

Waste

MODULE SPONSORS:

Part I: Educate

Let's begin with some background information to provide foundational waste management knowledge to your team.

Directions:

PART I: Research and answer questions 1-5 within your team. Answer in **200 words or less** per question.

PART II: Contact the notated staff below to complete questions 6-10. You may share the question list with them ahead of time so they can prepare to answer. Answer in **200 words or less** per question.

After you have answered the primary question, use extra writing space to explore the *Student Considerations* question.

PART I:

1. Research what SB1383 is about. When did the legislation pass and when did it go into effect? Why is it important to redirect organics from the landfill?

Student Considerations: What kinds of conversations do you have with friends and family regarding food waste? Do you focus on world hunger or try to shift the perspective to the needs of your community?

2. [Watch this video by OC Waste & Recycling](#). When organic material is breaking down, what gas does it release into the atmosphere? Think about all the trash seen in the video. Why is it important to separate waste properly into the blue, black, and green bins? Think about the secondary life trash items could gain if they avoid contamination.

Student Considerations: Go home and determine who your waste hauler is by examining your trash bins. Go on their website and look for a trash sorting guide. What items have you been improperly disposing of at home?

3. The “ick factor” or fears about properly handling food scraps due to unpleasant smells or textures harms efforts to redirect organic waste. Research ways to minimize the ick factor including odor management solutions or kitchen scrap storage options. Food is such an essential part of our daily lives; explain why a

social perception of “icky” food waste or “ugly” produce can be harmful to our relationship to our food system.

4. Hauler Contract - Sustain SoCal Partners are currently developing this question. In the meantime, ask your parents, property manager, or a city representative to view your Waste Hauler Contract.

5. How are waste management companies innovating to reduce waste? What is an OREX system? What is an anaerobic digestive system? How do innovations such as these turn our waste problem into farming and energy solutions?

PART II:

6. Contact your cafeteria staff and examine the types of food offerings, packaging, and utensils provided by your campus. What materials are they made out of? Later, your team will perform a waste audit but, for now, predict what types of waste are most commonly thrown away by your peers and explain why.

Student Considerations: At home, how often do you utilize single-use items? Does your household consume all of the food prepared for meals and stored up as leftovers?

7. At least one in eight children is at risk of hunger in Orange County. Reach out to a basic needs or student resource specialist and ask them if your campus has coordinated a dedicated “share table” for unwanted items or established a relationship with a local food bank.

Student Considerations: Sign up to work a volunteer shift at your local food bank! If you need a designated adult chaperone, contact the Sustain OC Foundation.

8. Contact your school custodian and ask them to describe their daily work flow. What does their trash collection routine look like? Which areas on campus create the most waste? Does your custodian feel they have the right amount of and types of bins for proper separation?

9. Ask your custodian if SB 1383 compliance is a major concern on your campus. Have they received training on SB 1383 and waste sorting practices? What issues related to organic waste do they most commonly encounter or expect to encounter if specified organic separation were to increase or be implemented on campus.

10. Hauler Contract - Sustain SoCal Partners are currently developing this question. In the meantime, ask your campus, district, or a city representative to view your Waste Hauler Contract.

Part II: Assess

Welcome to the audit portion of the Waste Module! This section will challenge you to perform a hands-on assessment of waste sorting behaviors at your school and consider different solutions.

Waste Sorting Directions: Ask your custodian if you can assist them with a waste audit. You can either a) defer to what your custodian usually does or b) ask to follow the below steps:

1. Determine audit scope: Are we measuring waste from a cafeteria, outdoor space, event, etc.?
2. Gather your team and assign the following roles: Sorter, recorder, and safety monitor.
3. Ensure proper PPE (gloves, closed-toed shoes, trash grabbers).
4. Lay all items out onto a tarp, old tablecloth, or cut up trash bags. Properly sort the waste into a Landfill, Recycle, and Organics pile. Monitor contamination rates.
5. Count and photograph items that are frequently misrouted.
6. Throw all waste into the proper hauler bins and clean up.
7. Summarize your experience in **500 words or less**.

Solution Directions: Using the following guidelines, determine which organic waste solution pathway could be most appropriate for your campus.

