

Let's talk trash!

TALKIN' TRASH program guide

HCS 4th GRADERS

2025-2026



WWW.TALKINTRASHSWA.COM

WWW.SOLIDWASTEAUTHORITY.ORG

ARE YOU READY TO TALK TRASH?

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Talkin' Trash (TT) is a school recycling and waste diversion competition that encourages elementary schools to engage in waste reduction practices, such as recycling, composting, etc. Created by the Horry County Solid Waste Authority (SWA), the Talkin' Trash program has been introducing students to recycling and environmental awareness since 2000. The program has fostered a mutually beneficial partnership between the Horry County Solid Waste Authority and Horry County Schools (HCS).

The TT program entails recycling material each month as well as completing challenges over the course of the competition to improve the waste management practices at your school and to earn points in the competition. There are no one-size fits all answer for how schools can succeed in this competition.

As we have done in the past, the SWA will monitor and collect data on the amount of material being recycled/composted at each participating school. It is recommended that Dining Services and Building Services are included as they will be able to provide significant insight on how your school operates and they will be active participants in the program too. You know your school best so it will be up to you to determine the best strategy for the competition.

TALKIN' TRASH MISSION

The mission of the Talkin' Trash Contest is to educate HCS students and faculty on the importance of recycling, proper waste management and environmentally sustainable practices.

CONTACT INFORMATION

*****PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CALL OR EMAIL WITH ANY QUESTIONS!*****

All challenges should be emailed to education@solidwasteauthority.org.

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PROGRAM SCHEDULE


School progress is measured monthly (October – March). Winning schools will be determined by the weight of recyclables each school diverts from the landfill in combination with “Bonus Challenge Points” which is added to the final pound per student each month.

Monthly Challenges and Winning Presentation/Grand Finale Dates


- **October** Monthly Challenge: Waste & Recycling Information Station 2 points per station

 Talkin’ Trash Presentation: November 12th and 13th, 2025

- **November** Monthly Challenge: America Recycles Day Campaign 2 points per pledge

 Talkin’ Trash Presentation: December 10th and 11th, 2025

- **December** Monthly Challenge: Calendar Challenge 2 points per month

 Talkin’ Trash Presentation: January 14th and 15th, 2026

- **January** Monthly Challenge: Waste & Recycling Workers Thank You 2 points per note

 Talkin’ Trash Presentation: February 11th and 12th, 2026

- **February** Monthly Challenge: Recycled Art Project 2 points per project

 Talkin’ Trash Presentation: March 11th and 12th, 2026

- **March** Monthly Challenge: Video Diary 100 points

 Talkin’ Trash Presentation: April 15th and 16th, 2026

Grand Finale Field Trip is scheduled to be held May 27th, 28th, and 29th, 2026

Ongoing challenges

These are to be completed throughout the year to go towards Grand Finale Winners

- Field Trip at Landfill & Recycling Facility 25 points
- Campus Litter Cleanup 40 points
- Event Recycling 10 points

MONTHLY CHALLENGES

OCTOBER – WASTE & RECYCLE INFORMATION STATION

A waste audit is an assessment of what your school is throwing away. Conducting a visual waste audit is a great way to evaluate the waste that is disposed of and how much of that waste could have been recycled, composted, or donated.



Every classroom in Horry County public schools has the opportunity and should be recycling through the Horry County Solid Waste

Authority's (SWA) Classroom Recycling Program. Each school is provided with classroom recycling bins for free from the SWA. Each classroom should have one recycling bin.

All Horry County Elementary Schools have the opportunity to recycle food waste through SMART Recycling, contracted out by HCS Facilities. Your principal would need to contact HCS Facilities to participate in this program.

Challenge: Conduct a visual waste audit at school and answer the following questions:

1. Are there recyclable or compostable materials in the trash?
2. What could we have done to reduce the amount of garbage?

Have students create an information station for classrooms to utilize to encourage Commingle Recycling and what can and cannot be composted. To view/download HCS posters, visit

<https://www.solidwasteauthority.org/docs/hcsschoolposters.pdf>

To receive points, please submit photos and student responses to Education@solidwasteauthority.org on or before **October 31, 2025**.

NOVEMBER – AMERICA RECYCLES DAY CAMPAIGN

America Recycles Day (ARD) is held November 15th each year and is a nationally recognized day dedicated to promoting and celebrating recycling in the United States.

Challenge: Encourage an event or campaign to create recycling awareness and to celebrate America Recycles Day. You may pledge to recycle online at <https://kab.org/programs/ard/pledge/>

Some examples of ARD School Campaign Ideas:

- Encourage students and teachers to recycle more by providing an interactive opportunity to learn what can and cannot be recycled in your school (a relay race game).
- Host a school wide "I Recycle!" pledge campaign. Students, teachers, and administrators pledge to recycle for the rest of the school year.
- Invite guest speakers from various environmental agencies out for an Environmental Career Day (SWA, SCDES, Clemson Extension, 4H, Playcard Environmental Center, Waccamaw River Keeper, etc.).



To receive points, please submit photos and/or summary to Education@solidwasteauthority.org on or before **November 30, 2025**.

