

News Release

COMPOST KIDS Pilot Program Teaches Springhurst Students to Reduce Waste and Turn Trash into Nutrient Rich Soil for Outdoor Classroom Garden

Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. February 8, 2016—Springhurst Elementary School students are learning that “waste does not have to be waste.” Through a new school-wide initiative called **COMPOST KIDS**, the Springhurst community is taking a closer look at how they can reduce their trash and reuse it to provide nutrient rich soil for the school’s Outdoor Classroom Garden.

“With funding from the PTSA, we have launched an eight-session pilot program (offered to six classes at Springhurst) to introduce students to composting and the idea of food waste reduction,” said Barbara Miglio, the Outdoor Classroom facilitator and a speech/language pathologist. “The lessons are being taught by Master Gardener and Composter Pamela Davis from the New York Botanical Gardens.” The lessons will take place monthly in the Outdoor Classroom Garden, weather permitting, between January-June. The program culminates with the annual Outdoor Garden Salad Day at the end of the school year.

To jumpstart this initiative, a **“waste audit” is being conducted the week of February 8th** during the K-5 lunch periods to examine the quantities of food waste that are currently being disposed of as trash. In advance of the audit, Braeden Cohen, Waste Management Specialist from the New York Compost Project (Sponsored by the New York Botanical Gardens), will be on hand to provide further education and explanation regarding the audit process and properly sorting food waste. Individual bins with photos will help participants identify recyclable plastic and glass, recyclable paper, food waste, liquids and trash.

The lunchroom, kitchen and custodial staff, along with parent volunteers are being trained in proper food waste sorting to increase the accuracy of the audit. Additionally, all students will have a mini-lesson on the topic so they are fully prepared for COMPOST KIDS. The plan is to measure the amount of food waste being generated on a daily basis. Data from the audit will be compiled, analyzed and presented to the District with help from the Springhurst Math Olympiad Club and Student Government.

According to Miglio and Sara Sellitti, PTSA parent representative to the Outdoor Classroom Garden, all of the lessons build on the idea that “we don’t feed our plants in the garden, we feed the soil.” Students will build their own vermicomposting bins for their classroom and learn to compost their food scraps from classroom snacks. The goal is to demonstrate how easy it is to close the loop on the food cycle and generate nutrient rich soil for the garden’s sustainability.

Each of the eight lessons (offered once a month) has a different topic. Last week, participating Kindergarten (Brennan, Bocchichio) students examined red wiggler worms (the decomposers) and documented their observations. In the first grade (Pinkava, Zarro) students handled soil, sand and compost and learned which would be best for growing a plant. In third grade (Todd, Keshishian) students were given an assortment of items and asked to separate them into compostable, recyclable, reusable or trash bins.

“Students are learning that by integrating small behavioral practices in the lunchroom, they can help to improve the quality of life on our planet,” said Springhurst Principal Julia Drake. “Once again the Dobbs Ferry School District is excited to provide this opportunity to Springhurst students so that they have a better understanding of their role as local and global citizens.”

For more information, please contact:

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