

## Class Activity: Compost City Council Meeting

### Topics

1. Importance of composting at the community scale
2. Argumentative reasoning
3. Problem solving

### Teacher's Guide

#### Activity overview:

Students will engage in a debate simulating a city council meeting to discuss the implementation of a new community composting hub. Each student will take on a unique role and contribute to the discussion, either for or against the composting hub.

#### Prerequisite topics/knowledge:

1. Benefits of Community Composting - Graphic available [here](#).

**Note:** This activity complements the *Composting Case Studies Activity* available in *The Practice of Composting* module. It is recommended that this activity is done after the composting case studies activity. However, it can also be done on its own.

#### Activity Instructions:

1. **Introduce the Scenario**
  - a. *Scenario:* Worm City is holding a city council meeting for residents to discuss the proposal of a community composting hub in their town.
2. **Introduce the project proposal**
  - a. \*\*Refer to *Materials for Printing* section for proposal
  - b. Suggestion: Write the project proposal on the white board or project it on a screen so students can refer to it throughout the activity.
3. **Opening Statements**
  - a. Allow each student to give a brief opening statement (1-2 minutes) to share their perspective and key points related to the composting hub.
  - b. This opening statement will be provided to them - Refer to the *Materials for Printing* section to view statements
4. **Group Huddles**
  - a. Divide the class into the groups — those supporting and those opposing
  - b. Allow each group to plan their arguments and counterarguments.

## 5. Guided Debate

- a. The Mayor (instructor) will facilitate the class debate.
  - i. Each student must say what concern they are addressing.
  - ii. Each group should alternate after each argument is made.
  - iii. Only one student can speak at a time.

### **Guiding Questions for Possible Scenarios:**

#### *Scenario 1: Location Concerns*

- **Proposal:** The proposed location for the composting hub is an empty lot next to a residential neighborhood.
- **Guiding Questions:**
  - How can we address the concerns about potential odors and pests?
  - What best composting practices can we implement to ensure the hub does not negatively impact the nearby residents?

#### *Scenario 2: Budget and Funding*

- **Proposal:** This project will be highly dependent on volunteers. The cost of building and maintaining the composting hub is significant, and there are limited funds available.
- **Guiding Questions:**
  - How will we pay for our tools and other materials?
  - Should we apply for grants? Should we establish partnerships with local businesses that can help fund the project?
  - Are there potential long-term savings from reducing the amount of food that is sent to the landfill?
  - Could we make a profit directly from this project?

#### *Scenario 3: Public Health and Safety*

- **Proposal:** The composting hub wants to have a food waste drop off center that is open to the public. There is no guarantee that there will be an experienced composter on site to instruct participants on how to safely and properly dispose of their food waste.
- **Guiding Questions:**
  - What safety measures can be put in place to ensure the composting process is safe?
  - How will the composting hub manage potential health risks?

#### *Scenario 4: Education and Community Engagement*

- **Proposal:** The compost hub will include building for education and outreach events
- **Guiding Questions:**
  - How can we educate the community about composting and its benefits?
  - What programs or workshops can we offer to involve different groups?
  - What types of educational programs can we offer at the composting hub?
  - How can we involve schools and students in these programs?
  - What are the benefits of educating the community about composting?

*Scenario 4: Transportation and Accessibility*

- **Proposal:** The composting hub will be located down the street from a busy intersection. There are a lot of people that live and work around the proposed compost hub area.
- **Guiding Questions:**
  - How can we manage increased traffic to and from the composting hub?
  - What transportation options (bike paths, public transit) should be considered?
  - How can we ensure the hub is easy to access for everyone in the community?

*Scenario 5: Long-Term Sustainability*

- **Proposal:** The composting hub will rely on volunteers for its operation. There will also be a community farm next to the composting hub.
- **Guiding Questions:**
  - What plans can we put in place to ensure the long-term success of the composting hub?
  - How can we monitor and evaluate the hub's impact over time?
  - How can we ensure enough compost is produced for the farm?

*Scenario 6: Inclusivity and Cultural Sensitivity*

- **Issue:** The composting hub will include a space for community gatherings and other local events related to environmental justice and sustainability
- **Guiding Questions:**
  - How can we ensure the hub is welcoming, culturally sensitive, and inclusive?
  - What materials need to be translated into different languages?
  - How can we involve diverse community groups in the planning and operation of the hub?

