



The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), the Olathe Unified School District 233 and the City of Olathe has partnered together to create the **Foodwaste Trays Composting Program**



About the program:

KDHE began offering grants to schools for food waste composting. KDHE gave Olathe permission to combine the food waste trays composting program in with Olathe yard waste program in August of 2008 on a one year trial basis.

- The program began with three Olathe schools: an elementary school, a junior high school and a senior high school. The selection of the pilot schools were by geographic location to each other.
- Faculty, students & parents were interested in options for more environmentally sound disposal of their trash. Prior to this program, the district was using Styrofoam food trays. Students took one days use of the trays at one high school and they stacked 17 feet high. Imagine the volume of one year worth of trays being sent to be land filled.

Benefits to the School District:

- Reduction in trash generated
- Reduction in the number of times trash containers are picked up. (Going from daily trash pick-up to 3 days per week pick-up)
- Reduction in cost of plastic bags used. (Able to stack more compostable trays into a paper sack – 300 plus per bag)
 - Eligible to apply for KDHE grants.
- Environmentally friendly. Positive public feedback.

Downside to the program:

The cost of the Styrofoam trays are 4 cents each. The cost of the compostable food waste trays are 8 cents each. No price break was given to district based on quantity of trays purchased. Due to the price difference of the trays, the district is reluctant to raise the cost of school meals.

The grant program limited the schools to 1 year eligibility. The lack of any additional state provided funds to continue the program to participating schools, the program may not be able to be financially sustainable in the future.

Olathe South High School is one of the three schools that was set up to test the program.





Around 2500 lbs of food waste trays are picked up per month.

The food waste trays are made from 100% recycled paper that is fully compostable.





Using this program will help reduce the trash generated and the number of times trash containers are picked up, going from daily trash pick-up to 3 days per week.



Once the trays are picked up from the schools, they are delivered to the City's composting site by a front loader to be mixed with the yard waste that has been collected.





After the yard waste and the food trays have been combined, they are processed through the grinder.

Once the trays and the yard waste have been run through the grinder, they are loaded into a truck to be windrowed.





This is the
composting
stage.



Windrows



Turning of the windrows





Once the compost is finished cooking, the material is stockpiled and run through the screener to be offered to the citizens of Olathe.



Finished compost
being used in
Olathe's Community
Garden.



How Did the Program Affect the City of Olathe's Yard Waste Composting?

The additional materials that we have received through the program have not increased our time spent grinding. If the program went district wide, that would increase the volume received significantly & our time spent grinding in the future. The materials received have helped add some needed moisture and nitrogen to our existing materials through the fall and winter months. This program may be a benefit in helping to finish the compost sooner, but more time and larger volumes of materials are needed to be certain.

Q & A