Report on the Effectiveness of Rhode Island's School Waste Recycling & Refuse Disposal Act

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Table of Contents

Introduction

1.0 Purpose of the Survey

This report summarizes the result of a survey undertaken in order to comprehensively understand the current state of composting in Rhode Island schools. By gathering data directly from schools across the state, we aim to uncover the challenges hindering the implementation of composting programs mandated by policy 16-111-2. This survey serves as a tool in assessing the level of compliance and identifying barriers faced by schools to embrace sustainable waste management practices. Through the insights provided by this survey, we can develop a clearer understanding of the support, resources, and enforcement needed to increase compliance of the mandate.

2.0 Background on why the Survey was Conducted

The survey was conducted as part of an initiative to address the gap between what the policy 16-111-2 mandates and the implementation of composting programs in Rhode Island schools. Policy 16-111-2 was introduced in January 2021. It mandated schools to adopt composting initiatives. However, there has been a notable lack of progress in its enforcement and execution. As active members of Rhode Island high schools, we have encountered firsthand the challenges and obstacles hindering the adoption of composting practices in our schools. Recognizing the potential of passionate students and staff to drive change, we embarked on this survey endeavor to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding composting implementation. By collecting data directly from schools across the state, we aimed to gain insights into the support systems needed to facilitate successful composting programs in schools across the state.

3.0 Objectives and Goals of the Survey

The objectives and goals of the survey are rooted in the mission of the Youth Composting Campaign Initiative (YCCI) to increase compliance of the 16-111-2 in schools across Rhode Island. At its core, the survey utilizes a multifaceted approach to effecting progress in composting implementation. Firstly, the survey works to assess the current state of composting programs in Rhode Island schools, highlighting the extent of compliance with policy and identifying the challenges faced by schools. Through data collection and analysis, the survey aims to uncover barriers such as funding constraints, resource limitations, and administrative reluctance. Additionally, the survey serves to engage students, educators, and policymakers, advancing sustainable waste management practices. In sum, the survey's overarching goal is to leverage its findings to inform advocacy efforts, mobilize support from government agencies and officials, and to inspire action in enforcing the composting mandate.

Methodology

1.0 Methodology used to Conduct the Survey

The methodology utilized to conduct the survey was designed to gather comprehensive insights into the state of composting initiatives across Rhode Island schools. We utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain a comprehensive view of the challenges surrounding composting implementation. Firstly, we developed a structured Google Form questionnaire, informed by the objectives of the Youth Composting Campaign Initiative (YCCI) and guided by the requirements outlined in policy 16-111-2. We then distributed this questionnaire to schools statewide, inviting participation from educators and administrators involved in composting programs or potential initiatives. Additionally, we supplemented quantitative data collection with qualitative comments by respondents. By combining these approaches, we aimed to ensure a robust and holistic understanding of the factors influencing composting practices in Rhode Island schools, laying the groundwork for informed advocacy and action.

2.0 Sample Size and how Participants were Selected

In conducting this survey, both sample size and participant selection were taken into account, with the aim of ensuring that the data collected are representative and robust. With a total of 88 respondents completing the survey, the sample size provided a substantial dataset for analysis. To maximize participation, a targeted approach was used in sharing our survey with 288 schools. Outreach efforts were directed towards environmental clubs, science teachers, and school administrators, in an effort to engage schools. Through strategic outreach, the survey worked to ensure diverse respondents, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

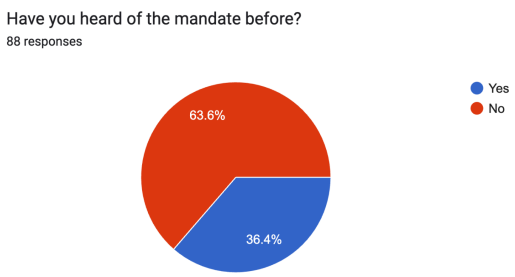
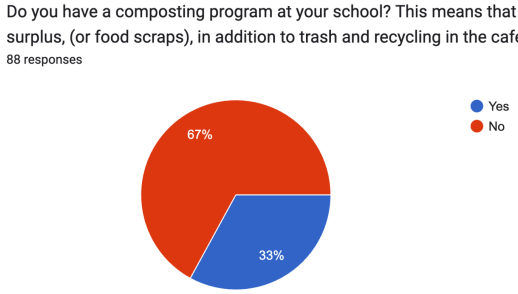
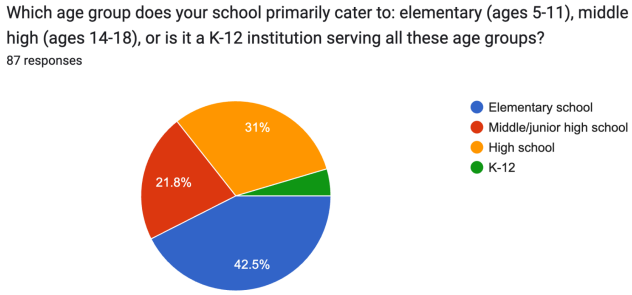
3.0 Details about the Survey Design

The survey design used in this study provided a comprehensive overview of composting practices and challenges within Rhode Island schools. A series of questions were developed to elicit insights from participants regarding various facets of composting initiatives. These questions covered a wide range of topics, including the presence and strength of composting programs, awareness of composting mandates, perceived difficulties in implementation and maintenance, level of administrative support, community affluence, and available resources. Participants were also given the opportunity to provide additional comments and insights, allowing for further understanding of the state of composting at their school. The survey was distributed electronically to ensure accessibility, and efforts were made to reach out to schools across the state. By employing this comprehensive survey design, the study gathered robust data to inform advocacy efforts and drive progress in composting initiatives across Rhode Island’s schools.

