

Create a Compost or Recycling Program

Having a recycling or composting program at school shows students that reducing landfill waste is important and provides opportunities for them to make a difference in an environmental issue. You can do this in your own classroom or you and your students can work with your local municipality and your schools' facilities staff to help do this for the whole school!

GRADES: All

INTENDED OUTCOMES: Hands, Head

SUGGESTED SUPPLIES:

- Color coordinated bins for collecting recycling and/or compost
- Signs and/or labels for bins
- Gloves and trash pickers

Suggested steps and/or focus for each grade level*:

ECE-3rd GRADE:

- Create signs with examples or other visual ways of demonstrating the different categories of waste (recycling, landfill, compost) - this can be done with students or for them.
- Discuss where to place the bins where people are most likely to use them (i.e. compost bins next to the lunch area or in the bathroom for paper towels.)
- Create a schedule for emptying bins into a more central or larger container (if necessary) and checking to see how the class or school is doing on it's sorting practices.

4th and 5th GRADES:

- In addition to what's above, provide opportunities for leadership of the school's recycling or compost program. This may mean helping to empty classroom bins for younger grades or monitoring waste stations during lunch to help with proper sorting of waste (compost vs. trash vs. recycling).

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL:

- In addition to what's above, consider helping to create and/or run a program for a nearby elementary school. Use this as an opportunity to practice collecting and analyzing data, developing and implementing a project, and public speaking skills!

*For more detail on the grade-level focus for natural and social concepts and sense of place, please refer to the Guidelines

TIPS AND TRICKS:

- What can or cannot be recycled depends on the capabilities of your waste hauler or refuse drop-off facility. Make sure you clarify what these are before training students or making signage, as they may not be the same as what you or your students are used to at home.
- Precede this activity with a discussion of why it is important to recycle or compost (to send less waste to the landfill). If possible, take a field trip to the local landfill or waste hauler to experience some of these impacts first hand.
- Consider conducting a waste audit before you implement your program to set a baseline against which to measure improvements. (see Waste Audit activity)
- If you can't find someone to pick up compost, consider creating a compost system on campus. Work with facilities staff to utilize the rich soil that results on the grounds or give it away to the local community.
- Note that if you are creating a program just for your classroom, you will likely have to rely on volunteers to take the recycling and compost home or to a local facility.



Relevant Standards

SC09-GR.1-S.3-GLE.1