

Cape Town Schools' Step Into A Year Of Practical Recycling Action

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In many schools, the conversation about waste and recycling often only appears during environmental club activities and occasional classroom recycling initiatives. However, schools that want to recycle consistently still face an operational challenge because recycling requires ongoing collection, sorting and processing services. These services have costs and logistics, which can become a barrier even when there is strong willingness from learners, educators and school leadership.

Consumer Goods Council of South Africa Producer Responsibility Organisation, Registered, 2023
EPR Registration Numbers

19/7/5/P/PRO/20231204/051: Paper and Packaging Sector

19/7/6/E/PRO/20231204/050: Electrical and Electronic Equipment Sector

19/7/7/L/PRO/20231204/049: Lighting Sector1

In response to these barriers, **Plant the Seed, supported by the Consumer Good Council South Africa: Producer Responsibility Organisation (CGCSA PRO)**, is starting a year-long schools recycling campaign throughout the country. The campaign brings together a cohort of schools that are committing to a circular economy, starting at an education level. The intention is to divert packaging waste from landfill, while helping school communities' model everyday habits that can last beyond the campaign itself.

“This partnership centers on subsidizing recycling collection costs, effectively removing financial barriers and making sustainable waste management accessible for schools. By directing investment straight into recycling collection, the initiative supports local job creation, operational expansion, and recycling rebates,” shares *Manon Shapiro, Operations & Data Lead at Plant the Seed*. “Beyond logistics, the program offers a data-driven educational component, providing schools with monthly reports on diverted waste.”



A visible and practical lesson.

People need to see and use a system often enough for it to become normal. “At the heart of this campaign is the notion that recycling is not only about waste. It is also about people, because recyclables move through a human chain of sorting, collection, processing and reintegrating. When learners understand this, recycling becomes more than another environmental message. It becomes a real-world practice linked to livelihoods and community action,” says *Matlou Setati, Food Safety and Sustainability Executive at CGCSA PRO*.

As the campaign begins, the confirmed participating schools include DSK (German International School), Herschel, SACS, Springfield, St Cyprian’s, WPPS (Western Province Preparatory School), WBJs (Wynberg Boys Junior), WGHS (Wynberg Girls High), Laerskool Fairland and Westerford High School. Plant The Seed is also in discussions with additional schools, and more are expected to join.

The CGCSA PRO's sponsorship supports and strengthens the recycling value chain beyond the school environment, because it supports buy-back centres and local collectors who form part of the wider circular economy. This means that when schools increase recyclable volumes, they are also contributing to economic activity in the recycling value chain and supporting the people whose livelihoods are connected to recyclable material flow.

Education as the engine of behaviour change



A key focus of the Schools Clean-Up Campaign is education. Schools are uniquely positioned for long-term shifts in habits, as learners operate within an ecosystem where actions can be reinforced through classroom learning, peer culture, teacher guidance and school pride.

For this reason, the campaign is supported by a structured awareness campaign and learning tools that can be integrated into the school calendar. This includes an

educational video series, posters and learning resources that schools can use throughout the year to keep recycling visible and meaningful. These tools help turn recycling into a shared school activity rather than a once-off environmental initiative.

The campaign also includes an inter-school recycling competition that keeps learners motivated through friendly rivalry and shared focus on building up effort and results. Schools that are participating in the programme take part in a year-long challenge where they compete to become the top recycler by volume. Each month, schools receive feedback on their results and can see how they compare to other schools on a leaderboard. Schools are also encouraged to boost participation through learner-led activities such as recycling drives, small awareness campaigns and sustainability-themed market days. At the end of the year, the winning school receives a cash prize (from CGCSA PRO) and a tablet (from HONOR), while every school still benefits from discounted recycling services, learning materials, workshops and ongoing support throughout the campaign.

Looking ahead

“As the campaign unfolds across 2026, it places recycling into daily school life through visible systems, shared responsibility and regular feedback on progress. Over time, learners begin to understand sustainability through practice, while the recycling value chain benefits from reliable recyclable volumes moving through the system”, shares Setati.

