



State of Hawai'i
Department of Education

Annual Report on Composting Pilot Project Working Group

November 2025

Act 207, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2018, requires the composting pilot project working group to annually report on its findings and recommendations.

School-Composting Pilot Program 2026

Act 207, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2018, established a composting grant pilot working group and provided funding for a grant program. Subsequently, since 2019, the Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) Hawai'i School Composting Grant Program (Program) has administered a grant pilot for composting at public schools and public charter schools.

Status of Composting Grant Program

The Department solicited applications for supplies, equipment, and technical guidance support. To date, a total of 43 schools have received support from the Program in the form of technical guidance from sub-consultants or tangible goods related to composting and food waste prevention (see Table 1 for a list of schools that have received funding from the Program since its inception in 2019). Participating schools received personalized recommendations from composting experts for their campuses based on the schools' access to labor, land area, school population, administrative support, teacher engagement, and student interest. These schools are able to apply to the Program for funds to cover supplies and equipment based on the scale and scope of their new or existing composting and organics diversion systems. Salaries were not eligible for funding due to restrictions in the Department budgetary rules, so staff time to manage each campus Program needs to be funded directly by each school's external funding sources or donated as volunteer labor.

As of December 31, 2025, the Department will be closing the Program, having distributed all funding allotted from Act 207 (2018) to the participating schools. This will conclude operations of the Program, though all recipient schools will continue their composting programs at their own discretion, and continue to utilize provided supplies.

Table 1. Completed Program Participant Schools to Date, October 2025

School	Composting and Bioconversion Strategies in Use
'Aiea Intermediate School	Milk Waste Collection
Baldwin High School	Food Waste Collection, Milk Waste Collection, Static Pile Composting
Castle High School	Green Waste, Food Waste Static Pile Composting
Enchanted Lake Elementary School	Green Waste, Food Waste Collection, Vermicomposting
Fort Shafter Elementary School	Green Waste, Food Waste Static Pile Composting, Vermicomposting
Ha'ikū Elementary School	Green Waste, Food Waste Static Pile Composting, Vermicomposting
Hana Elementary & High School*	Food Waste Collection, Milk Waste Collection, Static Pile Composting

School	Composting and Bioconversion Strategies in Use
Hawai'i Technology Academy - Kīhei	Food Waste Collection, Milk Waste Collection, Static Pile Composting
Hau'ula Elementary School	Green Waste, Vermicomposting
Hōnaunau Elementary School	Green Waste, Food Waste Collection, Vermicomposting, Bokashi/Microorganisms, Vermicast Tea
Jefferson Elementary School	Green Waste, Food Waste Collection
Ka'elepulu Elementary School	Green Waste, Milk Waste Collection, Food Waste Collection, Vermicomposting
Kailua Elementary School	Green Waste, Milk Waste Collection, Food Waste Collection, Vermicomposting, Static Pile & Tumbler Composting
Kailua Intermediate School	Green Waste, Milk Waste Collection, Food Waste Collection, Vermicomposting
Kaimukī Middle School	Green Waste, Food Waste Static Pile Composting, Vermicomposting, Vermicast Tea
Kainalu Elementary School	Green Waste, Milk Waste Collection, Food Waste Collection, Vermicomposting, Vermicast Tea
Kaiser High School	Green Waste, Food Waste Collection, Vermicomposting
Kamaile Academy	Green Waste, Milk Waste Collection
Kamehameha III Elementary School	Food Waste Collection, Milk Waste Collection, Static Pile Composting
Keonepoko Elementary School	Green Waste, Bokashi, Corrugated Cardboard, Vermicomposting
Ka'ōhau School	Green Waste, Food Waste Collection, Vermicomposting, Bokashi/Microorganisms, Vermicast Tea
Ka Waihona o Ka Na'auao	Green Waste, Food Waste Static Pile Composting, Food Waste In-Vessel Composting
Kīhei Charter School	Food Waste Collection, Milk Waste Collection, Static Pile Composting

