

Service-Learning in English Language Arts

Course: **Writing Lab**

School: **Milwaukee School of Languages**

Community Partners:
Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful
and **Sweet Water Organics**

Project Name: **Worm Composting:**
Creating Change through Writing



Project Snapshot

“How can we create change and connect with community partners through writing?” After being challenged with this question, students spent time in the school courtyard reflecting on the relationship between humans and nature. Out of their reflections came a class decision to figure out what students could do that would actually benefit the natural environment.

The students chose to create a schoolwide composting program to address the problem of so much waste going into the garbage every day—waste that could be used to create soil. They learned about composting through research and through a presentation from their community partner at Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful. Red wiggler worms were donated by Sweet Water Organics after students wrote to request them. Students set up procedures for separating compostable items in the cafeteria. They set up and tended compost bins in their classroom.

As a result, 1,100 students at the school learned that their leftover raw fruits and vegetables can be turned into rich organic soil. And “MSL Dirt Bags” (worm compost) were sold at the school’s spring Festival of Nations to raise money for a celebration trip to the landfill in Menomonee Falls.

Throughout this experience students wrote for a variety of audiences, including each other, community partners, and people who view the school website. They wrote morning announcements, letters to community partners, an article for the school website, a query letter to a national magazine, and reflective writing on their achievements. They engaged in persuasive writing, descriptive writing, writing based on observation, journal writing, poetry writing, and marketing.

Community Need/Issue Addressed

Responsible Consumption and Production*

Many people do not realize that food waste sent to landfills releases methane gas (a greenhouse gas more potent than CO₂) into the air. Recovering and recycling food waste reduces these emissions. The use of recycled food waste as compost improves soil health and structure, increases drought resistance, and reduces the need for supplemental water, fertilizers, and pesticides.

**from United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development <https://www.globalgoals.org>*