

## Charting the Direction of your Waste Focus

At this point, your waste reduction efforts could take several directions, depending on how invested you and your students are in the process and what seems feasible at your school. It is preferable for your students to feel success at a smaller goal than to try to take on a huge system and not get very far. You will have to gauge your school environment and what waste reduction measures have been undertaken in the past and are currently in place in order to choose the best path for your class (seeking their input, of course!) Potential next steps are listed below by increasing intensity.

1. **Use your classroom as a microcosm to study changing waste habits.** Ask students to adhere to their habit recommendations (Lesson 2) and measure the waste generated by the classroom each week to determine if their changes are yielding measurable results. Use the opportunity to practice graphing data over time. Make improvements to classroom systems by improving waste container numbers, location and signage. Start collecting organic waste for a class worm-bin or someone's home composting system. Add a re-use basket for collecting items a student no longer wants but are still useful.
2. **Educate the rest of the school on changing wasteful habits.** Share what you learned from your classroom audit with the rest of the school community. Conduct a public awareness campaign to encourage more sustainable waste habits. This could involve quantifying waste in other classrooms, offices, or other areas your class would like to target. Use the results of measurements to encourage students to work towards a goal in waste reduction. Students could improve recycling collection (containers, signage and how it is collected) and develop contests for classrooms to compete as the biggest waste reducers (without just pitching their waste in hallway trash cans, of course).
3. **Conduct a School-wide Waste Audit to quantify the waste generated by the entire school.** This is an intensive, slightly stinky process, but the course to take if your class is committed to radically improving the school's waste profile. See lessons 3, 4 and 5 for details on conducting the waste audit, learning more about the logistics of changing institutional waste infrastructure, and developing an action plan.

All of these courses of action are eligible for Sustainability Action Grant funding. Feel free to ask if you need more specific lesson ideas for options 1 or 2.

For training in establishing and running a compost system at your school, whether it be a classroom worm bin or an outdoor composting system, contact the Green Learning Station program manager at 513.221.0981 or [rbullock@civicgardencenter.org](mailto:rbullock@civicgardencenter.org).

**Additional resources** for school composting and waste management can be found at:

- School Composting Manual for Connecticut (geared towards K-6 but lots of useful background info)  
[http://www.ct.gov/dep/lib/dep/compost/compost\\_pdf/schmanual.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/dep/lib/dep/compost/compost_pdf/schmanual.pdf)
- Teacher Resources for grades 7-8 and 9-12 all focused on solid waste:  
<http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/TrashGoesToSchool/TrashIntro.html>

There are tons of similar resources available online if you search for school composting or recycling.