Best Practices Guide
CARTON RECYCLING IN SCHOOLS

YES!
school cartons are recyclable

CartonOpportunities.org
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Students from Dudley Elementary in Camden, NJ empty their residual milk and juice into 5-gallon buckets, which is easier for custodians to lift and empty.

Students from Waukesha, WI can empty their residual milk and juice into a 33-gallon container. Installing a spigot at the bottom of that container makes it easier for the custodian to pour the residual liquids into a floor sink.

Find the system that works for your school!
A custodian at Ridgewood Middle School in Arnold, MO created a system where students empty residual milk into a metal funnel attached to a hose that empties into a sink. A bin is placed below the system for carton recycling.

A custodian at E.P. Foster Elementary School in Ventura, CA built this system after having difficulty lifting the residual milk to empty it into the sink. Students pour milk into two strainers nested in a rectangular bin, which sits atop an old painter’s dolly. The custodian can crank the dolly up to pour liquid into the sink from the spigot installed at the bottom of the bin.

Students in St Paul, MN can easily recycle what’s left after lunch at the recycling station. The smaller openings used on the recyclables container on the left help prevent contamination. All the containers are on dollies with wheels. This station has excellent, easy to read, color coordinated signage as well.
Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District, NC created this carton recycling system after receiving a grant from Carton Council. The Carton Council created the signage for the school’s containers.

A school in Agawam, MA created their own branding for their program.

“Got Milk Cartons?”

The students quickly caught on and correctly put cartons in the recycle bin.
New York City Schools Recycle Cartons!

The city created some creative carton recycling bin signs and materials. These materials are available to any school throughout the country to use. Find the Grow NYC toolkit materials at https://www.grownyc.org/recyclingchampions/cafeteria-best-practices

Notice: NYC schools recycle cans, bottles, and cartons all in one bin. The residual liquid bucket is placed in the middle and the schools provide different sized containers for smaller children to reach.
Westview Elementary School in Jacksonville, FL has students empty their liquid waste directly into the garbage can. The custodian did not want to use a residual bucket so they continue to use the original trash bin for residual milk.

The school built excitement and informed students about the upcoming carton recycling program by putting a board in the lunchroom to count down the days to kick-off.

This elementary student in Boston, MA heads to the milk carton bin to recycle his carton. These attractive bins are available through grants provided by the Carton Council. Contact info@recyclecartons.com for more information.
Some schools have gone the extra mile and built their own stations!

This school received grant money from their county to build a carton recycling station. Similar stations can be purchased starting around $1,200.

Students set down their trays which makes it easier to dismantle their lunch. The custodian can wheel the entire station away for cleaning and emptying!

This is a low cost recycling station used in Arlington, MA. It has bright, clear signage and all containers are on dollies with wheels to make emptying very easy.
Gresham-Barlow School District in Oregon chose to do the rack drying method. Students empty their residual milk and juice into a bucket and then turn the cartons over and place them on the rack. This method guarantees dry cartons but can be time consuming.
Draining residual milk and juice is critical to a successful recycling program. Use a screen (right) to capture any wrappers, straws or food that get tossed with the milk.
While it’s easy to collect cartons in plastic lined cans, remember…Plastic liners go into the trash!

Cartons must be removed from the plastic liners before being placed in the outside containers!
Students love to help! Set up a green team and get students involved!

PROGRAM TIP #3

Schools can determine the type of recycling system that works best for their students. Get students involved and design your system to meet their needs!
A custodian in Hillsboro, OR created an innovative program to recruit and reward volunteers to help with the recycling program. She created her own “fun money” and store.

Student volunteers are “paid” for their work, and save their “money” to spend at the custodian’s store. The store contains toys and trinkets acquired through donations, thrift shops, or dollar stores. Items are priced from $1 to $10, which teaches students to save money for something big.

Use incentives to recruit recycling program volunteers!
Carton recycling posters have a greater impact when designed by your own students, teachers and parents.
CARTON RECYCLING POSTERS

Best examples
Contests are a great way to get students involved in the design of a new poster!

This poster was designed by a student in NC as part of a poster contest for high school students. It is available free on the Carton Council website.
Contests

Boston Public schools held a contest to see which classes recycled the most cartons and rewarded them with banners and a pizza party.

Incentivize carton recycling with contests!
Find champions and make them poster children for recycling!
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