



RECYCLING OR GARBAGE – DO WE REALLY THINK ABOUT WHERE WE'RE PUTTING OUR PLASTIC?

# The Navigator

PHOTO CREDITS: CLAIRE TROTTER, 2018

## The Broken Blue Bin

Reflecting on our Recycling Responsibilities **by** Claire Trotter

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**Holy Name of Mary College School** in Mississauga, Ontario is a certified “Silver Level Eco School”, and this year, it’s aiming to achieve gold. Predominantly, this means that each student brings either a laptop or tablet to school, and many assignments and handouts are posted online, helping to reduce the amount of paper that we produce as a school community. Among the other characteristics that make the school a positive community in regards to the environment are modern water fountains that show how many plastic bottles we save by their use, and the eco team performing light checks and waste audits. There is an “eco hog”, a plush

pig that sits in the room caught with lights on but no one inside. There is an indoor wall garden, and of course, the school participates in an annual “Eco Conference”.

But despite the fancy title, it may not always feel like the school is doing so well at being eco friendly, if, for example, one takes a trip to the Gr. 12 lounge. A cluttered place of school bags and second hand furniture, the graduating class enjoys relaxing in this room during spares and lunch. Most of the girls have their driver’s licence and drive themselves to and from school - and many of them arrive carrying fast food. That’s how I first began to notice our problem.

Many of these plastic coffee and smoothie cups from my classmates’ outings were ending up in the garbage. I seem to recall that there had been a recycling bin in the lounge at the beginning of the year, but now it’s nowhere to be found, and everything by default, goes straight to the



garbage.  
The lonely garbage bin in the Gr. 12 lounge

"It's frustrating because everyone knows - not certain things, but everyone knows that 2241 Mississauga Road, plastic cups are recyclable." says fellow classmate Gabriel Michael about the situation. "They think 'I'll just put it in [the garbage]. It'll be fine.'"

This trend needs to stop. It would be one thing if we had misplaced our recycle bin for a day, but throwing out our recycling everyday is too much.

### Finding a Solution

In order to change where our garbage is going, I've made a plan of action for the girls in Gr.12 who use our lounge so we can work together to recycle our plastic and avoid sending it to a landfill where it will sit for eternity. My first step is to get us a recycling bin. That, in and of itself, should encourage some people to choose the blue bin over the black bin! The next part of the plan is to leave a reminder on the lounge chalkboard. Our grade likes to leave messages on the board, whether they be funny or inspirational, or just plain life-saving (a reminder to study a certain something for a test). I will add a "Please don't forget to recycle!" message - a gentle but compelling reminder. Then, on the wall above the recycling bin itself, I plan to post a sign showing what goes where, so if people are unsure about whether or not their item can be recycled - there's a sign



The proposed solution. Sign reads: "Please remember to Recycle! Thank you! Stay Awesome!"

I am optimistic that these steps will encourage people in my grade to recycle more. But this project can also be implemented on a school wide level. In order to help the entire school community put in the extra bit of effort to recycle our plastic items we can:

- make sure that the rooms without recycling bins get one
- post signs to inform people of what can be recycled
- implement other personal messages (such as the blackboard in the lounge) to connect with each class and grade

### Making a difference for a day

Furthermore, to highlight the impact, encourage proper action, and make a difference for a day, I hope to implement activities on one day in particular. In connection with the Eco Club at our school, I

would like to do some contests for house points. Nothing motivates people like the promise of a prize, especially when they have the chance to win points towards their house winning the House cup. In the week leading up to a special "Eco Day", we can encourage students to recycle as much as possible, because House points or a prize will be awarded to the classroom with the most recycling and least garbage. Then, there would also be an activity for the Eco Day for house points, where volunteers/class groups help to sort out the garbage and recycling. These events will raise awareness about why and how to recycle, and we will have the satisfaction of knowing that everything that can be recycled that day, is recycled - and that we can achieve that everyday if we commit.

In the end, recycling is no great novelty. Everyone at our school has grown up with it; in fact, we are used to it. However, unless we actually use this system to safely dispose, and consequently end up reusing, our plastic items, we are not really making any sort of difference. I want to encourage others to recycle things that they wouldn't think of recycling, and recycle more things that they usually don't take the time to recycle. If everyone does their small part to help put plastic in the proper space, then we'll be able to make our planet a greener and healthier place.