Results & Analysis

1.0 General Results and Analysis for all Schools

1.1 Graphs of General Results for all Schools

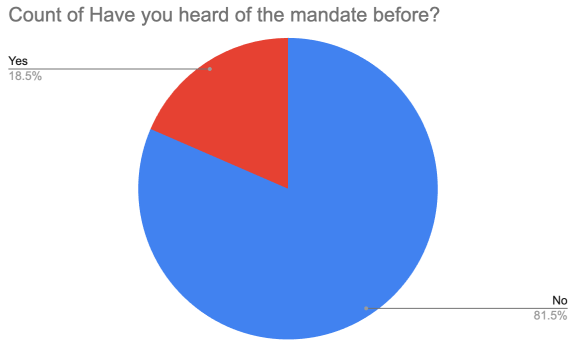
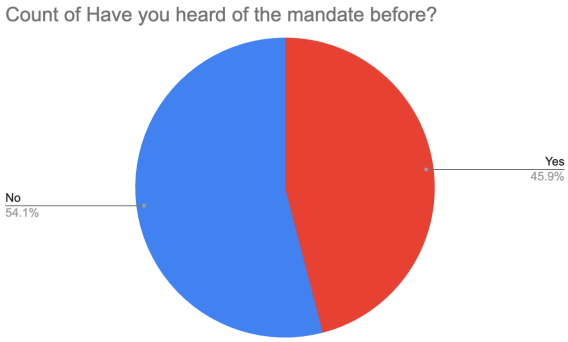
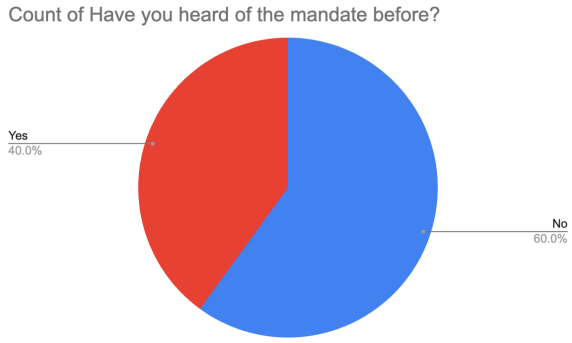
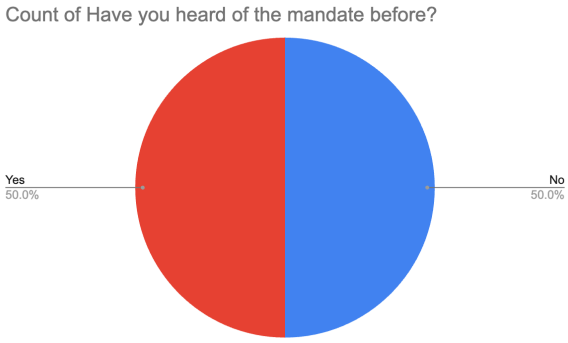
Question Asked	Graph
Have you heard of the mandate before?	
Do you have a composting program at your school? This means that your school collects food surplus, (or food scraps), in addition to trash and recycling in the cafeteria.	
Which age group does your school primarily cater to: elementary (ages 5-11), middle (ages 11-14), high (ages 14-18), or is it a K-12 institution serving all these age groups?	

1.2 Analysis of General Results for all Schools

The analysis of general results across all schools surveyed provides an overview of the state of composting initiatives in Rhode Island. Firstly, the data indicates little awareness of the composting mandate, with only 36.4% of participants reporting hearing the policy. However, despite this awareness, only 33% of surveyed schools reported having an active composting program in place. This suggests a gap between policy awareness and implementation, highlighting the need for increased support and resources to facilitate the adoption of composting practices. The majority of respondents represented elementary schools, comprising 42.5% of the sample, followed by high schools at 31%, middle or junior high schools at 21.8%, and k-12 schools at 4.7%. Overall, the analysis of general results demonstrates the importance of concerted efforts to promote composting initiatives across all levels of education in Rhode Island. By addressing barriers to implementation, policymakers can work towards achieving widespread compliance with composting mandates.

2.0 General Results and Analysis Each Age Group

2.1 Graphs of General Results per Each Age Group

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Question asked: Have you heard of the mandate before?</td></tr>
<tr><td>High school</td><td>Elementary school</td></tr>
<tr><td> 
</td><td> 
</td></tr>
<tr><td>Middle/junior</td><td>K-12</td></tr>
<tr><td> 
</td><td> 
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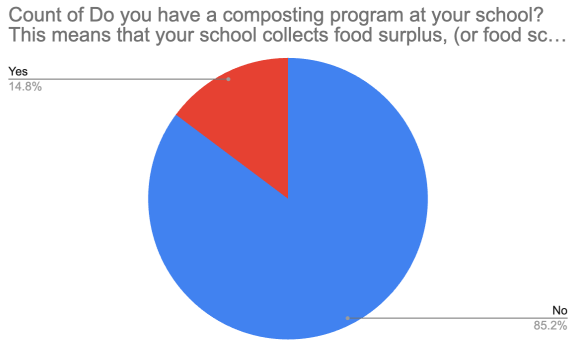
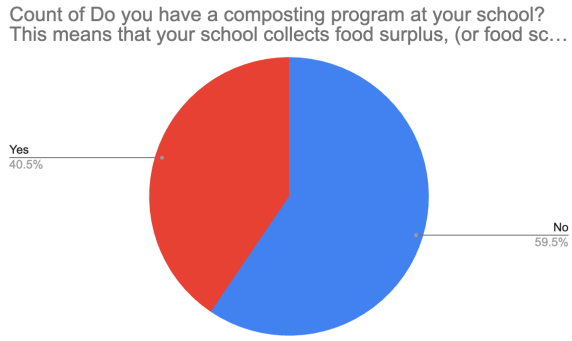
Question asked: Do you have a composting program at your school? This means that your school collects food surplus, (or food scraps), in addition to trash and recycling in the cafeteria.