School	Composting and Bioconversion Strategies in Use
Kūlanihāko'i High School	Green Waste, Food Waste Static Pile Composting, Food Waste In-Vessel Composting
Lahaina Intermediate School	Food Waste Collection, Milk Waste Collection, Static Pile Composting
Lahainaluna High School*	Green Waste, Food Waste Static Pile Composting, Food Waste In-Vessel Composting
Leilehua High School	Green Waste, Food Waste Static Pile Composting, Food Waste In-Vessel Composting
Ma'ema'e Elementary School	Milk Waste Collection
Mililani High School	Green Waste, Food Waste In-Vessel Composting, Static Pile Composting, Vermicomposting, Bokashi
Nānākuli High & Intermediate School	Green Waste, Bokashi, Corrugated Cardboard
Pearl City High School	Green Waste, Static Pile Composting
Pomaika'i Elementary School*	Food Waste Collection, Milk Waste Collection, Static Pile Composting
Princess Nahi'ena'ena Elementary School	Food Waste Collection, Milk Waste Collection, Static Pile Composting
Princess Victoria Ka'iulani Elementary School	Green Waste, Bokashi, Corrugated Cardboard, Vermicomposting
Pu'uhale Elementary School	Milk Waste Collection
Pu'ukukui Elementary School	Food Waste Collection, Milk Waste Collection, Static Pile Composting
Sunset Beach Elementary School	Green Waste, Food Waste Static Pile Composting, Vermicomposting
Wai'anae Intermediate School	Green Waste Composting
Waihe'e Elementary School*	Food Waste Collection, Milk Waste Collection, Static Pile Composting
Waikīkī Elementary School	Green Waste, Food Waste Collection, Vermicomposting, Bokashi/Microorganisms, Vermicast Tea
Waikoloa Elementary & Middle School	Green Waste, Food Waste Collection

School	Composting and Bioconversion Strategies in Use
Waipahu Intermediate School	Green Waste, Food Waste Collection, Vermicomposting, Bokashi/Microorganisms, Vermicast Tea, L.A.B production from recovered milk
Wheeler Middle School	Food Waste Collection, Vermicomposting

** These schools are anticipated to begin, or restart, campus composting programs, but have not commenced as of the submission of this legislative report.*

As of October 8, 2025, total program expenditures have been \$255,322.20, leaving \$29,677.80 of the original appropriation of \$285,000.00. As of the publication of this report, the final Program schools are receiving their supplies, as well as technical guidance. By December 31, 2025, the remaining balance of the original appropriation will be zero dollars. No additional funds have been subsequently appropriated.

Program Conclusions and Outcomes

Over the course of this Program's administration, many lessons and best practices have been gleaned that will serve to inform how organics management and campus composting programs can best be conducted to meet the needs of the Department and individual schools, as well as their surrounding communities. Below is an outline of key takeaways and resources produced as a result of the Program operation.

Key Takeaways from the Program:

- 1) Department-provided resources and guidance are extremely useful for schools to have in order to determine what scale and scope of composting activity may be appropriate and a best-fit for their circumstances.
- 2) A wide range of food and green waste collection and composting systems are feasible on Department campuses, including static pile, vermicomposting, fermented composting, un-aerated green waste piles, in-vessel composting, and lactic acid bacterium cultures/serum production.
- 3) Successful campus food collection and composting programs have a demonstrated ability to significantly reduce the volume of waste generated by Department schools, and reduce the burden on local waste management systems; the potential for waste management cost reduction for the Department through such programs is sizeable and justification for further encouragement of campus-composting operations.
- 4) The production of on-campus composting products (compost tea, compost as soil conditioner, Bokashi byproduct, composting worm stock) provides an opportunity for schools to generate additional resources and funds that can support the programs' continuation, in addition to supporting school garden efforts.
- 5) Department-provided clarity on what food/green waste collection and composting activities are and are not allowable on Department campuses is essential to ensure smooth and compliant operations.

- 6) Department-provided clarity on procedures and documentation required for campuses to conduct any scale or scope of composting activity is necessary to prevent confusion or unintended program interruption.
- 7) Community engagement and outreach for composting activities planned on campus are helpful to prevent misunderstandings that may result in program interruption.
- 8) Labor to manage on-campus composting activities, as well as program management, requires funding that a school may or may not have, and is essential for program success. Any future Department composting initiatives should include funding for program management and staff to ensure effectiveness and longevity.
- 9) Invasive species management and infestation prevention plans are essential components of any campus composting operation.
- 10) Department-coordinated tree trimming services could provide a large supply of wood chips and mulch that could support some campuses' composting operations, lessening the burden on individual schools to source these materials privately. This would reduce disposal costs and support school composting efforts, assuming materials are managed with invasive species best practices to prevent infestation.

In response to the key takeaways from the Program's operation, the Department has produced the following resources that will be available for use by schools by Spring 2026:

- 1) A school composting guide that covers a wide range of scale, scope, and modality of composting and resource recovery options for Department campuses, including how to select the best-fit system, technical guidance, curriculum recommendations, best management practices, compliance procedures, and estimates on labor and budgets required for desired composting activities.
- 2) Operational guidelines for allowable composting activities, such as recommendations on cafeteria sorting station strategies, siting of campus composting systems, compost system recipes and maintenance, invasive species management, community outreach strategies, pathogen testing, product distribution, and agreements with the Office of Facilities and Operations (OFO).
- 3) A Memorandum of Understanding between OFO and the school wishing to pursue campus composting programs.