

# FOOD WASTE

## GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS



## TURN FOOD WASTE INTO RESOURCES

Even after thoughtful ordering, proper storage and good preparation practices, some food waste is unavoidable. Schools unable to re-purpose or donate leftovers may consider ways to recycle and compost instead of throwing out food.

When schools recycle food waste they can build partnerships, teach children valuable lessons and improve fiscal responsibility.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Many local governments and businesses welcome opportunities to work with schools to find new avenues for recycling food waste. These kinds of partnerships have a positive effect on many schools, economies and communities across Texas.

## EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Contracting Entities (CEs) that encourage students to lead food recycling projects see the largest participation rates. Students can observe the environmental benefits of diverting food from the landfill. In the classroom, teachers can use the process as an example of the science of decomposition or the business of recycling. After being properly composted, the recycled food waste also provides an excellent additive for campus gardens and boosts the effectiveness of garden-based learning.

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### ECONOMIC BENEFITS

A robust food waste recycling program can reduce a school's expenditures for waste removal and encourage students to be more mindful in their lunchroom choices. Also, maintaining a campus garden can be less expensive when the school generates its own rich soils from composted food.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO TO ENGAGE YOUR STUDENTS

During the 2015-2016 school year, students at Eastside Memorial High School conducted a recycling education campaign. As a result, recycling increased from an average of 3,200 pounds per month to more than 4,400 pounds per month. Eastside Memorial also became the first high school in the Austin Independent School District to introduce a composting program. The effort prevented 10,250 pounds of waste from going to the landfill. As a result of the school's zero waste efforts and other environmental initiatives, Eastside Memorial High School became the first National Wildlife Federation Certified Green Flag High School in Texas.

### PRIORITIZE GOOD STEWARDSHIP

Since 2011, Hays Consolidated Independent School District has implemented composting and recycling at every school in the district (23 schools). As the program has matured, landfill diversion rates have increased each year, with one elementary school diverting more than 51,000 pounds of waste from the landfill in 2016.



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