



# Non-mandatory Recycling Project Ideas & Funding Opportunities

***Just because it is not mandatory doesn't mean we can't move beyond and recycle it.***

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- [Plastic Film and Plastic Bags](#)
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Annually, schools generate tons of waste – from paper and computers to food waste and crayons. Some of these items are required to be recycled in Connecticut,<sup>1</sup> while others don't fall under this mandate. While some items are not required to be recycled, schools across the state are making a positive impact by establishing recycling programs and collections to capture non-mandatory recycling items.

A good place to start is to conduct a waste audit to determine what materials are in your school's waste stream. After you have identified the different materials, you can develop strategies for non-mandatory recycling and capture materials that are currently going to the trash.

This Toolkit has some ideas for non-mandatory recycling programs, along with fundraising options! Let's work together to boost our recycling efforts and create a more sustainable environment in our schools!

### ***Textiles and Shoes School Box Program***

Children grow quickly and often outgrow their clothes and shoes. Establishing a textile and shoe collection program at your school can be a strategically solution to recycle unwanted textiles, divert this material from the waste stream, and generate revenue for the school community.

A 2015 waste characterization study<sup>2</sup> by the [Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection](#) (CT DEEP) found that textiles make up 4% of Connecticut's waste stream. Several schools in CT are already participating in textile recycling collection to tackle textile waste in our State. Here are some ways to address the problem of unwanted textiles at your school and the school district level:

1. [Bay State Textiles](#) offers a School Box Program that includes a cross-branded donation box placed outside of each school in a district. The box is serviced weekly, and a rebate check is disbursed monthly, based on the weight of donations. The program is free and Bay State Textiles handles all the logistics to the program.

1. In accordance with Section 22a-208v and Section 22a-256a of the Connecticut General Statutes and Section 22a-241b of the Regulations of the Connecticut State Agencies
2. [2015 Statewide Waste Characterization Study](#)
3. <https://www.lionsclubs.org/en/start-our-global-causes/vision>

2. [Clothes Bin®](#) places a bin at the school campus and makes it easy for schools to fundraise 24-7, 365 days a year. Schools receive funds for every pound of recycled textiles. When the Bin reaches its fill capacity, BLIP®'s technology will alert a Clothes Bin® representative to empty the Bin.
3. [Helpsy](#) places clothing bins at your school property while providing all equipment, service, insurance, permitting, and monthly payments for the collected cloths.
4. [Soles4souls](#) partners with schools to collect gently used shoes for children in need. After the shoes are collected, they must be shipped or delivered to one of Sales4shouls' warehouses. This program is free; however, make sure to fill out the [digital donor form](#) before shipping or dropping off the collected shoes.

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**Remember!** Before you recycle, consider promoting clothing and shoes reuse. Some schools and libraries host second-hand clothing swap days to encourage generosity, reuse, and stop fast fashion. Learn how to create a secondhand store in your school from a [successful program from Ottawa, Canada](#).

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### **Plastic Film and Plastic Bags**

Plastic bags and plastic film, also known as shrink wrap, should never be put in the school recycling bins in CT because they can jam equipment at the Intermediate Processing Centers that prepare recyclables to be marketed. As a recycling alternative, every year, hundreds of schools across the nation compete to collect and recycle the most plastic film and plastic packaging. This initiative helps students understand the importance of recycling and diverting plastics. Additionally, schools can earn recognition for their recycling efforts. Below are some ways to address the issue of plastic film and plastic bags at the school level:

1. [NEXTREX](#) offers an annual recycling challenge program for plastic film and plastic bags. The program kicks off annually, and participants must collect more than 1,000 lbs. of soft film plastics and packaging in a 12-month span. [Click here to learn more and register your school](#). NEXTREX also donates a high-performance composite bench to the winning school and awards every participating school with honorary recognition.
2. [The Wrap Recycling Action Program \(WRAP\)](#) is a national initiative designed to increase the recycling of polyethylene (PE) plastic bags, wraps, and films. In Connecticut, several municipalities and retailers partner with WRAP to provide recycling bins to collect these materials. Teachers can organize a WRAP collection day at their schools, gather the collected items, and take them to a participating drop-off location. For more information on drop-off locations, please visit the [Wrap Locations](#) webpage or contact your local [Recycling Coordinator](#).



Photo: Rutherford, NJ PS, 2020.