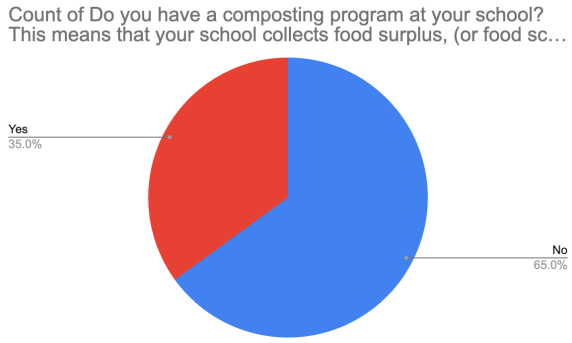
High school



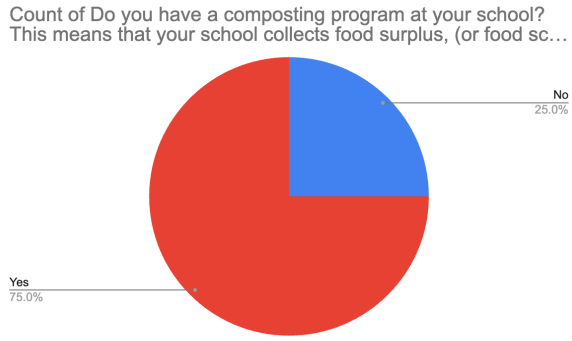
Elementary school



Middle/junior



K-12



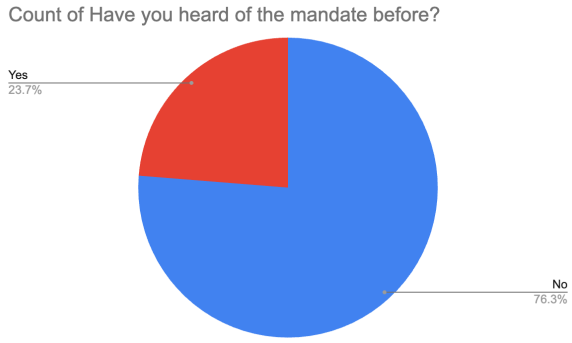
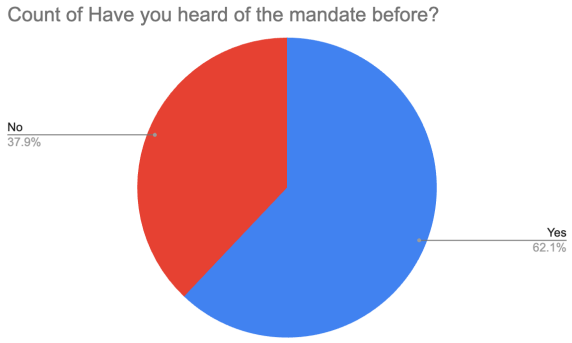
2.2 Analysis of General Results per Each Age Group

The data offer insights into the awareness and implementation of composting programs across different age groups in Rhode Island schools. Among high schools surveyed, only 18.5% of respondents reported being aware of the composting mandate, and a mere 14.8% indicated having a composting program in place. This contrast suggests a significant gap in awareness and implementation efforts within this age group. Similarly, middle/junior schools demonstrated moderate awareness of the mandate (40% yes) and a relatively higher implementation rate (35% yes), indicating a somewhat stronger presence of composting programs compared to high schools. Elementary schools exhibited the highest awareness of the mandate (54.1% yes) and a relatively higher implementation rate (40.5% yes), which aligns with the involvement of organizations like the RI Recycling Project, which generally focuses on elementary school compost initiatives. Notably, though K-12 institutions reported the highest implementation rate of composting programs (75% yes), only half of K-12 schools are aware of the mandate. Overall, these findings highlight the need for targeted awareness campaigns and support mechanisms

across educational levels. While elementary schools demonstrate a relatively higher level of awareness and implementation, this is likely due to the support offered by the Rhode Island Recycling Project. By providing resources and guidance, there could be more compliance with the mandate across all age groups in Rhode Island schools.

