

I had an idea that we should compost food scraps from all Austin public school cafeterias. Every day at school I see tons of food wasted when it could be composted. I know Austin has a composting program for residential yard waste and the ability to pick up residential yard waste. So it seems dumb not to use that resource to the best of its ability. The city could easily expand its current program of only picking up yard waste to include picking up compostable materials from schools. Additional bins could be provided to the schools to use only for compostable materials and could be picked up by the same trucks that pick up yard waste. This would in turn help the city by reducing materials going to the landfill. If we keep putting waste in the landfill it will expand, making land less available for residential or commercial use and increasing the cost to the city to buy additional land for new landfill space.

The use of food scraps and other school cafeteria waste to the current composting program will improve the quality and quantity of the final compost product. One way this compost could be used is in city parks, to beautify Austin and help us be a greener city. Excess compost could be sold to the public for use at homes throughout the city; generating additional revenue for the city to support this program.

Another alternative would be for schools to have onsite composting bins and gardens helping our schools to be even greener and healthier. Not having to haul off the materials to another site and the fuel burned by trucks contributing to air pollution makes this a much greener option. Not to mention, with the rising cost of gas, this is another reason we should compost. This would save money for the city from needing to add additional bins and fuel required for the extra truck trips to pick up. The compost generated by these on site bins could be used to benefit trees and bushes around the campus by supplying nutrients to the root systems, retaining moisture and making the schools more appealing. This helps lower our overall carbon footprint by letting nature do the work instead of using the trucks to

haul the materials and the compost from different locations. The students could help and learn about the process and the pros and cons of composting allowing them to open their mind to nature and the value of caring for the community they live in. With the garden schools could have fresh juicy strawberries instead of mushy frozen ones. And we all know fresh fruits and vegetables are much better for you than canned or frozen. These school gardens could become community gardens making more parents in our community aware of the benefits of composting as well.

On site composting is the greenest way to compost at schools. In my opinion schools would be a much better place because of how much healthier schools would be and it would give students a lot more energy. As a student I know how important energy is during school, a tired kid is a distracted kid and distractions hurt your grades. I also think it would make kids feel better about themselves because everyone can compost. Here are some simple and easy steps,

Step one: Construct a bin for the compost; this could even be a class project with recognition to the class with the best bin

Step two: Fill your bin with a balanced mixture of green materials such as (fruits and vegetables) and brown materials such as (cardboard and paper). All of these are readily available at our schools

Step three: Layer different materials

Step four: Turn your pile regularly; a good physical workout

Step five: Harvest your compost and use

As you can see there are many learning opportunities with composting besides eating healthier and leaving a lower carbon foot print. Even though you can't compost everything and it won't solve all the problems it is a step in the right direction. A step I think would help Austin and our community to be an even better place to live. Thank you for your time and I hope you will consider composting.