

Shades of Becoming Green

The Expansion of Enfield High School's Composting and Recycling Program

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Project Motivation & Goals

Motivation 1: More than **60 billion pounds of mineral-rich food go to landfills each year** in the U.S. alone, with U.S. **schools specifically wasting over 530,000 tons of food annually.**¹ That's right, sadly, about 70% of the waste that we throw away without a second thought could be repurposed to create a nutrient rich product that supports healthy soil and can grow nutritious food without using chemical fertilizers. When food waste rots in a landfill it releases harmful greenhouse gasses. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, **food is the single largest category of waste put in landfills.**² However, when food is composted, it releases no greenhouse gasses at all, effectively reducing emissions.

Motivation 2: My belief is if students practice and learn about the effects of recycling and composting now, our future generation of adults will continue this habit throughout adulthood. The **recycling "habit" developed in school can serve to transform our communities**, our jobs, and our nation as we recycle more and more of the products we consume and the resources used to manufacture them.

Goals: *My project comprised three phases: Phase 1-Expand the current recycling practices in our Enfield High School (EHS); Phase 2-Develop a Composting Program to support our community garden; Phase 3-Create an Educational Program to support both Phase 1 and 2 then spread awareness to other school levels within the Enfield community.*



Fig 1a & b: Installing signage and informational flyers on newly installed recycling bins throughout Enfield High School.

Methods

- Research Phase:** Explored current recycling practices with custodial staff and school principal.
- Develop a Working Recycling Program** & part time **Composting Initiative:**
 - Collected data on student knowledge and practices regarding recycling and composting via a survey³ (Fig. 4).
 - obtained a town funded recycling bin and created recycling awareness posters for the new cafeteria recycling bin (Fig. 1).
- Develop an Action Plan to Spread Awareness** using [Teach In Model](#)⁴ focused on Informing, Promoting and Empowering (Figs. 2 & 3).
- Spread Ongoing Awareness** using Composting Weekly Chart⁵ (Fig. 6), Public Service Announcement⁶ (Fig. 5c) and Earth Day Celebration District-Wide (Fig. 8).



Fig 3: Practicing Teach In at local Barnes and Noble bookstore. Read aloud books to support Teach In Model focused on informing, promoting & empowering students to teach about saving our environment through the use of literacy.

Project Outcomes

- Overall the student survey responses indicated that: (Fig. 4):
 - most students do not compost at home, do understand what composting is and think it is important to compost;
 - they also understand what recycling is and do recycle at home
 - the majority of students would, if available, discard materials in a compost bin if they could.
- Expanded the current Recycling Program** to include our school cafeteria at Enfield High School with support of Town Director, Principal and custodial staff (Figs. 1 & 7b).
- Began [Composting Program](#)** at Enfield High School, which was fully funded by our [local Home Depot](#) (Figs. 5a & 7a).
- Spread awareness** of the impact both recycling and composting can make locally and globally. Created a PSA (public service announcement) for all Enfield High School (Fig. 5c), followed by signage at each station for Composting and Recycling throughout the school (Fig. 1).
- [Earth Day 2024 Celebration District Wide](#)** to promote Awareness and Sustainability needs through literacy and Teach In model (Fig. 8).