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## Eyeglass Recycling

Many school-age children frequently change their eyeglass prescriptions, resulting in a collection of unused glasses often stored in dresser drawers. That same pair of eyeglasses can transform another person's life. Learn more about eyeglass recycling options in CT and consider establishing a recycling collection station at your school:

1. [Lions Clubs International](#) has been working to combat vision impairment and blindness since 1925<sup>3</sup>. To support this mission, local clubs place collection boxes in their communities for individuals to donate old or unused eyeglasses and sunglasses. [The Lions Clubs International Recycle For Sight program](#) collects used eyeglasses in Connecticut and might be able to partner with your school. The collected glasses are refurbished and donated to developing countries. For more information regarding hosting a collection site at your school, visit this [webpage](#).



Photo: Collection site in CT.  
The Courant.

## Hard-to-recycle materials

Some private companies offer schools free recycling for materials that are difficult to recycle. Generally, municipal recycling programs do not accept these hard-to-recycle materials. Items such as toys, art supplies, certain types of packaging, and even beauty products can be included. This initiative provides K-12 schools with a great opportunity to engage in recycling while also raising funds through fundraising efforts. Let's explore some of these opportunities together.

1. [TerraCycle](#) offers a fundraising recycling program for "hard-to-recycle" materials specifically designed for schools. When you recycle with TerraCycle, your school earns points for each shipment of hard-to-recycle material you ship to them. These points can then be used as a donation to your school! And better yet—you'll help inspire the next generation of recyclers. Access [TerraCycle's](#) webpage and learn how to register to their free recycling programs.
2. [Crayon](#) has launched a reuse initiative for schools that want to brighten the lives of children in hospitals by sending in their old crayons. Your school can participate by collecting used crayons and sending them to The Crayon Initiative with just a few simple steps. First, rally your colleagues to gather crayon nubs that might otherwise be discarded. Next, set up crayon collection boxes in elementary classrooms where students can drop off their unused crayon pieces. Appoint someone to collect the contents of these boxes every month, and then send the collected crayons to The Crayon Initiative for redistribution to hospitals. [Learn more here](#).



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## Next Steps

- Keep educating students and participants about the new recycling program.
- Monitor, track, and measure progress.
- Determine environmental benefits.
- Share results and promote success.
- Assess results and if needed re-evaluate the program.

## Potential Funding Opportunities

- [Keep America Beautiful Bin Grant Program](#) - has Recycling Grant Programs designed to support local community recycling initiatives.
- [Community Foundations Serving Connecticut](#) - learn about their grant programs and which may provide funding for schools or environmental initiatives.
- DonorsChoose - Support a classroom fundraising <https://www.donorschoose.org/>.
- [EyeRecycle](#) – they sort, count and pay schools for deposit containers. More details [here](#).
- [Agricultural Grants](#) - while focus is on gardening, food and agriculture, the CT Farm to School [Grant Program](#) has provided funds for schools to start or expand composting initiatives.
- SustainableCT – has a [Community Match Fund](#) program, matching funds raised through a peer-to-peer platform your school or group coordinates.
- [Carton Council](#) – milk cartons and juice boxes are accepted in Connecticut's mixed recycling (single stream) program, which includes schools. The Carton Council offers small grants to help develop programs to collect milk cartons and juice boxes for recycling at schools.
- [New England Grassroots Fund](#) - offers a range of grant programs to support community based environmental initiatives.
- Connecticut Outdoor & Environmental Education Association (COEEA) - has a mini-grant program for its members. Learn more [here](#). They also provide a list of fundraising ideas [here](#).
- Contact local banks, many have special sponsorship or grant programs for local groups.
- Have a tag sale! This is a great way to promote Reuse while raising money for another important waste management strategy...Recycling!
- [Farm to School](#) has a statewide grant program to help establish and further farm-to-school initiatives. Check [here](#) to see if there is any grant opportunities related to reuse and recycling.

## Conclusion

Congratulations on considering or launching your new program! You are making a positive impact by teaching students about recycling in your school or school district. We hope this Toolkit offers you practical and achievable ideas to help you implement new programs or enhance existing waste reduction and diversion initiatives.

**Good luck with your recycling program and keep up the good work!**

**Disclaimer:** The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) maintains the content on this web site to enhance public access to information and facilitate understanding of waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. The DEEP is not recommending these resources or products over any others and recognizes these represent only a partial listing of resources on this subject.

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