

# A GUIDE FOR STUDENT COMPOSTING



In this document you will find: a short list of questions you will need to know the answer to if you are going to run a successful school composting program, information about common composting systems, and some advice and things to consider when starting a compost program based on other school's experiences with composting.

## Planning

Roughly how much food waste is created in each place? (think about: cafeteria, dining hall, classrooms, staff lounge, hallways, foods classes, other places). Where is the most food waste currently disposed of?

What is currently done with the food waste?

Who is currently responsible for managing food waste?

What is your primary goal for a school composting program? Secondary goals? (i.e. To raise awareness about composting in school community, to divert a significant amount of organics from the landfill, to produce healthy soil for school garden/greening...)



## Getting Started and Keeping it Going

How will you encourage students to properly sort food waste from garbage and recycling?

Who will collect the compost bins from inside the school and dump them into the composter?

How will you make sure the compost bins are kept clean and tidy?

Who will be responsible for maintaining the compost outside and making sure it is working? What kind of compost system are you using? What does this compost system need to create good, healthy soil?

How will you harvest and use finished compost?

How will you use the compost program to educate students and staff about the benefits of composting?

How will you involve as many people as possible?

Will you involve the community? How?

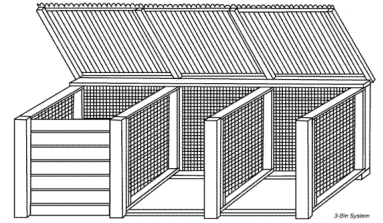


# DIFFERENT KINDS OF COMPOSTING SYSTEMS



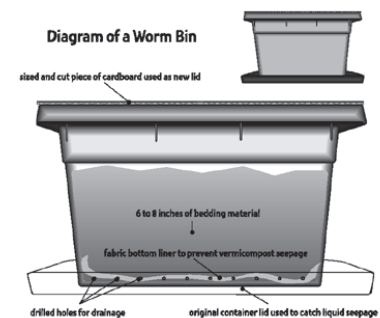
## Backyard & 3 Bin Systems

- need mix of brown and green materials
- need to be monitored to ensure good air flow and carbon/nitrogen balance
- fairly small capacity unless you have many bins
- hands on, good for education
- can be messy if not properly maintained
- not recommended for composting meat, dairy, and bread (only vegetable waste)



## Vermicompost Bins

- small capacity, only able to process some classroom food waste
- great for education
- can be kept inside
- need to be monitored
- cannot compost meat and dairy, bread not recommended



## In-Vessel Compost Systems

- expensive to install
- larger capacity, could handle all school waste
- can compost meat, dairy and bread
- different systems require different levels of maintenance
- red tape and energy involved in installing and learning how to use – can be steep learning curve



## Collection Services

- expensive. regular, monthly fee for truck to come pick up organic waste
- can take meat, dairy and bread
- clean and no maintenance required
- lacks educational capacity – still just send garbage “away”
- don't get any finished compost



Other systems not pictured do exist, though are less common.



# IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS



Start small, with the places that produce the most compost, and then work towards increasing the number of compost bins in the school you manage. Encourage more people to get involved over time.

Different systems will offer different benefits and weaknesses (see section above). Make your plans appropriately, with clear goals from the beginning.

If you want to make really good compost for a small school garden, consider getting food waste from places in the school where meat, dairy and bread do not accumulate. Vegetable scraps from school cafeterias are perfect for backyard composting, whereas sandwiches, pizza, meats and cheeses are not. It is hard (but not impossible) to separate all meat, dairy and bread out of bins in areas where students throw away their lunch scraps.

If your goal is to compost ALL the food waste in the school, you may want to consider a mixed approach, that you implement over time. Collection services may be the easiest way to do this (by 2015 all schools will have to sort their compost from their garbage). Having some composting happening in the school will also be very useful for education and gardening efforts.

Think carefully about how you are going to advertise and communicate about your composting efforts. It's important that people know that composting is important.

Schools often find that it's necessary to keep reminding people in the school about what to compost and how to do it. Try to do this every 6 weeks.

Think carefully about the long term sustainability of your composting program. How will it be maintained and helped to grow over the years?

## FOR ADVICE CONTACT

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