3.0 Results and Analysis of Correlation Between Awareness of the Mandate and Composting

3.1 Graphs Depicting Correlation Between Awareness of the Mandate and Composting

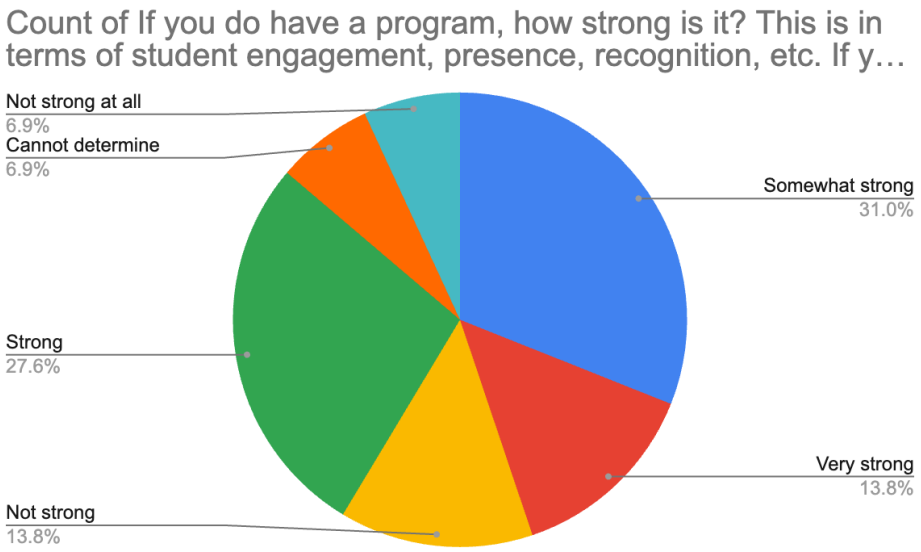
Doesn't compost	**Composts**
	

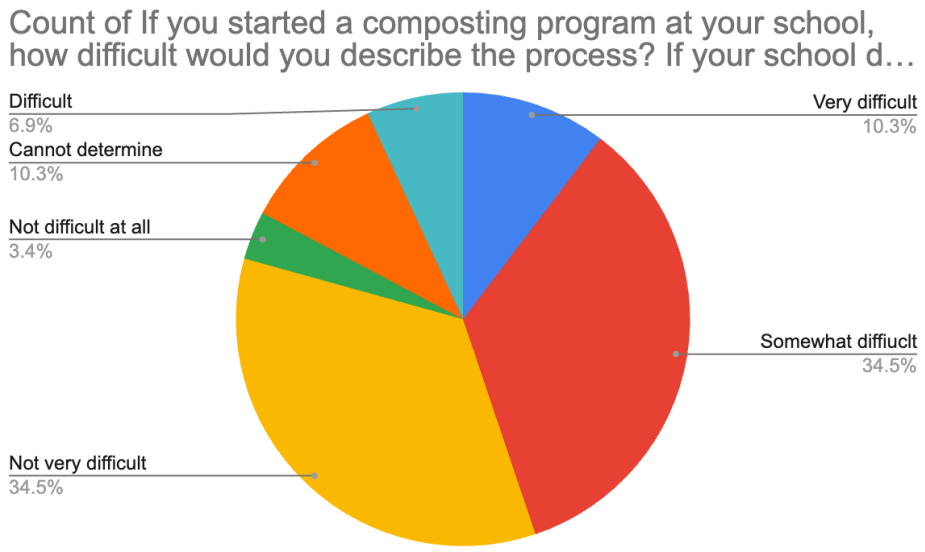
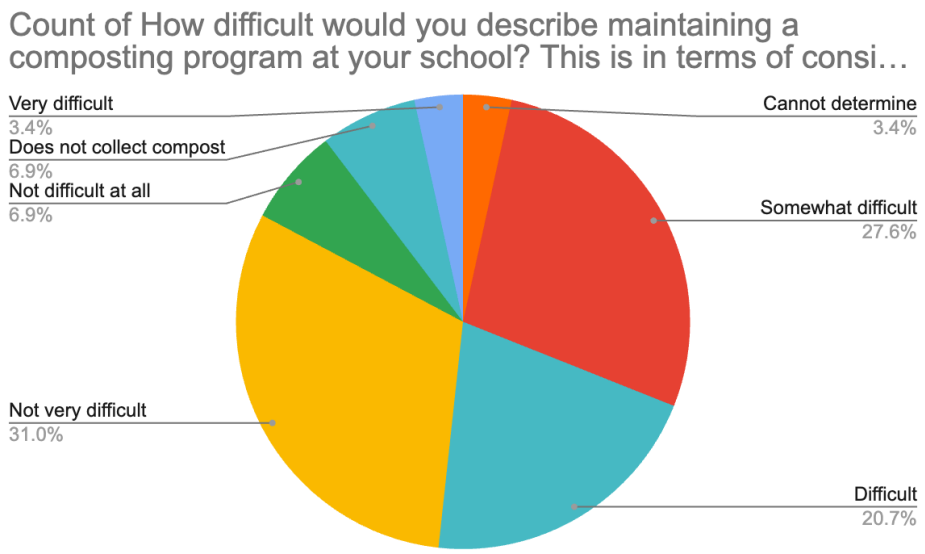
3.2 Analysis of Correlation Between Awareness of the Mandate and Composting

In the analysis of correlation between awareness of the mandate and composting implementation, there is a notable trend. Among those who do not compost, a significant majority, comprising 76.3%, are unaware of the mandate, while only 23.7% are aware. Conversely, among individuals who do compost, 62.1% are unaware of the mandate, whereas 37.9% are aware of it. These results suggest a relationship between awareness of the mandate and composting implementation, indicating that awareness may influence composting practices.

4.0 Results and Analysis of how well Composting Programs are Running

4.1 Graphs Depicting how well Composting Programs are Running

Question asked	**If you do have a program, how strong is it? This is in terms of student engagement, presence, recognition, etc. If you do not collect compost, please select "does not collect compost". If you are not sure, please select "cannot determine".**
Graph	
Question asked	**If you started a composting program at your school, how difficult would you describe the process? If your school does not collect compost, please select 'does not collect compost.' If you are unsure, please select 'cannot determine'."**

Graph	
Question asked	**How difficult would you describe maintaining a composting program at your school? This is in terms of consistency throughout the school year, having enough volunteers, etc. If your school does not collect compost, please select 'does not collect compost.' If you are unsure, please select 'cannot determine'."**
Graph	

