



## Composting Guidebook

DRAFT

## How will composting benefit our school community?

- 1) **Provide Educational Opportunities**~ Composting provides hands-on learning experiences about environmental science, biology, and sustainability. Students can observe the decomposition process, understand nutrient cycles, and learn about soil health and ecology.
- 2) **Enhance our School Environment**~ Composting helps reduce waste and keeps landfills from overflowing, contributing to a cleaner and healthier school environment.
- 3) **Promote Responsibility and Citizenship**~ By participating in composting, students develop a sense of responsibility and environmental stewardship. It fosters a culture of sustainability and encourages them to make more eco-friendly choices in their daily lives.
- 4) **Community Engagement and Awareness**~ Composting initiatives can serve as a model for broader community practices, demonstrating the school's commitment to sustainability. The initiative also brings volunteers into the school community in an interactive way.

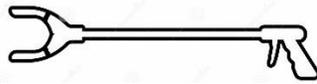
## How do we begin?

- 1) Express interest to WS/FCS Director of Sustainability, Justin Thornton.
- 2) Two groups of people must be on board.
  - a. *School Administration*- As leader of the school, administrative commitment and support are essential for any venture to be successful and sustainable.
  - b. *Committed Volunteers*- A small group of committed volunteers is vital for starting up composting. These volunteers will help assist students and teachers for the first few weeks during lunchtime.
- 3) Plan and meet with WS/FCs Director of Sustainability, Justin Thornton concerning details about kitchen upfit, any costs associated and supplies the school will need to provide.

## Once we are approved, what work needs to be done?

- 1) Hold a meeting with volunteers, administrators, custodians, and cafeteria staff. Create a plan for how composting stations will flow and who will be responsible for which part. Diagram the cafeteria flow.
- 2) Be certain you have volunteers committed for the first 2-4 weeks, depending on the needs of the students, teachers, and staff to get the program up and running.
- 3) Pick a start date to begin (September)

## What materials will we need to get started and sustain the composting program?

District will provide:	School will provide:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sink</li> <li>• Gloves</li> <li>• 5-gallon buckets</li> <li>• Table for stackable trays</li> <li>• <b>Compostable bags?</b></li> <li>• Rolling trash bin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trash pickers </li> <li>• Aprons</li> <li>• Laminated signs</li> </ul>

## How do we get the whole school on board?

Plan for education before implementation.

*(The following steps are provided by Jefferson Elementary and Tara Brown, organizer. You may make a copy of any resource you would like to use and change to include your students, photos, school name, etc.)*

1. To begin the process, a competition was held for 5th graders. They were challenged to create a slideshow titled “What is Compost?”. The contest drummed up a lot of interest among the students. Winners were chosen and their slideshows have been shown on screens throughout the school.
2. A group of students met (2 volunteer parents helped here). Students divided into small groups and made the signs for the composting line.
  - a. Trays (Pictures to show how the trays need to be stacked so they match)
  - b. Compostable food (with pictures of food that goes in the compost bin)
  - c. Trash (stapled actual trash to the board)
  - d. Liquids (above the sink)
  - e. Food Donations (unopened food- leave here and you can take for later).

Once the compost line and bins were set up, the signs were hung above them.

3. A short [video](#) of kids demonstrating the process was made and also played on screens throughout the school.
4. An adult created [slideshow](#) was used to share accurate information to students. You can make a copy of this one and change it for your school.

## What roles do students take once the program is up and running?

- One (or two) students per class is needed to help stand with the line and help direct traffic. (The helper(s) can use the trash pickers if any trash is accidentally thrown into the compost bin).
- Once a class has finished, stacked trays should be taken and placed neatly in the bin by a helper.

## How do we plan for sustainability?

- Continue to recruit interest for the program (booths at PTA meetings, talk with new parents, etc.)
- Collect feedback from students, teachers, and cafeteria staff about how the program is going
- Address any needs and share any successes
- Create shared ownership between school staff and volunteers, so several people are always knowledgeable about the process.
- Offer class “tours” of the composting areas or to help with experiences to help bridge the gap between composting in the cafeteria and real-world implications of composting.

## Lessons Learned:

- Napkins are considered “trash”. That seems to help the flow.
- Jefferson’s original intent was to phase in composting by grade level. In hindsight, beginning with 3-5, then adding 1 and 2 would be very doable. (adding K later in the year).
- Discussion about items such as slushies is important (Are they liquid? Where do they go?)
- When in doubt, throw it out. (Keeps the line moving).
- Adult volunteers begin the process, then students “shadow” them, learning how to assist in the process.
- Add breakfast composting later.
- The liquid bin needs emptying during the lunch period. Someone should keep an eye on it.
- The sink gets very dirty. It needs scrubbing with a brush at the end of each lunch period.

**Helpful Resources** *(provided by Jefferson Elementary and Tara Brown, you may make a copy and use for your needs)*

- [Composting Communication Plan](#) (getting information to parents and families)
- [Email](#) to volunteers in preparation.
- [Volunteer Guidelines](#)
- For teachers- [End of Lunch Routine](#)
- [Composting Directions](#)

## Important Contact Information:

### **Justin Thornton**

Director of Sustainability for WS/FCS  
[jdthornton@wsfcs.k12.nc.us](mailto:jdthornton@wsfcs.k12.nc.us)

### **Jessica McCrory**

Parent at Speas Elementary School  
[mccrory.jessica@gmail.com](mailto:mccrory.jessica@gmail.com)

### **Tara Brown**

Parent at Jefferson Elementary School  
336.829.2516  
[tamariebrown@gmail.com](mailto:tamariebrown@gmail.com)

### **Angela Reece**

Parent at Jefferson Elementary School  
704.649.4992  
[ang0418@gmail.com](mailto:ang0418@gmail.com)

### **Christine Wittmeier**

Organics Recycling Specialist for NC  
Dept. of Environmental Quality  
[christine.wittmeier@deq.nc.gov](mailto:christine.wittmeier@deq.nc.gov)

### **Piedmont Environmental Alliance**

<https://www.peanc.org/>  
[info@peanc.org](mailto:info@peanc.org)

### **Triad Compost Service**

336-448-9494  
[TriadCompostService@gmail.com](mailto:TriadCompostService@gmail.com)

## Additional Information

### How does composting tie into curriculum?

**Science-** Composting ties directly into science standards:

- In the life sciences, there are K-8 expectations for Ecosystems; Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics
- In earth/space sciences, K-8 expectations exist for Earth and Human Activity
- Earth/Environmental Science course is offered in high school.

**Math-** Concepts such as weight, ratio, proportionality, predictability, calculating gas mileage/cost for compost pick-up, and data tracking are all easily made real with composting experiences.

**ELA-** Research into composting, persuasive pieces on whether to compost or not, debates, signs, etc.

**Social Studies-** Students can examine the economic/ environmental costs and benefits of composting, compare composting in the southern USA to other regions or climate zones (Does it look the same?), Human impact on their environment, etc.

### How to organize/recruit volunteers:

- Set up an online sign-up tool (i.e. SignUp Genius, SignUp.com, etc)
- Make sure each volunteer is registered with WSFCS and are entered into the volunteer system at the school before showing up
- Share with others who might be interested in helping (parents, grandparents, friends, neighbors, and/or your local faith community, Piedmont Environmental Alliance or other community organizations)

Resources can also be found:



Or <https://wakelet.com/wake/H1IZ7TdabjogJ3MPEZhwz>