

# Let's Talk Trash!

## TALKIN' TRASH Program Guide



HCS 4<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS  
2026-2027



[WWW.TALKINTRASHSWA.COM](http://WWW.TALKINTRASHSWA.COM)

[WWW.SOLIDWASTEAUTHORITY.ORG](http://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

All challenges should be emailed to [education@solidwasteauthority.org](mailto: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 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026

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

 Talkin’ Trash Presentation: December 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026

- **December** Monthly Challenge: Compost & Recycling Video Tip by Student(s) 2 points per video

 Talkin’ Trash Presentation: January 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2027

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

 Talkin’ Trash Presentation: February 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2027

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

 Talkin’ Trash Presentation: March 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2027

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

 Talkin’ Trash Presentation: April 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 2027

Grand Finale Field Trip is scheduled to be held May 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, and 28<sup>th</sup>, 2027

## 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.

**Challenge:** 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](mailto:Education@solidwasteauthority.org) on or before **October 31, 2026**.

## NOVEMBER – AMERICA RECYCLES DAY CAMPAIGN

America Recycles Day (ARD) is held November 15<sup>th</sup> 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/>



To receive points, please submit photos and/or summary to [Education@solidwasteauthority.org](mailto:Education@solidwasteauthority.org) on or before **November 30, 2026**.

## DECEMBER – STUDENT COMPOST & RECYCLING TIP VIDEO CHALLENGE



Communicating important information in a fun way is a great strategy to spread awareness about a topic and students delivering the message has proven to be very effective in getting others involved.

**Challenge:** Record student(s) speaking tips and facts about compost and recycling. The tips will be featured on our socials, which provides a daily reminder of how important it is for us to be responsible stewards of our environment.

To receive points, please submit photos and summary to [Education@solidwasteauthority.org](mailto:Education@solidwasteauthority.org) on or before **December 31, 2026**.

## JANUARY – WASTE & RECYCLERS WORKERS WEEK THANK YOUS

The Week of June 17<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:Education@solidwasteauthority.org) on or before **January 31, 2027.**

## 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!

To receive points, liaisons should please submit photos to [Education@solidwasteauthority.org](mailto:Education@solidwasteauthority.org) on or before **February 28, 2027.**

## 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.

**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!



Videos may be submitted by liaison as a SchoolTube/YouTube link or Media File. Links may be emailed to [Education@solidwasteauthority.org](mailto:Education@solidwasteauthority.org) on or before **March 31, 2027.**

## 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** presentations 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:Education@solidwasteauthority.org). (Must be completed and turned in by April 1st)