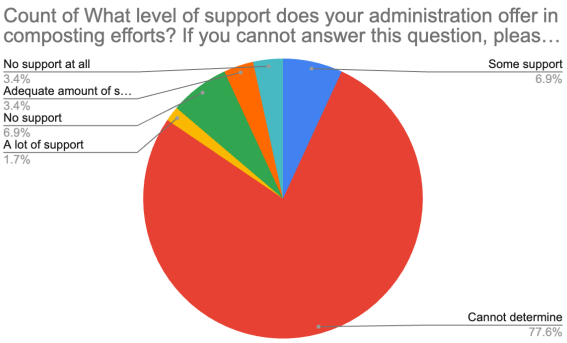
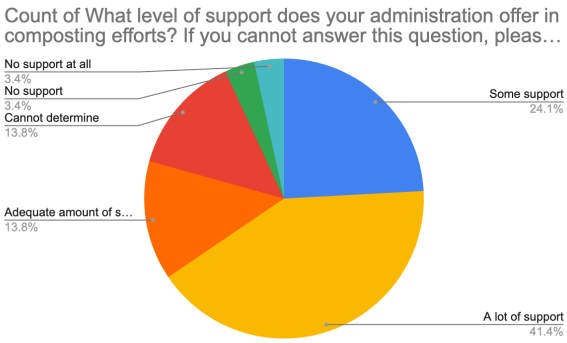
4.2 Analysis of how well the compost program is running

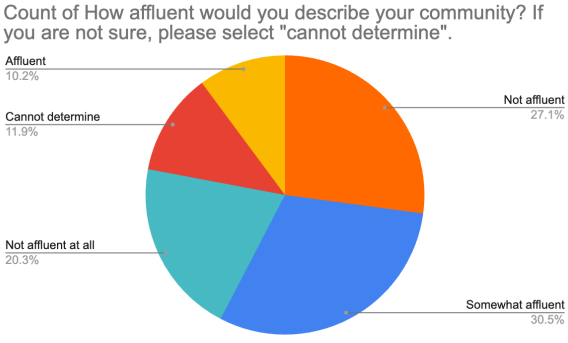
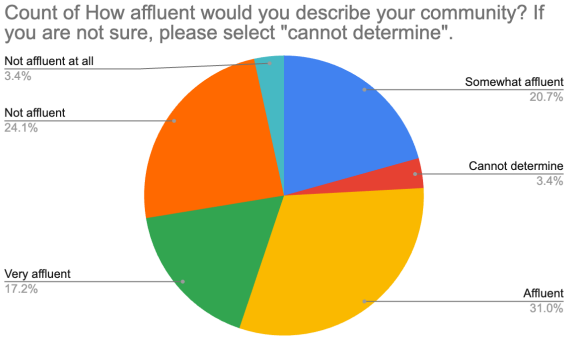
The data on how well composting programs are running reveal trends indicating challenges in program effectiveness and long-term sustainability. Among schools with composting initiatives, only 27.6% described their program as strong, with an alarming 13.8% describing it as not strong at all. Furthermore, nearly one-third (31%) described their program as somewhat strong,

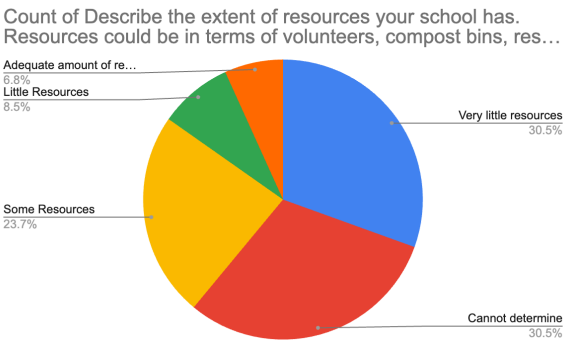
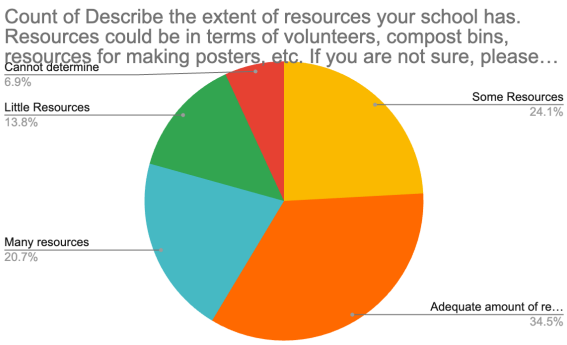
suggesting a lack of engagement and recognition within the school community. When assessing the difficulty of initiating composting programs, responses were equally concerning, with 34.5% finding the process somewhat difficult and another 34.5% finding it not very difficult. This suggests widespread challenges in implementing composting initiatives, potentially hindering their successful establishment. Additionally, maintaining composting programs posed significant difficulties for respondents, with only 31% finding it not very difficult and 27.6% indicating it as somewhat difficult. Moreover, 20.7% described it as difficult, indicating persistent challenges in ensuring consistency throughout the school year. These findings highlight the need for support and resources to address the issues hindering the implementation of composting programs in schools.

