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We waste quite a bit of food. We don't have a cafeteria at my school, but individual classes sell food four days a week, and students bring their own food for lunch. However, many students don't finish their food and dispose of it in the trash cans. Food makes up about half of the trash in the cans by the end of each day.

To tackle this issue, we could start to compost on campus. We have a small farm at school where composting is already being done. However, the high school does not compost. We could collect food waste and bring it to our composting station at the farm.

We also use a lot of plastic at sporting events due to water, gatorade, and snacks that are being sold. Despite the fact that we have a water fountain in our gym, most individuals choose to buy bottled water. Single use plastic water bottles and gatorade bottles fill up a significant portion of the trash cans after sporting events.

To lower our single use plastic waste, we could sell water in reusable bottles for more money. If someone did not want to spend more money, they could drink from the drinking fountain. We could also buy large containers of gatorade and it in uncoated paper cups and then recycle or compost the cups.

We use a significant amount of paper. Because we are a low-tech school, a large amount of information in classes is distributed in the form of handouts. In my math class, for instance, we had a minimum of three pieces of paper per class. By the end of the year, I had two binders full of paper handouts.

We could reduce the amount of paper we use by having teachers create slideshows with relevant information and email them to students before or after class. If that is too hard to do, we could make a great effort to reuse the paper. Old handout could be used as scratch paper or be made into art projects. Paper could also be shredded and used in our compost.

Food sold during lunches is sold on paper or styrofoam plates with plastic utensils. Though we are moving toward more sustainable dishes, some lunches are currently producing massive amounts of waste on our campus. For instance, chow mein is sold on styrofoam plates with plastic forks and drinks in single use plastic water bottles.

All classes could move towards using washable plates and utensils. The plates and utensils could be washed in our dishwasher. Drinks could be sold only if they were in aluminium or glass bottles which we could then recycle.

The Plan: To Reduce Food Waste by Composting

This is a project Tyler and Riley are already working on, and will be put into action on Monday, October 7th. Here is how we went about making it happen:

The first step we had to take was talking to our school's farmer. We asked him if he could accommodate compost from high school in his compost piles. We asked him what kinds of food he accepted in his compost, and talked strategy about how to inspire the high school body to compost. We decided that it would be wise to have compost bins in every classroom and a compost tumbler in high school. Everyday, the compost bins in the classroom could be emptied into the compost tumbler. The compost tumbler would be brought down to the farm every two weeks by the ninth and tenth graders who had classes on the farm. In this way, we would lower our food waste and make it as easy as possible for the high school body. We also purchased mini chalk boards that we will cover with facts about why composting is important, and what to compost.

We are working alongside our school's farmer to work out the logistics. However, the most important factor of this project, is the involvement of the student body. We also involved our student government advisor, who ensured that we were using all of the resources provided to us.

The logistic details are how to collect food waste, and how to make sure it breaks down into fertilizer and doesn't rot in classrooms. We will collect the food waste in compost bins which we be placed next to the trash and recycling bins. We will then move the collected food waste compost tumbler in the high school where it will begin to break down. We will move that waste to the farm's compost pile, where our farmer will oversee its breakdown and use the fertilizer to grow plants.

We have yet to face any large barriers. The school agreed that composting is a good idea and had no pushback to our proposal. The biggest potential barrier is an unengaged student body. If the high schoolers don't dispose of their food waste in the compost bins, or refuse to empty the bins into the tumbler, then the project will fail. To combat that, we plan to educate the students on the global impact of food waste and the easy change we can make.

We will begin the project this Monday.