DECEMBER – CALENDAR CHALLENGE



Communicating important information in a fun way is a great strategy to spread awareness about a topic and student art as a calendar has proven to be a great way to get students involved. The resulting calendar, featuring the winning artwork, provides a daily reminder of how important it is for us to be responsible stewards of our environment.

Challenge: Sponsor a 12 month calendar art campaign at your school that promotes sustainability, health and wellness, recycling, composting, environmental stewardship, energy, clean air, litter, or any other topic that students connect to sustainability at your school. This can be made into a contest for added fun and share winners on

social media!

To receive points, please submit photos and summary to Education@solidwasteauthority.org on or before **December 31, 2025**.

JANUARY – WASTE & RECYCLERS WORKERS WEEK THANK YOUS

The Week of June 17th is Waste and Recycling Workers Week. During this special week of celebration, we join together to thank the women and men who work daily to keep our neighborhoods and streets safe and clean!

Challenge: Have students write Thank You cards / letters to your schools' Building Services staff, Horry County Solid Waste Authority employees, trash, and recycling workers / drivers. More information on Waste & Recyclers Workers Week can be found here <https://wasterecyclingworkersweek.org/celebrate-waste-recycling-workers-week/>



To receive points, please have students deliver their notes to your schools' staff personally (capture photos if possible & share with us!) and or use HCS Interoffice Mail to get the Thank Yous to us at Horry County Solid Waste Authority. Pictures and or videos can be sent to Education@solidwasteauthority.org on or before **January 31, 2026**.

FEBRUARY – RECYCLED ART PROJECT



The 3 R's are: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle! It is important to try to reuse items even before we recycle them. It all diverts waste from the Landfill!

Challenge: Rethink ways to turn trash into treasure! Collect items that would normally be discarded and turn these pieces of trash into something artistic, innovative, and new!

Ideas for projects include using old books, bottle caps, plastic bottles, tissue boxes, pens/markers, plastic bags, milk cartons, etc. Check out Pinterest, Etsy, Google and other fun websites for inspiration.

To receive points, liaisons should please submit photos to Education@solidwasteauthority.org on or before **February 28, 2026**.

MARCH – VIDEO DIARY

The video challenge invites the school, students, teachers, staff, administration, and parents to reflect on not only the basics of recycling, but on sustainability, resource conservation, and environmental stewardship. This activity will empower students and facilitators to demonstrate how their school is conserving resources, reducing pollution, and increasing the life of Horry County's landfill by encouraging increased recycling participation. The contest will also serve as a learning tool for participating students by providing lessons in ecology, art, drama, technology, marketing, and teamwork.



Challenge: Create and submit a video encouraging recycling and the efforts being taken to reduce waste. Show and tell us what you did this year during the Talkin' Trash program and why you are the greenest school in Horry County!

Ideas for project include using photos from previous challenges. We really want to see videos and photos of your students completing challenges throughout the competition, but please be mindful of any media-denied students that may be participating.

Videos may be submitted by liaison as a SchoolTube/YouTube link or Media File. Links may be emailed to Education@solidwasteauthority.org on or before March 31, 2026.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

SWA LANDFILL FIELD TRIP AND/OR PRESENTATION

Have you ever been to a landfill to see where your trash goes? The SWA offers **FREE** field trips to tour the landfill, recycling facility and composting area. We also reimburse the school for bus mileage and students and teachers will not only learn, but experience a fun, unforgettable tour! Tours and presentations and applications can be found at <http://www.solidwasteauthority.org/education.html#tours>. We also offer **FREE** in school presentations as well on various environmental topics such as pollution.

Challenge: Schedule a field trip to the SWA or a presentation at your school.

To receive your challenge points, please submit student testimonials to Education@solidwasteauthority.org.

(Must be completed and turned in by April 1st)



COMMUNITY LITTER CLEAN UP

Litter is a major issue, and we should all make efforts to reduce the litter in our communities and clean up where we can. Students can help educate others and parents on the importance of keeping our community litter free.

Challenge: Hold a litter cleanup! This cleanup can be on school grounds, at home, or you can go off-site to an area in need.

Our local Keep America Beautiful chapter, Keep Horry County Beautiful (KHCB), can assist you with all of the equipment and resources that you need for your cleanup including trash grabbers, bags, vests, signage, and safety information.

To receive your challenge points, please submit photos and written testimonials to

Education@solidwasteauthority.org.

(Must be completed and turned in by April 1st)



EVENT RECYCLING

Does your school make efforts to recycle during special events? Is there anything that you could do to promote recycling and waste diversion when you have special events?

Challenge: Choose at least one event during the school year and plan to offer event recycling to attendees. You can obtain temporary event recycling containers from the SWA for this if needed. You may also choose to utilize the containers and equipment currently on-site and make containers available to attendees during the event. Make sure that you have signs available to tell everyone what should go in the containers.

This is a great opportunity to introduce recycling and composting to parents and guardians! The students have likely told them about what is going on in their school and this is a great chance to have students teach their family how to be good environmental stewards.

To receive points, please submit event information and photos to Education@solidwasteauthority.org. *(Must be completed and turned in by April 1st)*