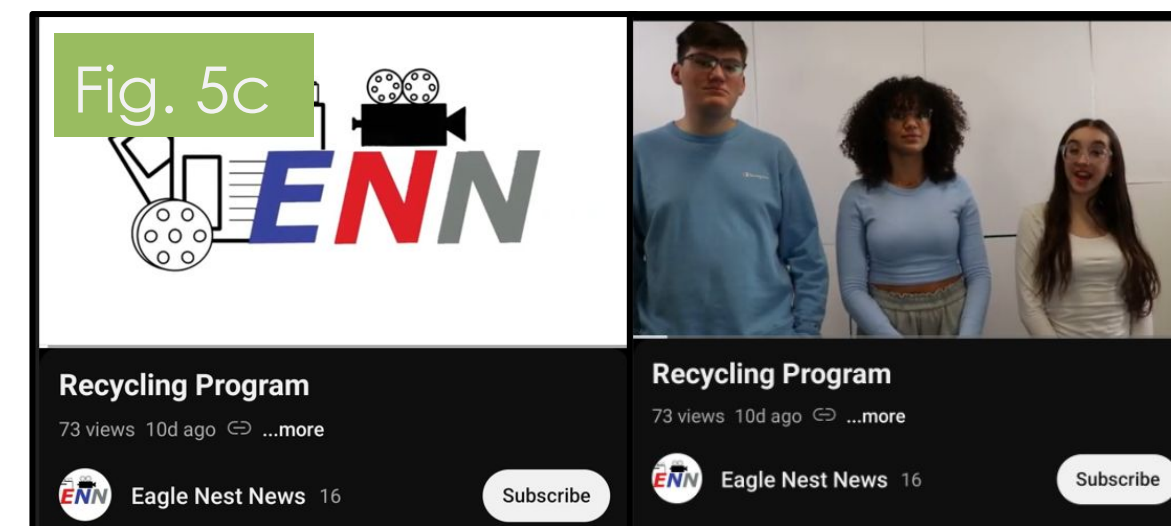


Fig. 5: (a) Put together and installed composting barrel donated by community partner at EHS to align to Public Service Announcement school-wide. (b) Presenting CAP project at Board of Education meeting. (c) Eagle Nest News broadcasted via Youtube PSA.

EHS Composting Weekly Tracker

Please use this form to keep track of the food waste that is added to our compost and who is responsible for managing the compost every week! This helps the school measure the amount of food waste that we are diverting from landfills and transforming into compost.

Dates	Name of Compost Manager	Signature/Initials
	Isabella Dinnald	ID
Dates	Weight of Food Waste Collected (Pounds/Lbs.)	Notes
Example: Monday January 1, 2024	Example: 5.4 lbs.	Example: We added dry leaves collected from the school lawn to our compost today!
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Weekly Total		

