

Community Perspectives of Site Cleanup

The school athletic field is used through the week and on weekends for sports practice and games. After a game or practice, the areas around the field and under the stands are littered with trash, mostly plastic bottles. There is a trash receptacle by each entrance. There are no receptacles specifically marked for recycling.

If this is like your school, you probably want to do something to address this problem. Anytime we wish to make a change, we must consider perspectives of the other stakeholders. Below are the views of the different people who have an interest in the athletic field appearance. Cut apart the chart into horizontal strips and assign roles to pairs or small groups of students. Discuss what can be done about the situation, using language that shows respect for different points of view.

Environmental Club Students	The Environmental Club students have noticed the plastic bottles littered on the field, and they are frustrated. They think people don't care about plastics in the environment or that their school campus looks bad. The students often use club time to pick up the used water bottles and sports drinks bottles, and they feel the people using the field should take care of their own trash. They don't understand why this is a problem--it seems so easy.
Environmental Club Leader	The environmental club leader is willing to help the students find a way to solve this problem. She will help club members take on tasks to research and contact different people who might be able to make a difference. In her experience, issues like this can be complex with many people having different feelings and experiences.
Principal	The principal is concerned with the appearance of the field; however, ultimately, she will consider the time and budget of the custodian/groundskeeper. There aren't any funds for purchasing recycle bins or putting out signage. If the students want to create a campaign the custodian is comfortable with, and doesn't cost anything from the school budget, they may proceed.
Coach A	The coach doesn't like it that there is trash left around the field, but with the flurry of player activity at the end of practice or a game, he can't add one more task. He does not have time to pick up after the kids. After a long night of practice/games, his goal is to get all the athletes home and then get home to his own family.
Coach B	The coach has enough problems keeping the field clean for practice, so the bottles are just one more issue. She doesn't like it that people let their dogs poop on the field. Not to mention, the trash bins are often filled with water from a recent rain; or else they don't have a liner. Sometimes the bins have fallen over and all the trash is on the ground. She thinks the bins aren't emptied enough.
Athletes	They are focused on the practice/game and don't usually notice that other people leave their trash and bottles behind. They are pretty sure they throw their own trash where it belongs. One athlete mentioned that the trash bins don't work well. She noticed they are often really wet after a rain, or else they are covered in sticky mess. When that happens, there are usually a lot of bees around the trash bin. She's allergic to bees, so it's pretty scary to walk over there.
Athletic Director	The athletic director cannot be at every event for every team. She depends on the coaches to make sure things run smoothly. There are a lot of different moving parts and pieces to keeping hundreds of kids playing their sports each season, so trash on the field is not a problem she wants to deal with. The coaches should handle this.



<p>Operations / Facilities Director</p>	<p>The operations director is in charge of 18 schools and 3 times as many fields. He would like to see this problem fixed, but he does not have time to check in on individual fields to see if there is trash left outside the bins. Each field is up to the specific building custodian/groundperson to maintain. The operations director's budget covers the bins and liners, but not enough to provide an extra set of bins for recycling. That could be part of the individual principals' budgets. "I provide a recycling dumpster, and if they want to use their building budget to add recycle bins to the fields, that is fine. The custodial staff will put anything from the recycle bins in the recycling dumpster."</p>
<p>Fans/Spectators</p>	<p>The fans enjoy watching the players and chatting with one another during practice/games. When the game, or practice, is over; everyone is looking for their rides and backpacks and saying good-bye. They are ready to get home to have dinner or do homework. None of the fans pay much attention to the bottles left behind by others. Some people notice the bottles, but they are pretty sure they and their kids throw away their trash when they are at the field.</p>
<p>Parents/Families</p>	<p>Some family members notice there aren't enough trash bins. The bins are placed by the entrance to the field, so they feel it is an inconvenience to throw something away during practice. They say it would be easier if they didn't have the other siblings to watch, not to mention the dog. "Really, if this was such a problem, they should put more trash bins by the stands where we can get to them more easily." Some parents noted that oftentimes the trash cans are knocked over and trash is spilling out anyway. They think the school must not really care about it.</p>
<p>Local Environmental Action Nonprofit</p>	<p>The local environmental organization is educating the community about the amount of plastic that ends up in the county landfill. A recent audit showed that 35 percent of what is thrown into the landfill could be recycled. Another 35% is food waste that could be composted. This organization is working with the county's recycle center to reduce landfill waste by 90% by 2030. The education director at the nonprofit organization seeks to partner with area schools to make young people and their families aware of the issue of plastics and other recyclables in the landfill. They also want people to know that the leftover liquid left in closed water or soft drink bottles is never reclaimed by the Earth's water cycle. If people emptied their leftover beverages on the grass, the water could drain back into the groundwater.</p>
<p>Building Custodian /Groundsperson</p>	<p>The custodian is overworked. In addition to being responsible for everything inside the school, he is now required to take care of the grounds as well because of budget cutbacks. He feels there is no way he has time to manage both a recycle bin and a landfill trash bin, let alone a compost bin! He has seen the separate bins at other venues, and he knows people will put items into the wrong bins, and he'll have to go through all of the bins to sort the items himself. Until there is a way to make sure the public puts things in the correct bin, it is better to only have the landfill trash bin available. The custodian is frustrated about the number of plastic bottles that are left around the field. He does not have time to pick them up, and he is grateful there is an environmental club that can take care of this.</p>

