

Caring Composter Presentation

This presentation was developed to support student and staff leaders who want to present about their school's composting program. It is designed to help you encourage everyone in your school to properly compost their organic waste.

Hand-Out and Presentation Adapted From SF Environment's STAFF Compost Monitor Training

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Lesson Summary

Teach students and/or staff how to compost in the school and why it's important.

Time

10 - 15 minutes

Introduction

Hi everyone! My name is **(insert name)** and I am here to teach you a simple thing we can do to help each other and the environment.

Compost! Do you know what that is?

Compost is when you put organic waste – like food scraps, dead plants, or paper towel – in a big pile and let them break down into rich garden soil

Today we'll learn about how we at school can make less garbage and start composting!

Starting ("today" or "on Thursday" etc.) our school will begin to compost. You will all have a very important role to play because you all get to be Compost Monitors, which means you will be the school's leaders and experts in composting! This means you will have to know what to put in our school's compost bins, and what not to.

In this video, we will show you why it's important for us to compost, and describe how to compost.

Part 1 – Decomposers

Composting is nature's way of recycling and it's happening all the time. Living things called decomposers breakdown materials found in nature, like fallen leaves, fruit that has dropped from the tree, an old snakeskin, and even your leftover food. Decomposers eat these things, slowly turning them

into compost (**Hold up jar of compost**).

Compost is a dark brown material that looks, smells and feels like soil. It's full of vitamins and nutrients. Farmers and gardeners mix it into their soil to help their plants grow bigger and stronger. And it comes from our left over food scraps (**Hold up banana peel, apple core or other food scrap**).

Now, there are three types of decomposers that break stuff down, and I like to call them the FBI.

F stands for fungi. Fungi are living things that include mold or mushrooms. Mushrooms break stuff down by spraying powerful chemicals called "enzymes" that dissolve the things around it.

Now how many of you have ever gotten out some bread to make a sandwich, and you've found blue and green fuzzy looking stuff on the bread? Yeah, that has happened to me too. That fuzzy stuff is mold and it will grow on bread that is too old to eat. That mold is helping the bread to decompose!

B is for bacteria. Bacteria are very, very, very, very, very tiny living things that we can only see with a microscope and they are everywhere. Sometimes people think of bacteria as germs that can make us sick. Well, some bacteria can make us sick, but many more are good for us.

Raise your hand if you like yogurt. Well, bacteria are in yogurt and they are what give yogurt its sour flavor and make it healthy for us. Just like fungi, bacteria are constantly decomposing or breaking down things in nature.

I is for invertebrates. Invertebrates are animals that do not have a backbone. Everyone, go ahead and feel your backbone like this (**touch your backbone**). Instead of using a backbone to stand up straight and walk around like we do, invertebrates wiggle, crawl, and slide. Invertebrates break things down by chewing or grinding. Slugs, snails, worms, and beetles are all invertebrates.

So, as you can see, Fungi, Bacteria, and Invertebrates are decomposers that are hard at work! And as Compost Monitors you will be working directly for the FBI!

Part 2 – Compost Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2rpjStZoww>

Or Google Search "VSB Compost Video"

Part 3 – How to Compost

Okay, so here in Vancouver, we're really lucky because we get to compost using this green bin. (**Display the green bin that will be used to collect compost**) The leftover food scraps, dirty paper, and yard waste we put in the green bin are taken away to a place called Richmond Soil and Fiber where it is dumped into huge piles.

The FBI comes along and decomposes, or breaks it all down, and after two months, we have rich compost (**hold up jar of compost again**). This compost is then sold to local farmers and gardeners. If your school has a garden, you can also get some of this compost to use there to help your plants grow! (If you have a school compost, make sure to say that some of the compost stays in the school)

Now let me see a show of hands: How many of you use this green bin at home? Can anyone tell me what are the three main types of stuff that we can compost? (*write food scraps, dirty paper/wax paper,*

and flowers/plants on the board as students name them) Here is a helpful way to remember - we can compost anything that comes from a plant or an animal! Stuff like: pizza crusts, banana peels, chicken bones and apple cores. Do these things come from a plant or an animal? Yes, all food comes from a plant or an animal.

Dirty paper like used napkins and greasy pizza boxes can all be composted into the green bin. Remember, paper is made from trees, and trees are plants, so we can compost all dirty paper.

You can also put plants in the green bin like flowers and leaves from your garden.

Different kinds of composters can compost different kinds of things. The big compost piles at Richmond Soil and Fiber can safely break down meat, dairy and bread. BUT, the composters at most schools can only break down fruit and vegetable scraps.

(If your school is going to compost everything, including meat etc, say this. If your school is only able to compost fruit and vegetables, make sure you warn students NOT to put meat, dairy or bread into the green bins)

If you don't compost your leftover food scraps into the green bin, and you put them into the trashcan instead, where do they go? **(Take answers.)** That's right! They get put into a HUGE pile of garbage called a landfill. When your leftover food goes into a landfill, it can last for years without decomposing. Because of this, it starts to create methane, which is a powerful gas that causes climate change. Since we want to stop climate change, it's REALLY important that you compost.

Now let's review: What kinds of things can go into the green bin? Things that come from plants or animals, like: food, dirty paper, and yard trimmings.

Tell the students where they can find green bins in the school, and remind them that they are now Compost Monitors who can encourage other students to properly compost their left over food waste.

Part 4 – Handout

Leave handout “The Dirt on Composting in the VSB” for teachers and students to review.

Links to Curricular Resources

SF Environment – Teacher Lounge

<http://sfenvironmentkids.org/teacher.htm>

Compost and school garden activity guides and handouts for K-12.

CalRecycle - Closing the Loop: Exploring Integrated Waste Management and Resource Conservation

<http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/Education/Curriculum/CTL/>

An excellent resource for incorporating waste prevention, recycling, and composting concepts into the classroom. Interdisciplinary, action-oriented, and hands-on.

The Edible Schoolyard Project – Search for Resources

<http://edibleschoolyard.org/resources-tools>

A searchable database of activities and resources for engaging with school food systems. Search “compost,” “soil,” “waste,” etc. for some interesting resources.

Local Composting Resources

Vancouver School Board – Green Board – Waste and Recycling

<http://www.vsb.bc.ca/green-board-waste-and-recycling>

City Farmer – Vancouver Composting Hotline

(604) 736-2250

<http://www.cityfarmer.org/homecompost4.html>

City of Vancouver – Residential Food Scraps Collection

<http://vancouver.ca/projects/foodWaste/>

[Sustainability & Climate Change Information](#)

(604) 873-7748

sustainability@vancouver.ca

Metro Vancouver – Food Recycling/Composting

<http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/solidwaste/Residents/composting/Pages/default.aspx>

Sustainability Education Coordinator

(604) 432-6200

Victoria Compost Education – How To...

<http://www.compost.bc.ca/learn/howto.htm>

(250)-386-9676

info@compost.bc.ca

Washington State University – Backyard Composting

<http://gardening.wsu.edu/stewardship/compost/yardcomp/yardcomp.htm>