

NH the Beautiful Recycling Grant  
Dunbarton Elementary School, Dunbarton, NH

We at Dunbarton Elementary School (DES) are a lucky group. Located in rural NH, students looking out their classroom windows are able to take in the beautiful sights of nature in all its seasons. The Dunbarton community at large tends to push this ethos of enjoying the pleasantries and calming effect of nature around us. As such, five years ago parents and community members took on the responsibility of creating the DES Roots Garden Club.

Their mission statement:

***Inspiring next generation environmental stewards by cultivating curiosity and exploration with active engagement. To instill ownership and foster community from seed to savouring.***

Is implemented on DES grounds and our community at large. One of the Roots objectives was to reroute the stream of food waste from the school cafeteria, creating an open 3 bin compost system that could be integrated into the elementary school curriculum. Although this has been a valiant effort, the system was somewhat temporary, has not been used to its peak effectiveness, and a porcupine has taken residence at DES in order to enjoy the bounties of the DES cafeteria.

Our goal is multifold:

We would like to use the grant funds to better secure our compost system, moving towards a more permanent and secure system. Although our wildlife is entertaining from a distance, it is certainly causing some nuisance by being there when food is to be disposed of. Furthermore, we need to better educate our students and staff as to how to effectively compost. Currently, we are simply dumping in food waste with no other actions. While this is reinforcing our goal of keeping it from the waste cycle, our passive composting is not as effective as we could hope for. We would enjoy to purchase two enclosed style composting units such as can be found here: <https://www.gardeners.com/buy/exaco-eco-king-600-composter-160-gallons/8598984.html#start=23>

If possible, we would also like to create a school community service announcement of sorts that could be used to educate future DES students as to how to use the compost system effectively. Currently our fifth grades are our active compost classrooms. This means students daily gather classroom and cafeteria waste and bring it outside to our system.

In conjunction with the UNH Cooperative Extension we would also like to incorporate the science of composting in the science curriculum of our classrooms. Having a hands-on example of the science behind composting would be a great opportunity for our students. As mentioned previously, having a resident porcupine makes it difficult. Not to mention, our current inefficient system. Also minimally two staff members attending workshop(s) to support our in school and community initiatives is a much needed resource.

Our ultimate goal is for our students to follow their "waste" full circle. Students composting, active classroom investigation, Roots Club utilizing finished compost to enrich their gardening practice, and finally supporting our school cafeteria from our gardens. We feel this is an attainable goal and we would love your support in this endeavor!

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Our current system at installation:



A PSA goal:

