

ADVOCACY PACKETS

COMPOSTING SYSTEM

How to implement a composting system at your school

As young individuals, we see environmental issues in our community and on the news and want to take action to protect our future. Often it can be difficult to know where to start or how to enact lasting change as a student. But students around the globe are working to change the world one step at a time - and so can you.

This series of advocacy packets, created by students for students, provides introductory knowledge on these ideas and concepts and walks you through steps on how to begin implementing change in your classroom, home or community. By using our voices and gathering support for these sustainable initiatives, we will change the world.

This specific packet on composting walks you through the process of establishing a reliable composting system at your school. This packet will enable you to present your idea to important stakeholders and explain the importance of implementing a composting system, which can provide an environmentally friendly and economically efficient way to combat food waste.

Additional resources can be found in [this link](#), which will appear multiple times throughout this advocacy packet.

IMPORTANCE

Composting is a process in which food waste is diverted from landfills and added back to soil for nourishment. Composting not only helps to protect the environment, but can also have many benefits for your school! When food waste is added back to the soil, the organic matter breaks down and serves as a fertilizer for the plants and creatures that live in the area. This is a more natural and environmentally friendly way to support plant growth, as opposed to using fertilizers or harmful chemicals.

Composting systems also reduce the impact of food waste on the environment. When we toss still-edible food into the trash, it ends up in landfills, where it generates methane and accelerates the rate of climate change. As a result, food loss and waste account for 8.2% of the total human-made greenhouse gas emissions. Food waste is especially concerning when we consider the fact that many people, perhaps even our peers, do not have enough to eat. By donating food and composting scraps we can combat both of these issues.

By implementing a composting system in your school, you can have a direct positive impact on the environment by taking part in a regenerative cycle in which you minimize the amount of waste your school produces on a daily basis. It can also promote a greater understanding of your local ecosystem and instill stewardship, responsibility and teamwork skills. To make a difference this **Earth Day**, create a composting system in your school!

STAKEHOLDERS

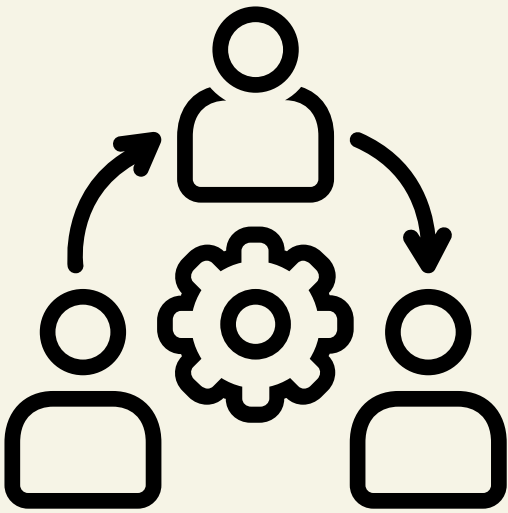
Students

Talking with your peers is a great way to gain support to implement a composting system. Distribute a petition among your peers and teachers to illustrate to your school's administration the support behind your composting initiative.



Clubs and Organizations

Collaborating with clubs and organizations around your school is also a great way to spread your message. If your school has a recycling club and/or garden club, reach out to club leaders about working with you to establish a composting program at your school. If your club doesn't already have a sustainability chair, learn how to form one in our other Advocacy Packet!



School Newspaper

Explaining your idea to students who write for your school's newsletter or newspaper is an efficient way to raise awareness and gain support. Talk with them about printing an article on the benefits of creating a composting system at your school.



School Administrators

Reaching out to your school's principal is very important when establishing a composting system at your school. After gathering information and gaining support from students and faculty, hold a letter writing campaign to directly advocate for this program.



Financial Supporters

Discussing your composting initiative with local businesses can build support within your community and provide financial assistance for your composting system through supply donations and monetary contributions.



Community Members

Finding composting experts in your community can help to tailor your composting system to your individual school.



HOW TO IMPLEMENT COMPOSTING AT YOUR SCHOOL

STEP 1: STARTING THE CONSERVATION

Use these discussion points to start a conversation with a teacher or school administrator about composting:

- Composting creates learning opportunities for students inside and outside the classroom
- Composting connects students to nature and our food system
- Composting builds responsibility and environmental stewardship
- Composting helps mitigate climate change by reducing green house gas emissions
- Composting can establish your school as an example for other schools to follow



STEP 2: GAINING SUPPORT

Use these ideas to start raising awareness on the importance of composting in your community:

- Use [this template](#) to start a petition and collect signatures from students, parents and faculty members
- Present a resolution to your student council or school board to implement your new composting program
- Use [this template](#) and conduct a letter writing campaign to your school's principal to advocate for your program
- Host a [Teach-In](#) on composting to educate your community on the importance and benefits of composting
- Host fundraisers to raise money for supplies and reach out to local businesses and potential financial supporters who could be interested in supporting your project
- Seek out grants/minigrants from organizations that can fund your project.



STEP 3: BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Remember to have discussions on these topics before creating your composting program:

- Encourage your school's administration to switch to reusable or compostable lunch trays and utensils
- Talk to your school's waste collector to see if they will accept your compost or [establish a school garden](#) where you can use your compost directly
- Find out if there are any food donation centers who would like to take excess food from your school's kitchen





HOW TO IMPLEMENT COMPOSTING AT YOUR SCHOOL

STEP 4: THE BASICS OF COMPOSTING

Replace garbage bins with composting stations. At each station include these 4 bins:



- A bin where students can pour out any liquid leftovers, such as milk, juices or sodas. You can place a large traffic cone upside down and over the top of the bin to prevent other waste from accidentally falling in. It is necessary to separate liquids and pour them down a drain to prevent toxic liquids from entering landfills and polluting groundwater.
- A bin for recyclable materials. Include items such as cardboard boxes, empty plastic bottles and containers.
- A regular garbage bin for materials that can't be composted or recycled. Include items such as plastic bags, dirty napkins and meat products.
- A composting bin for food waste from your cafeteria.

In addition to food waste, you can include these materials to your composting bins:



- Carbon-rich material - dead leaves, twigs, coffee grounds and shredded paper
- Nitrogen-rich material - nuts, seeds and grass



Remember to always place these items in trash bins instead of composting:

- Dairy products
- Meat
- Plants treated with pesticides



Host a training event on the new bins and place informational signs above each station explaining what materials belong in each bin



Distribute the compost at a local collection site, a nearby community garden, or use it to start a schoolyard garden

COMPOSTING ADVOCACY PACKET:

Further Information



Expanded Learning Opportunities

In order to have a successful composting program, it is essential to educate and raise awareness on how to compost and why it is important:

- Plan lessons or community programs about composting and how it can help mitigate climate change
- Create a Compost Committee and assign students different responsibilities to maintain the composting system
- Build a school garden and use your compost to grow more food for your cafeteria or a community kitchen
- Visit local farms to learn more about composting
- Plan school lunches with sustainable and local ingredients



Additional Resources

- Check out these [Composting Do's and Don'ts](#) to help organize your bins
- Learn more about the effects of food waste and how you can modify your diet to help fight climate change with [FoodPrints for the Future Campaign](#)
- Read more about [regenerative agriculture](#) and why composting plays such a significant role