



## THE PROJECT: FOOD WASTE AUDIT

Edwardsville’s green team consisted of students from the AP Environmental Science class, the Environmental Club, and Project 612, a student-led group working to collect unopened lunch food for the local food pantry. The team conducted a cafeteria waste audit and surveyed the school community to discover their awareness and opinions about their school’s cafeteria waste. Students plan to present their results to the administration and school board and make recommendations to reduce waste and initiate a composting program, in which the compost can be used by agricultural classes and maintenance to care for vegetation around campus.

**Project Type:** Waste  
**Students Involved:** 40  
**Staff Involved:** 2  
**Location:** Edwardsville  
**Grade Levels Involved:** 11-12th  
**Number of Students Impacted:** 693



Once waste is filtered and categorized, we will also have a better idea of the amount and type of waste that can go into a compost system and therefore the type and size of the compost system needed to support a school of our size.

- Amy Burian



## PROCESS

To prepare for their cafeteria audit, Edwardsville ordered supplies—including clipboards, pencils, hand scales, five-gallon buckets, signage supplies, gloves, and disinfectant wipes—using funding from the Illinois Green Schools Project mini grant, and advertised the upcoming audit by creating flyers to hang around school. They assessed their school’s waste culture by designing a pre- and post-audit survey to share with students. During execution, students used hand scales and buckets to sort and weigh lunch waste. These student volunteers then met to discuss the audit and survey results and brainstorm waste reduction strategies to present to the principal and school board.



## OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

The cafeteria audit found that out of 165 kg of waste, 35% was trash, 26% was food waste, 25% was uneaten food in packaging, and 14% was unfinished drinks. The top reasons students reported for throwing out food were that they were full/not hungry and that they did not like their food. With this data, the green team concluded that smaller portion sizes and “better tasting options” were the best ways to reduce waste at their school. They also determined that most of the waste could be composted to keep it out of landfills. Students are currently making infographics to share their results with the rest of the student body as well as the community.

