

Dear Teachers:

At the request of one of our member schools, CVSWMD created signage to support their students in reducing the amount of trash and recyclables getting into classroom compost buckets during lunch. We are now making this signage available to other interested schools. Please read on for more information.

Background Information on the Role of Chickens in Processing Vermont’s Food Waste, Including Food Scraps Generated by Schools:

The majority of public schools within our solid waste district have their collected food waste removed by a food waste hauler. The food waste is then either *fed into an anaerobic digester to generate electricity* or it is **turned into compost at a commercial compost facility**. At the latter, chickens often play an important role, with large-scale composting facilities hosting flocks of hundreds of hens and roosters.

Before the food waste is provided to the chickens, it is often mixed with other materials (e.g., tree bark, animal manures, spoiled hay silage), which are all part of the composting process. As the chickens scratch through this mix, digging for food scraps and bugs, *they enhance the compost by adding their droppings and mixing it all together*. Additionally, *the composting facility can sell the eggs their chickens produce*.

This makes for a beneficial, reciprocal relationship:

Benefit to Chickens	Benefit to Vermonters
The mix of materials the chickens are fed, including our food waste, enables them to forage naturally on a diverse and nutritious food source.	<i>Our food waste is kept out of the landfill</i>
	<i>Compost is created, providing many benefits, including supporting the growing of more food</i>
	<i>We get nutritious and delicious eggs to eat</i>

The Signage: So that is where this signage comes in, because keeping classroom compost buckets as free as possible of non-food items (napkins, silverware, plastics, etc.), *to the degree that you and your students are reasonably able to*, will only benefit this entire process, which includes all the Vermont chickens scratching their way through our food waste, toward a more sustainable future for all of us.

The **larger sign** can be used to **introduce the chicken/food waste relationship** to your students, and the importance of keeping non-food items out of class compost buckets. The **smaller sign**, which lists food items for composting, can be placed near your classroom compost bucket to **serve as reference** for your students.

I realize how challenging circumstances are for you right now, so if you don’t feel like you can take on introducing this signage to your classroom, or if you feel your students don’t need this information, that is understandable. *Another option I’ll offer is to make a brief “virtual” visit to your classroom, via Zoom, so I can introduce this information to your students*. Regardless of what you decide, **please feel free to contact me anytime if you have any questions**. Otherwise, take care of yourselves and stay healthy.

Sincerely,

John Jose

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