5.0 Results and Analysis of Potential External Factors Hindering Implementation

5.1 Graphs of Potential External Factors Hindering Implementation

Question asked: What level of support does your administration offer in composting efforts? If you cannot answer this question, please select "cannot determine".	
Doesn't compost	Does compost
	

Question asked: How affluent would you describe your community? If you are not sure, please select "cannot determine".	
Doesn't compost	Does compost
	

Question Asked: Describe the extent of resources your school has. Resources could be in terms of volunteers, compost bins, resources for making posters, etc. If you are not sure, please select "cannot determine".	
Doesn't compost	Does compost
	

5.2 Analysis of Potential External Factors Hindering Implementation

The data on the potential external factors hindering implementation provide a comprehensive view of the contrasting conditions between schools that have embraced composting initiatives and those that have not. Among schools without composting programs, the vast majority (77.6%) reported an inability to determine any level of administrative support, indicating a significant lack of backing from school leadership. This stark contrast is further emphasized when compared to schools with composting efforts, where a substantial portion (41.4%) indicate receiving a lot of support from administration. Additionally, the disparity in resource availability is evident, with 30.5% of non-composting schools reporting very little resources, in contrast to composting schools where a significant portion (34.5%) have an adequate amount of resources, with 24.1% having some resources. Moreover, the factor of community affluence highlights the disparities between non-composting and composting schools, with schools that have composting programs often in more affluent communities, as evidenced by 31% of composting schools describing their communities as affluent and 17.2% as very affluent. In contrast, non-composting schools are more prevalent in less affluent regions, with 27.1% categorizing their communities as not affluent and 20.3% as not affluent at all. These findings demonstrate the challenges hindering schools from pursuing composting initiatives, highlighting the need for support and resources to facilitate the widespread compliance with the mandate, particularly in less affluent communities where initiatives may face additional barriers.

6.0 Quotes from respondents

6.1 Quotes from respondents

Question	**If you have not started composting in your school, could you describe why?**
Quotes	“Don’t have a framework”.
	“Never crossed my mind (I do it at home but not at school)”.
	“Probably because no one has spearheaded the effort”.
	“Limited resources and supported, higher priorities in a struggling school. We don't even have recycling.”
	“The opportunity has not been offered to our school [at] this point”.
	“Lack of support and resources.”
	“No time or resources or students who want to start it.”
	“This is my first year as principal and I have not yet fully turned my attention to this problem. However, last week, my cafeteria director suggested the idea of eliminating the use of styrofoam food trays and moving towards reusable plates. This generated a conversation regarding composting and how we might implement it here. So this survey comes at a perfect time for us!”
	“No plan or funding allocated”
	“Seems like a big project and I'd need multiple teachers/admin/custodians on board”
	“I'm new this year -- [it’s] on the list, just haven't gotten there yet!” *
	“Lack of staff/space to separate compostable material in the cafeteria.”
	“[I] don't know how to implement and keep everyone on board.” *
	“No one has spearheaded this project.”
	“Finding the time to set-up and coordinating a system to maintain it.”
	“New school, we need help.”
	“[I don't] know why, but Sodexo is the food company. Maybe they [don’t] have to do It?” *
	“We would need resources, the largest being volunteers.”
	“We have begun communicating with Black Earth Compost to begin composting in the kitchen, then to expand from there”
	“In the past, food scraps were collected for a local pig farm. I think it stopped because they no longer needed the scraps. I also think there [it] has been [difficult] to find staff to maintain this program.” *

	"Our Earth Club tried to introduce a composting program a few years ago but we could not find anyone willing to come to [redacted] to haul it away each week." †
	"...we contract out our Lunch Program with Chartwells. We don't have a full kitchen available in our school, since we are a small elementary school." †
	"It has never been a topic of conversation or thought."
	"Logistics and maintenance"
	"It has not been a priority in my district and it's something we have not given a thought yet."
	"It was never brought up as a topic prior to this."
	"Composting requires immediate pickup on a weekly basis. It is expensive for districts. It also requires custodians to do a little extra and our school is already understaffed in this area. I have a vermicomposting bin in my classroom for our personal scraps."
	"No one has ever mentioned it. I was not aware it was a mandate. Administration has never proposed this to my knowledge."
	"We have not started composting at our school. I am not sure why. We have school committee members who have been passionate about getting composting started in our district."
	"Lack of time and support."
	"[Lack] of administrative push". *
	"The likelihood of attracting pests, including rodents"
	"I have just transitioned into the position this fall and have started the work on this. We have had the RI [Resource] Recovery come and present to the students and plan to apply for grant funding to help with eliminating our foam trays and purchasing compost collection containers for each classroom and school set up of compost Bins." *
	"We hope to start in September".
	"It would require a separate disposal/storage system. We currently outsource our custodial services as a district. We can barely get them to clean buildings adequately. I can't imagine this company would be willing to work with the district to take this on."
	"We had a program in the past, where a local farmer would come and collect our scraps from the cafeteria, but after COVID, it did not continue."
	"We are looking into starting it with Black Earth. We had it prior to COVID but the previous company was challenging to work with and it was more expensive. They were not school friendly."
	"Difficult, time consuming".

	“We began composting- covid came- we never went back”
	“We do not have the structure/processes to support composting at this time.”
	“Afraid of the smell and rats.”
	“I don’t think it’s working within my scope of job description. Unsure why the school as a whole has not started, or if they have it has not been announced to the wider school population”.
	“We are currently at an alternate location due to renovation of our school.”
	“[Leadership]” *
	“We used to do vermiculture and had worm bins in each classroom, but it was challenging to have students take on a leadership role in this as a stewardship project and we stopped implementing the program. We have an industrial composter, but we can't use it because we don't produce enough compost as a school being 213 people.”
	“Worked with clean ocean access”.
	“Requires teacher's time, [which] teachers do not have. [We] Barely have enough teachers for coverages.” *
	“Our garden club asked [us] to do it and even installed a barrel outside but our previous Director of Maintenance claimed it would draw rats and [didn't] let us have one. I don't feel our club asked the newest director.”
Question	**Please leave any additional comments about the state of composting at your school including difficulties, resources, etc.**
	“I would love to help start composting in my school!”
	“Our main concerns will be the additional resources necessary to start a composting program, including people and time”.
	“No plan or resources”.
	“Our science department budget keeps getting cut so I don't know how much money would be available to start something like this”.
	“We currently have the culinary teacher collecting unused food material for reusing into foodstuffs for the local pantry. But no program for compostable material that is unable to be reused as foodstuff.”
	“[As] a small private school, we are limited in most resources.” *
	“This would be good at all levels (educational, communal, ethical, etc.)”
	“The administration would support the initiative, but we would need to work with the custodial staff to maintain the program.”
	“We want to do this…”
	“One of our biggest hurdles would be the sheer amount of waste we would need to compost and a location for the waste.”
	“We actually want to start this up at our school…”

	“I lead the Earth Club and we are very eager to incorporate composting into our waste removal.”
	“The school community needs to be educated on this topic.”
	“Education for students is paramount. In addition, there has to be a weekly collection and bins for in school and outdoor storage must be provided for schools. Most districts do not have the money for additional costs, even though it would save on trash removal. Most are not educated on the [do's] and don'ts of composting.” *
	“We have an outside food company. It would be good to run composting through the food service companies.”
	“The timeline for expectations from the state is very tight with the academic initiatives that they have also rolled out. This is an important part of our work but I feel the community as a whole needs to be included so that the ripple effect of sorting, recycling and composting is widespread and not isolated to the school environment.”
	“Chartwells runs food service/ Their leadership team is not on site/ Would need Chartwells regional leadership to take the lead”. *
	“There may be resources available to begin a program[;] however, I am concerned about attracting various animals to the compost site.” *
	“I began a composting program with my classes several years ago. I have some support, but not enough to help schoolwide”
	“We would like to start a composting program when we get back to our home school.”
	“Collecting the compost is easy, our kids do it. Since we compost here on site, it would very difficult without the help of parent volunteers”
	“Bootstrap composting collects our waste 1X/week. It wasn't too difficult to get the program off the ground, but what has been difficult is continued buy in from the school population, as well as working with the cleaning staff to empty bins appropriately.”
	“We first started with a compost bin in the faculty room late fall. Then, in January we opened an elective class "Earth Crew" for middle schoolers to handle recycling, composting (both outside in bins as well as vermicomposting indoors), and gardening, including winter sowing. Part of this endeavor was already in progress for years on a volunteer basis, but over time, it had faded somewhat when the environmental science teacher who began it retired. Earth Crew has been re-established and expanded to include school-wide composting and seed starting/winter sowing. MSC is a 6-12 school, but that wasn't listed as an option.”
	“Difficult getting students [to] buy in. Difficult getting custodial on board”
	“[Successful] because of [the] student composting team and partnership with the farm”. *
	“We were the 1st school in RI to compost the food waste during lunch. The program

	is very easy to set up. We had lots of help from Clean Ocean Access!! Funding has been an issue. However I have written grants to pay for the pick up, sold the compost back to the parents, and for the 2024/25 school year it will be budgeted in."
	"We are the [redacted], and environmental justice and literacy is part of our mission so we are open!" †
	"We are using Black Earth as well to pick up our food compost weekly."
	"We are lucky to be able to contract with a company that collects our kitchen scraps and cafeteria compost. Prior to this (several years before Covid) we had student volunteers collecting the compost and had difficulty in the winter months."
	"We do not see the impact on composting here in Rhode Island. We have to see composting at HOME AND at SCHOOL to see the impact. Composting just at school will not help students see the reason behind why composting matters because the same message is not being replicated at home. School food has plastic wraps, and utensils - there is [no] point in trying to be [environmentally] friendly when there are things like that in place. The state and school [do] not give out the same message." *
	"We worked it into the 7th grade science curriculum so they are in charge of it."
	"I'm overjoyed that we have a waste reduction program in our school which includes composting."
	"We now do [pre-consumer], post-consumer, and our waste oil is also picked up". *
	"We use Bootstrap compost which has been great. They use a biodigester so we can compost all food scraps and napkins in the cafeteria."
	"We started because of a grant through the RI Recycling Club. If not for their help and support, our program would not exist."
	"As the principal, I met with the [redacted] Sustainability Committee monthly. We also [met] with people from CET ([redacted] completed [an] audit as have been helpful) and Warren from the RI Recycling Program. We partnered up with a local pig farmer and he takes our compost weekly to feed his pigs." †*
	"Students love it, it creates so many more opportunities for students to have food via the share station and to take food home over the weekends."
	"Our composting program runs fairly well but we do need to REtrain students and staff as to what can be recycled, composted, and thrown in the trash every year (and sometimes a second time each year). We do NOT have compostable trays and that would be so much better."
	"My PTO and Family volunteers made composting happen along with our Garden!"
	"Our composting program was a teacher led initiative. We only collect in grades 3-5. We have established a "Green Team" to help with the composting in grades 3-5 in the cafeteria. The custodians are a big help in composting and helping to weight trash/compost."
	"We have difficulty getting management to buy in. We have installed a recycling garbage system in our cafeteria but the students, no matter how many lessons and

