



Community Grants Program

New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYS P2I) provides financial and technical support for projects that raise awareness and understanding of pollution prevention practices and lead to implementation at the local level

Northern Manhattan Compost Bioremediation

Organization & Contact Information

West Harlem Environmental Action Inc.
(We Act for Environmental Justice)
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www.weact.org



Project Description

West Harlem Environmental Action, Inc. (WE ACT for Environmental Justice) is a Northern Manhattan community-based organization whose mission is to build healthy communities by assuring that people of color and/or low-income participate meaningfully in the creation of sound and fair environmental health and protection policies and practices. We Act for Environmental Justice initiated the *Northern Manhattan Compost Bioremediation* project in order to educate and engage students of the Washington Heights Expeditionary Learning School (WHEELS) in a composting and waste reduction project. The goal of the project is to reduce waste creation through composting and create and maintain a community garden, sustained by the compost created from the students' school lunches.

The objectives of the project were to complete the following tasks:



1. Assess the preliminary soil quality of WHEELS' community garden
2. Provide education to 90 high school students regarding the role of composting in both waste reduction and soil bioremediation
3. Implement an onsite and offsite compost collection and processing program at WHEELS and Vokashi Compost Service, respectively
4. Work with WHEELS faculty and students, the Lower East Side Ecology Center (LESEC), and Vokashi to create educational short videos on the composting efforts at WHEELS
5. Assess the changes made to the soil quality upon the project's completion
6. Encourage the development of an expanded school-wide composting program
7. Disseminate Project Information to the public

Project Results

- Students formed a "Composting crew" that conducted soil pH tests evaluated by Cornell University's Agri1 site.
- Students created and delivered an interactive presentation entitled, "To Compost or not to Compost," to 250 underclass students.
- A video was created by the students to demonstrate composting methods. Students trained classmates on proper methods and monitored the cafeteria during lunch periods.
- Compost collection **diverted over 1,200 pounds of food scrap waste** from being sent to landfills.

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