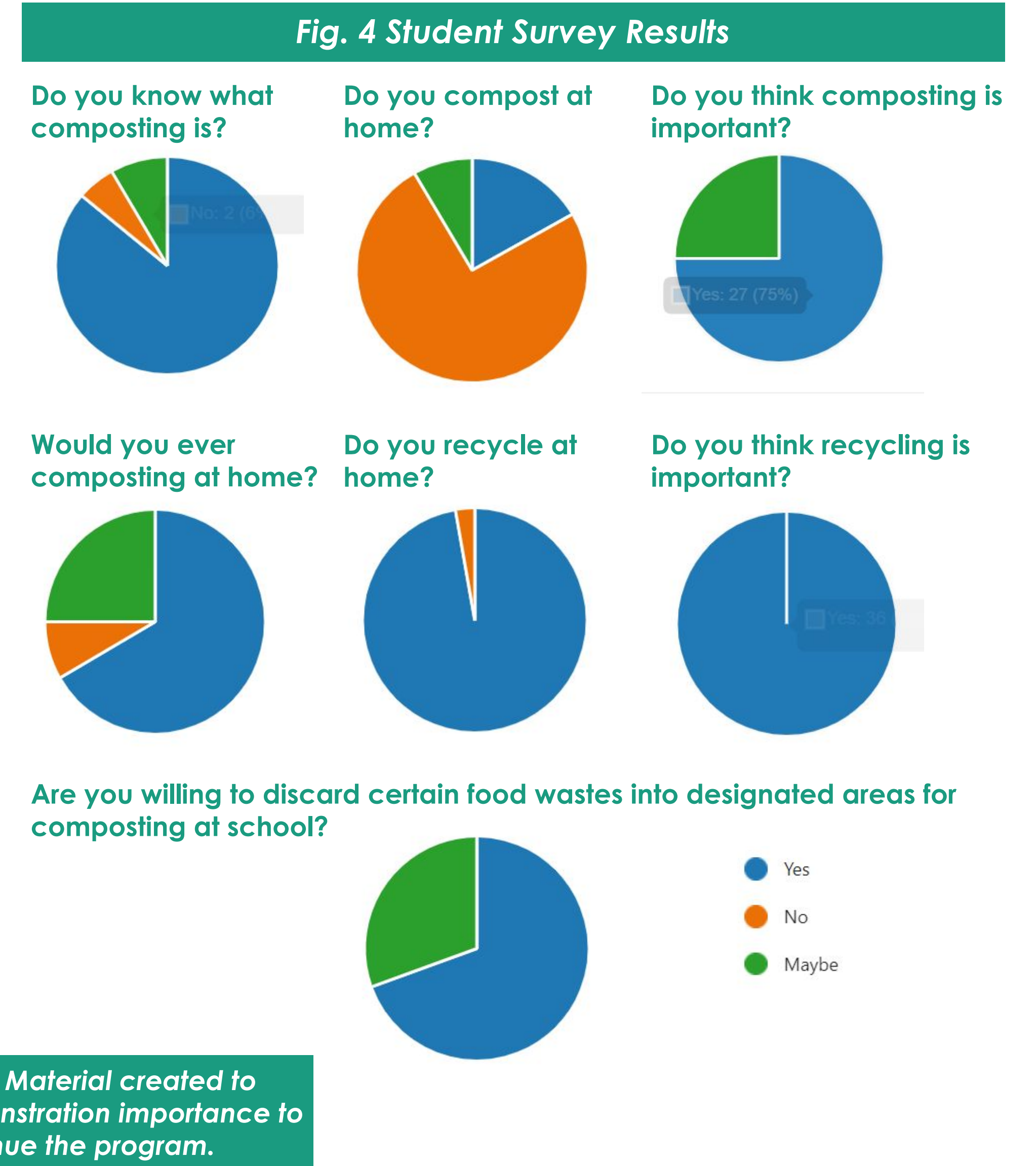


Fig. 6: Material created to demonstrate importance to continue the program.

Community Partnership

- Creating a long-lasting recycling/composting system within an educational institution requires partners at all levels of the school.
- I partnered with Enfield High School **Principal Mrs. Clark** to get approval for my action plan and support throughout this project (Fig. 7b). I created an action plan with my mentors **Mrs. Desrochers and Andy Zhang**. My action plan included community support with our **local Home Depot** to fund my project (Fig. 7a) and support from our **Enfield Town Facilities Manager**. I also included our **Sustainability Club and Gardening Club** in my action plan who is led by Mrs. Desrochers and Mrs. Siegrist.
- My expectation for this project is to live on after the CAP experience in the following ways: 1) inform students about environmental issues;⁷ 2) promote concepts and values of reducing waste; 3) empower my community with sustainability skills necessary for long-term solutions.



Fig 10: (a) Partnering with local Home Depot to donate composting materials including barrel. (b) Partnering with custodial staff at EHS to install recycling bins. (c) Partnering with EHS administration to promote project to students and families in digital newsletter.

Conclusion and Next Steps

- As Enfield High School administration plans on continuing the new recycling and composting program for future students, my project will last for years to come. In addition, it has **resulted in Earth Day Celebrations becoming an annual component of our schools** specifically focused on our plastic waste and recycling. These earth day celebrations directly correlate with spreading awareness about how we affect our environment with our plastic waste (specific to Connecticut) (Fig. 8).
- As a member of both the Sustainability Club and Gardening Club, I plan to continue working with administration and students to keep the composting and recycling system going. In addition, I hope to create more awareness and outreach in the following years through environmental initiatives to increase people's everyday use of the recycling and compost bins.



Fig 8: District-wide Poster Promotion

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