Cafeteria Recycling Container Options

Below are some recycling container options that can be potentially used with a school cafeteria recycling program. OPS does not specifically endorse these products. This reference document is intended to simply showcase some "possible" options. Another alternative for recycling bins is to repurpose an available trash can with student art such as the container shown below.

The most important aspects to consider when selecting a successful recycling container consist of the following:

- **Size:** The size of the container needs to be large enough to accommodate the large volume of recyclables generated in a cafeteria. Plus, if a container is too small cafeteria/custodial staff have to empty it more often, which is not desirable. Typically, most schools use a 44-gallon trash container so a recycling container should be close to this size.

- **Appearance:** It's important for a recycling container to clearly stand out from the trash can so that its clear that the container is meant to collect recyclables. Ideally, the container should be a different/noticeable color and have the recycling symbol and label noted on it. As noted below, some schools even paint their recycling containers.

- **Lids and Opening Shape/Size:** Ideally, the recycling container has some type of lid on it with a special opening for placing recyclables. The opening needs to be large enough to accommodate all types and sizes of recyclables (i.e., the shape/hole should be larger than just a small circle for cans/bottles-see below).

- **Signage:** Signage that depicts the most common recyclable items should be posted on or above the recycling container (i.e., a location that students and staff can easily notice and reference). Signage should show images of the common recyclable items collected in the cafeteria; depicting the actual images is more effective than providing a text-based list of recyclables. To access standard OPS cafeteria recycling signage, please go to the OPS Green Schools Initiative webpage: district.ops.org/hsi

Wheels or dollies can also be useful, but they are not necessary. Its also important to speak with your head building engineer about securing new bins and any desired changes to the cafeteria recycling program to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Trash containers can be repurposed into recycling containers with student art. This creates a distinctive look that distinguishes the recycling containers from trash containers. Be sure to use **acrylic** paint. On some surfaces, it may be best to sand a bit to rough the surface so the paint sticks.
Below are options for recycling containers. The links to these products are only one option for purchasing. It is best to discuss purchasing options with your Principal.

32 gallon capacity

- The lids and dollies are an extra cost.
- A customized opening can be cut out of the lid.
- The bright color and symbol clearly differentiates it from the trash can.
- This is a fairly low cost and distinguishable option.

- A bright colored lid, such as the one shown to the right, is helpful in distinguishing the recycling bin

- The raised center can be cut out and the signage from the GSI website is designed to fit on either side of the cut out hole

- The picture below illustrates a 44 gallon brute recycling container with the yellow lid, appropriate opening size, and GSI signage

Close up of the yellow lid above with signage and opening
34 gallon capacity

- Made from recycled materials
- Variety of lid options available although the one shown is optimal
- Containers reinforced with steel are also available.
- Also available in ski, mountains, and beach sunset pictures
  - The bright colors also clearly differentiate this as not a trash container

50 gallon capacity

- Container is already on wheels
- Made from recycled materials
- Recycling symbol included
- Large/different opening on the top
42 gallon capacity

- Made of recycled materials—plastic and aluminum
- The small opening on the lid is less than desirable but the container is fairly large and kid focused.

30 gallon capacity

- Comes in blue, green, beige, back, and gray
- Wording on the bin is customizable

35 gallon capacity

- Made with 100% post consumer content
- Distinguishable but it has a small opening and can be challenging to empty
Grant Options

- **Lowe's**
  - Toolbox for Education
  - $2-5000 per grant
  - Opens mid-July
  - Purpose is for permanent facilities improvement but the website directly mentioned recycling programs
  - Match fund is not required

- **Coca Cola**
  - Bin Grant
  - Opens in late January annually. Deadline is in March.
  - Purpose is to provide recycling containers in schools
  - Match fund is not required
  - [http://bingrant.org/](http://bingrant.org/)

- **Nebraska State Recycling Association**
  - Recycling Equipment Grant
  - Up to $15,000
  - The program runs until the grant funds are gone
  - Purpose is to fund recycling programs
  - At least 20% match fund are preferred
  - At least 6 months of recycling is required after the grant funds have been received
  - [http://recyclenebraska.org/](http://recyclenebraska.org/)

- **Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality**
  - Litter Reduction and Recycling Grant
  - Available annually
  - Deadline to apply is in September
  - Purpose is to reduce litter, provide education, and promote recycling in Nebraska
  - Match funds are not required
  - [http://www.deq.state.ne.us/](http://www.deq.state.ne.us/)

- **Waste Management and Keep America Beautiful**
  - Assorted Grant Opportunities
  - Grant applications are available starting in January
  - Purpose to increase recycling
  - [http://www.kab.org/site/PageServer?pagename=grants_home](http://www.kab.org/site/PageServer?pagename=grants_home)

- **Captain Planet Foundation**
  - Deadlines to apply are January and September, application is open year round
  - up to $2500 - Match funds up 50% preferred
  - Purpose is to create projects that create momentum for environmental activities in schools
  - Schools need to have an operating budget less than 3 million
  - A report is due 30 days after the completion of the grant project
  - [http://captainplanetfoundation.org/apply-for-grants/](http://captainplanetfoundation.org/apply-for-grants/)

- **Project Learning Tree**
  - PLT Greenworks - $1,000-3,000
  - Deadline to apply is in September
  - Purpose is service learning and environmental education
  - Match fund required-50%
  - [https://www.plt.org/apply-for-greenworks-environmental-education-grant](https://www.plt.org/apply-for-greenworks-environmental-education-grant)