



# Every Tray Counts Newsletter

October 2020

Contact us at [everytraycounts@gmail.com](mailto:everytraycounts@gmail.com)



25,000 tons of waste each year from NC Schools could be composted!  
In 2019, Wake County schools (WCPSS) diverted 60,634 lbs. from 5 schools;  
from Jan-Mar 2020, WCPSS diverted 19,333 lbs. from 6 schools.

**Every Tray Counts (ETC)** is a group of parents, educators, students, school administrators, government officials and community members who all share in the vision of creating sustainable lunchrooms in our schools and empowering the next generation of sustainability stewards. Through the efforts of dedicated volunteers, we are working to advance the mission of Every Tray Counts.

## OUR MISSION

To train, guide, and support schools and school systems to adopt sustainable, just, and environmentally positive waste-diversion policies and practices.

**Special Note** During this challenging time of Covid, we encourage you to envision how the new normal we develop can be more sustainable. It is more clear than ever before that we must tread more lightly on this Earth, and that means a more sustainable future for the generations to come. We welcome you to join us and create a greener future as we help shape our new normal.

**NEWS from across North Carolina.** Parents, administrators, teachers and government have taken action to initiate sustainability programs in schools across NC. Here is what has happened recently:

## Mountains

- **Henderson County** Christine Wittmeier reports the county was awarded a \$90,000 grant from the USDA to expand the County's organics pilot programs including \$28,000 for the lunchroom composting program with [Atlas Organics](#). Through the [Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction](#) (CCFWR) Projects, USDA is investing approximately \$1.09 million in 13 pilot projects that develop and test strategies for planning and implementing municipal compost plans and food waste reduction. Henderson County's "Organics Pilot Expansion" project was selected out of 578 applicants across the county, with only two in the Southeast and the only recipient in North Carolina. The County's two-year project will support critical electrical and equipment needs for the compost facility pilot at the Transfer Station, expand the lunchroom composting pilot program to six additional schools and start a residential backyard compost bin program.

## Piedmont

- A composting pilot program is to be introduced to two **Orange County** elementary schools. The program is a collaboration between the Board of Orange County Commissioners, Orange County Solid Waste Management, the Orange County Food Council and Brooks Contractors. Sara Pitts, director of environmental health and safety for Orange County Schools, will oversee the project at both schools. She will work with site administrators and custodians, who will be responsible for the program's operation. Sara says, "I am extremely excited that Orange County Schools is transitioning our daily actions and operating protocol toward creating a more sustainable and environmentally friendly district, and the positive impacts that this may have on public health for our students and community". See the full news article [here](#).
- Several **Wake County** school board members accepted an invitation from their local ETC group to visit a school to see their composting program in action. It was a great opportunity to showcase the program and answer questions the school board members had about the program. ETC Wake attended a sustainability brainstorm meeting with Child Nutrition Services(CNS). We came away with the feeling that CNS is fully supportive of all sustainability initiatives, and are doing all they can with the limited budget they are given to work with. CNS switched to compostable trays, are looking into reusable trays, switched to utensil packets without straws, and are looking into many more sustainable options for the cafeterias. Present focus in Wake County is asking the WCPSS School Board to add a commitment to sustainability in the next version of their Strategic Plan. You can take action too by writing to the school board members [here](#). Wake County organizer Julie Hall asks those interested to stay in touch with ETC Wake by joining our [Facebook](#) and receive emails through Wake ETC [Mobilize](#) group.

## Coastal Plain

- In Wilmington the one school that was composting prior to Covid shut down is continuing to offer a compost drop off site at the school! When families go to the school to pick up school lunch to take home, they can drop off their bucket of compost materials. This is made possible through a collaboration of the school and composting enthusiast Riley Alber's [Wilmington Compost Company](#).

***Do you have news to report from your area? Please email it to [everytraycounts@gmail.com](mailto:everytraycounts@gmail.com)***

## How can you help?

ETC has a growing **online community** to facilitate collaboration around outreach and advocacy, as well as sharing practical information about our lunchroom programs. Contact us to be added to your community ETC group where you can get the latest updates on our progress and how you can be involved! Email [everytraycounts@gmail.com](mailto:everytraycounts@gmail.com) Website [everytraycounts.org](http://everytraycounts.org) and [Facebook page](#).

## Outreach

Do you know about House bill [HB 1119 - Food Waste Reduction Act](#)? ( It would require composting by any 'person' who generates at a single location an annual average of two tons per week or more of food scraps, including supermarkets, large food service businesses, higher educational institutions, hotels, food processors, correctional facilities, and sports or entertainment venues). This is an important step toward sustainability for the state of NC. Encourage your state [leaders](#) to pass this bill and include all schools, not just 'higher education'.

The office of the Dept. of Public Instruction can be a real ally of the push for more sustainability education in schools. ETC has reached out to the candidates for Super of Public Instruction, [Jen Mangrum](#) and [Catherine Truitt](#). Please write to them and ask for their position on this issue and ask for their opinion of HB 1119.

## Job Posting

Did you know that we are looking for a new Executive Director to continue our expansion? Check out the description [here](#) and please pass along to anyone who you think would do an outstanding job! We need your help to help communities reimagine the school lunchroom and school curriculum!

**Donations** We are a nonprofit organization and your contribution is tax-deductible. Any help you can give will help us grow. Thank you for your contribution.

<https://www.everytraycounts.org/help-us-with-our-expenses/>