Onsite Organics Separation:

	1 - Poor	2 - Satisfactory	3 - Excellent
Organics Bin Availability	There are little to no green bins found on our campus.	Our campus provides a three part bin system including organics in outdoor areas.	Our campus has three part bin systems both indoors and outdoors.
Signage	Bins are separated only by colors or symbols with no further details on what trash goes where.	Some bins have signage with imagery of commonly sorted items.	Bin signage is specific and tied to campus hauler guidelines. Even better, it includes examples of common contaminants to avoid.
Hauler Communication	Team members struggle to obtain a hauler contract.	Team members can easily access the campus hauler contract for a review.	Team members not only access the campus hauler contract but there is also a point of communication available.

Food Diversion:

	1 - Poor	2 - Satisfactory	3 - Excellent
Food Excess	After completing our Waste Audit above, we found multiple unopened or uneaten food products in the garbage.	Our Waste Audit revealed limited unopened or uneaten food products in the garbage.	Our campus has a designated “share table” where students can offer up unopened or uneaten food products.
Food Bank Relationship	Our campus rarely coordinates onsite food drives or volunteer programs with a local food bank.	Our campus routinely hosts onsite food drives and students are encouraged to volunteer with local programs. Packaged, uneaten food on our campus is brought to a local food bank at least once a term.	Our campus has a strong relationship with the local food bank and perishable items in addition to packaged, uneaten foods are delivered on at least an occasional basis.
Zero Waste Days	Waste separation and donation efforts are not highlighted on campus.	Our campus monitors the various waste streams and encourages students to be mindful of separation habits with announcements or signage.	Our campus monitors and celebrates “Zero Waste Days” where a large proportion of students utilize reusable containers and properly sort or donate uneaten food.

Onsite Composting

Pay special attention to this option if you have given your campus low scores for Organics Separation Onsite and Food Diversion. Note the scoring criteria is different here as Onsite Composting would be a separate strategy.

	1- Make Your Own Solution!	2 - Build Composting Capacity...	3 - Circularity Masters!
Hauler Examination	Our hauler does not have full organic waste processing capacity.	Our hauler claims to have organic waste processing capacity but, when our trash is picked up, all waste types are combined and contaminated. Three bin systems are still good but the purpose would be educational, not true diversion.	Student and staff voices on our campus are actively asking to view waste hauler contracts to ensure work is being done towards SB1383 compliance and waste streams are not combined.
Compost Capacity	Composting would be unlikely on campus due to limited available spaces and a lack of campus will.	Our team has identified a potential onsite compost location (shade, drainage paths, water availability) and an advisor to oversee a new project. All that is needed is funding and setup assistance.	Students are already composting on campus! There is a designated team that manages composting operations and efforts to provide finalized compost to local farmers.

Which of the above assessments was the weakest for your campus? Which was the strongest? Which solution pathway is most realistic? Which pathway is most interesting to your team regardless of potential success? How could you move towards the “3” score category for one chosen pathway?

Part III: Survey

This last section of the Waste Module asks you to survey your peers with a set of questions related to organic waste. Teams should survey a minimum of 15 students and 5 campus staff although a greater sample size is encouraged. These questions are meant to challenge your peers' perceptions.

You can complete this portion by creating and distributing a survey submission link or by filming a "questions on campus" video, similar to what might be seen on TikTok, Reels, or YouTube. Feel free to be creative!

See the question list and submission form below. If you are quizzing your peers in a live format, feel free to share answers so everyone can learn!

QUESTION LIST:

1. In your everyday life, how could you work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?
2. In the County of Orange, what would you assume is the primary source of greenhouse gas emissions?
 - A: 87% of our emissions can be tied back to landfills! The County of Orange hosts three landfills, where composting food scraps and yard waste release methane.
3. Which greenhouse gas is more harmful to the environment: Carbon dioxide (CO₂) or methane (CH₄)?
 - A: Methane has over 80 times the heat trapping power of carbon dioxide!
4. Do you know what composting is? If so, what are some benefits to the environment?
 - A: Methane has over 80 times the heat trapping power of carbon dioxide!
 - A: Some benefits of composting include a decrease in emissions and healthier soils that are more fertile for growing and can capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
 - A: OC landfills currently have infrastructure in place to turn landfill gas to energy (powering 25 thousand homes locally) and to support residents and businesses in composting food and organic waste to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Participation in organics recycling by everyone can help reduce the 30-40% of organic materials that must be recycled instead of buried per California law.
5. Do you put your food waste in the green bin at home? Did you know that food scraps can also go in there, not just yard waste?
 - A: Depending on your home hauler, you can put your food scraps in the green bin! From there, your hauler can turn them into compost and keep them from emitting methane at a landfill. Look at your bins at home to figure out which hauler you use and help your home comply with SB1383.