## Materials List

- Role cards for each student
- Scenario cards with guiding questions
- Notepads and pencils

## Materials for printing

### Project Proposal

Worm City community members want to develop a community composting hub in our town. The proposed location for the composting hub is in an empty lot next to a residential neighborhood. This proposed site is also down the street from a busy intersection connecting to restaurants, grocery stores, and other businesses. This hub will include a public food waste drop-off center, though it's important to note that there may not always be an experienced composter on-site to guide proper disposal practices. In addition to composting, the hub will feature buildings for education and outreach events, providing a space for community gatherings focused on environmental justice and sustainability. The operation of the composting hub will largely rely on volunteers, with a community farm adjacent to the site to further enhance local food production. However, it's crucial to acknowledge the significant costs involved in building and maintaining the hub, especially given the limited funds currently available.

### Role Cards

Cards available for printing [here](#).

### *Roles SUPPORTING the community composting hub*

#### 1. **Soil Scientist:**

"Hi, I am a soil science professor. Through my research, I have learned that applying compost to soil changes its physical, biological, and chemical properties."

#### 2. **Community Garden Representative:**

"Hello, I lead a community garden in our city. I have been gardening for more than 10 years. I have learned that compost is like a superfood for our plants! With a community composting hub, we can make our soil healthy to grow fruits and veggies for everyone to enjoy."

### **3. School Representative:**

"I am a biology teacher at our local middle school. I took my students on a field trip to our community garden and they were super excited to learn about our soils and how to grow food. Compost is a great natural fertilizer for our plants. If students could learn how to compost in our neighborhood, they could see how food scraps turn into soil, making science and nature more fun and real."

### **4. Waste Management Official:**

"I help sort our city's trash at our local waste facility. Most of the trash we sort is organic material including fruit and vegetable scraps. Composting at the community scale can help reduce the amount of waste we send to landfills. It can make our waste management system work better and keep our city cleaner."

### **5. Student Advocate:**

"As a youth advocate, I believe young people can make a big difference. A community composting hub can give students an opportunity to learn, help the environment, and lead the way to a greener future."

### **6. Local Farmer:**

"I'm a local farmer that runs an organic strawberry farm. Compost is gold for our farms. It helps us grow healthier crops and reduces the need for chemical fertilizers. I would love to be able to use locally made compost on my farm to grow healthy strawberries for our community."

### **7. Non-Profit Organization Representative:**

"I'm from a non-profit group that helps establish home gardens throughout our cities. We also care deeply about reducing food waste and building community. Creating a community composting hub fits right into our mission of uplifting our neighborhoods and protecting the environment."

## ***Roles OPPOSING the community composting hub***

### **1. Concerned Resident:**

"I live across the street from the site where you plan to develop a community composting hub. I am worried that the compost will make my house smell bad and attract pests such as flies and rats."

### **2. Local Business Owner:**

"I am a local business owner. I run a small restaurant down the street from the proposed community composting hub. I'm worried that the composting center might bring more traffic and noise to the area, which could scare away my customers."

**3. Senior Citizen Representative:**

"I am a senior citizen and I represent older adults in our community. The composting hub might be hard for seniors to use or get to, and we want to make sure it's easy for everyone to participate. If the compost center is not accessible for the older adults in our neighborhood, I should not even exist at all!"

**4. Health Department Representative:**

"I am a public health advocate and I make sure our community stays healthy. If the compost at the hub is not managed correctly, it can cause harmful bacteria to spread in our neighborhood. If the composting center can not safely recycle food waste, we should reconsider this project."

**5. Budget Analyst:**

"I watch how we spend our town's money. Building and running the composting hub might be expensive, and we need to think carefully about our budget and other city needs."

**6. Transportation Official:**

"I manage our town's transportation. The composting hub could cause more traffic and make our roads busier. We need to plan for this to avoid problems."

**7. Local Taxpayer:**

"I'm a taxpayer. I'm concerned about using our tax money for the composting hub. There are many important projects, and we need to be sure this is the best use of our funds."

**8. Real Estate Developer:**

"I develop new buildings. I'm worried that the composting hub might lower property values and make it harder to build new homes and businesses in the area."