	signs we place just don't follow the directions and everything gets mixed".
Question	**Let us know if you have any comments or questions about our mission. In addition, let us know if and how you would like to assist our Youth Compost Campaign Initiative to encourage composting in schools across Rhode Island, and how we can reach you.**
	"Catholic Schools are typically PreK - 8th grade and they are often small communities with greater latitude to test pilot such programs due to student community involvement. In a school such as ours, this program would dovetail with our middle school science program and we would compost the food scraps directly on the property to be used for a community garden. Community gardens, particularly urban locations, might be a good program to partner with if you are thinking about doing this for your senior project."
	"I think this [is] a great program that all schools should have. I do not believe that my school has one because I have never heard of it." *
	"In the end, this comes down to lack of funds to support this program. Even if we collected compostable material, we have no staff available to collect it, limited space to collect and store it and no place to put it or send it."
	"Best of luck! And thank you for doing this!"
	"[Composting] is a good idea and would save the state and communities money and would provide nutrients to enrich the soil everywhere". *
	"Again, the big challenge for us is finding a hauler willing to pick up our waste. If you can put us in touch with a hauler the Earth Club would gladly work with Administration to set up composting."
	"In a school/district [such] as Warwick, we would have to start very slow in order to [have] any impact. It could take up to one school year for our School Improvement Team to begin learning about composting before mobilizing any action Steps." *
	"I support your Initiative to encourage composting in schools. If my school were to propose this, I would support."
	"I appreciate your efforts."
	"So glad you are looking into this and how to encourage this. Would be open to suggestions and recommendations that you have along the way."
	"We would need resources and training to support our students in getting started in a composting program. We would need the bins and training on how to sort lunch items for composting."
	"This is a great initiative[. We] just need a bit of education and resources[!]" *
	"I think you are doing a good thing!! If you have any [questions] please reach out." *
	"More awareness to the entire student body"
	"Please keep me on the email list. I am interested in hearing updates from the YCCI and would like to know if there are ways that our student environmental group can get involved even though we currently have a compost program.

	Thank you! Good luck!”
	“I would love to help, but as an administrator in a school that is already participating in a program like this, I have too many balls in the air to take on something else. Good luck to you both!”
	“Our school is a N - 8th grade school and that was not an option in the menu above.”
	“Would love to learn more in how to assist. I have also participated in Bootstraps Composting at a previous small private school and could provide examples of that process if needed. Please email me.”
	“I would LOVE to figure out how to get more money for compostable lunch trays and utensils.”

*Altered to make more clear or grammatical
† Altered to ensure the privacy of the respondent

6.2 Analysis of Quotes

The quotes provide insight on the challenges and shortcomings of composting programs in schools, revealing issues that hinder their successful implementation. The responses highlight logistical challenges such as a lack of framework, limited resources, and higher priorities in struggling schools, which prevent the initiation of composting efforts. Additionally, concerns about administrative support, funding constraints, and a lack of awareness about the mandate contribute to the lack of composting programs. The quotes also touch on logistical complexities, including difficulties in attracting waste haulers, managing composting logistics, and addressing concerns about pests and odor. Despite the interest and eagerness among educators and students to engage in composting initiatives, the barriers discussed in the survey suggest that many composting programs are not running optimally or at all. Addressing these challenges will require support, resources, and enforcement to facilitate the successful implementation and long-term sustainability of composting programs in schools.

Conclusion

1.0 Findings of the Survey

The survey findings provide insights into the state of composting initiatives in Rhode Island schools. Key findings include:

- Limited awareness: A significant portion of respondents, particularly among those who do not compost, demonstrated a lack of awareness of the composting mandate, highlighting the need for increased education and outreach efforts.
- Implementation gap: While awareness of the mandate varied across different age groups, there was a notable gap between awareness and implementation, with a significant portion of schools reporting no active composting program despite being aware of the mandate.
- Challenges in program effectiveness: Among schools with composting initiatives, many reported challenges in program effectiveness, including low levels of student engagement, difficulties in initiating and maintaining composting programs, and concerns about program recognition and support.
- Disparities in support and resources: Schools without composting programs cited a lack of administrative support and resources as significant barriers to implementation, highlighting disparities in support between schools with and without composting initiatives.
- Influence of community affluence: Composting programs were more prevalent in affluent communities, suggesting that socioeconomic factors may influence the adoption and success of composting initiatives in schools.

Overall, the findings demonstrate the importance of addressing barriers to implementation, providing support and resources, and enforcing the mandate is being complied with to facilitate the adoption and long-term sustainability of composting programs in Rhode Island schools.

2.0 Implications of the Findings and their Significance

The findings of the survey have several implications for composting initiatives in Rhode Island schools and their broader significance:

- Awareness and Education: The limited awareness of the composting mandate among school communities highlights the need for education and outreach efforts. Increasing awareness of the mandate can promote greater compliance with state law.
- Implementation Challenges: The gap between awareness and implementation suggests that schools face challenges in initiating and maintaining composting programs. These challenges were illustrated in the survey, including logistical barriers, resource constraints, and a lack of administrative support. Addressing these challenges could lead

to more adoption and long-term sustainability of composting initiatives in schools.

- Equity and Access: Disparities in support and resources for composting programs show the importance of addressing equity issues in environmental initiatives. Schools in less affluent communities may face additional barriers to implementing composting programs, highlighting the need for additional support and resources to ensure that all schools are able to comply with the mandate.
- Environmental Impact: The successful implementation of composting programs in schools can have significant environmental benefits, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions, diverting organic waste from our overflowing landfill, and enriching soil health. By promoting composting initiatives, schools can contribute to Rhode Island's broader sustainability goals.
- Policy Implications: The findings have implications for policymakers tasked with promoting composting initiatives and environmental education in schools. Policymakers can use the survey results to inform policy decisions, allocate resources effectively, and develop strategies to overcome barriers to composting implementation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate the importance of efforts to promote composting initiatives in Rhode Island schools, address implementation challenges, and ensure equitable access to composting. By providing support and resources and creating enforcement mechanisms, schools can be more apt to follow the composting mandates set forth by the state.

Petition link:

https://www.change.org/p/support-composting-programs-in-all-ri-schools-enforce-the-neglected-state-wide-mandate