

# Growing Green at Olmsted High School

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When your school's namesake is Frederick Law Olmsted, the famous landscape architect of New York City's Central Park and Buffalo's Delaware Park, you feel a certain responsibility to live up to his legacy. That is why my class and I recycle, grow a vegetable garden, and now, compost.

Last year, my class and I were awarded a \$500 grant from NYSAR<sup>3</sup> (New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse, and Recycling). With that money we were able to purchase all the materials necessary to begin a small composting operation. We are "repurposing" the kitchen waste from our school's cafeteria. Thus far, my students have saved over 100 pounds of food from going into a landfill!

Composting here at Olmsted High School is a collaborative effort. Cafeteria Manager, Sue Whalen, allowed my students to teach the cafeteria staff about which food items can be composted and which can't. The staff were extremely receptive to the idea of having kitchen waste turned into compost for the school's vegetable garden. After being thanked for being so supportive, cafeteria worker, Darlene Young said, "No. Thank YOU. You taught me something!"



*Pictured above: Mulkishur Rahman, Monique Martin, Michael Jones, Patrick Catania, Dimitri Lindsay, Nikkolas Fuentes, Melita Medina, Sue Whalen, Erica Chambers, Zhe'Vaunnah Young, and Darlene Brooks*

Each day, the cafeteria staff fill our buckets with egg shells, coffee grounds, banana peels, vegetable scraps and the like. At the end of each day my students collect the bucket and weigh its contents, and record the data. They then dump the scraps into a tumbler outside (that they assembled themselves!) and give it a few good spins.

Others from the school community have pitched in by contributing newspapers for us to shred, donating some manure for the raised bed gardens and tumblers, letting us use their space to assemble to composters.



*Checking the progress of the compost*

In addition, my students know that the compost they are creating is going right back into the soil, providing nutrients to the very vegetables they are growing, harvesting, cooking and eating! They are developing a true understanding of where their food comes from and how to grow it. Think School-to-Table!

"Will we become famous doing this?" Dimitri asked me. Being one of the first schools in Buffalo to be so green—recycling, having a vegetable garden and composting, it was a legitimate question. I told Dimitri that what he and his classmates are doing is impacting everyone in the school, city, and the world. That may not have been the answer Dimitri was looking for, but I'm sure that Mr. Olmsted would be pleased!