

Grace Holistic Center for Education

2026 Project Report



The Project:

The students at Grace Holistic Center for Education led a school-wide exploration of composting in order to reduce landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions while improving soil health. By researching, building, and testing multiple composting systems and educating their peers, families, and school staff, the students identified the most effective methods for their context and strengthened environmental literacy across all grade levels.

Project Focus: Waste Management

Students involved: 60

Staff Involved: 21

Location: Yorkville, IL

Students impacted: 60



We knew that we could include all grades, staff, and the community with our project making a larger impact.



The Process:

Guided by their Green Team leader and mentor, students from preschool through high school began by completing the IGSP Sustainability Self-Assessment and Waste Walkthrough. They identified missed opportunities to fully utilize existing compost systems and a lack of data on their waste stream as challenges. High school students researched six composting methods: cold, hot, worm, tumbler, direct, and Bokashi, while younger students focused on waste reduction basics, signage, and storytelling. With support from the IGSP Mini Grant, students built and implemented multiple systems, prepared garden areas, and conducted a hands-on lunchroom waste audit with help from families and community partners. Middle and high school students shared findings through presentations to younger classes, staff, and community members.

The Outcomes:

Through their lunchtime waste audit, students collected 12 lbs of landfill waste, 25 lbs of recyclables, and 9 lbs of food scraps, revealing opportunities to reduce plastic packaging and food waste. The green team learned the ideal conditions for specific composting systems, and observed a broader culture shift, including reduced paper and food waste and increased interest in home composting among students and staff. Moving forward, students will maintain all compost systems, apply finished compost to school gardens, conduct follow-up waste audits, test soil health, and share their composting knowledge with other schools and community partners.

