Generally motivated by costs, taxes, general student well-being, and desire for a sense of “community”
- Often this group is at the largest odds internally.
- Waste Managers?
- School Districts & SAU’s
Waste Managers

• A unique group
• Tend to think of them in the Community Group
• However, their expertise and authority tends to set them apart.
• Often behavior change, costs, and PR/ community relations/ community change are highest motivators
School Districts and SAU’s

• Control/Manage a bigger area/community
• Also driven to meet social responsibility and economic goals/ Fiscal Responsibility of their geographic areas.
• Have (and can generate) a high level of accountability
Hierarchies of Concerns

• Students:
  – Environmental; Social (personal and at-large)

• Teachers:
  – Social (education/students); Environmental; Economic (as they relate to demands on them)

• Admin/Facilities:
  – Economic/ Social; Environmental (especially where student health is concerned)

• Community:
  – Costs (taxes); Social (education); Environmental
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Program Design For Success

• Single-stream programs work best- in schools
• Partnering with local Transfer Stations works very well.
• Consistent Bins- Good Signs- Side by Side
• Tracking!! Baselines and ongoing assessments
Conclusion: Putting it all together

- One-off programs tend to be least effective.
- Instead, ongoing, interrelated programs work better.
- Must meet all the various stakeholders needs… but a broad program can do that.
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The End