

Food Waste Reduction at

Holmes Junior High

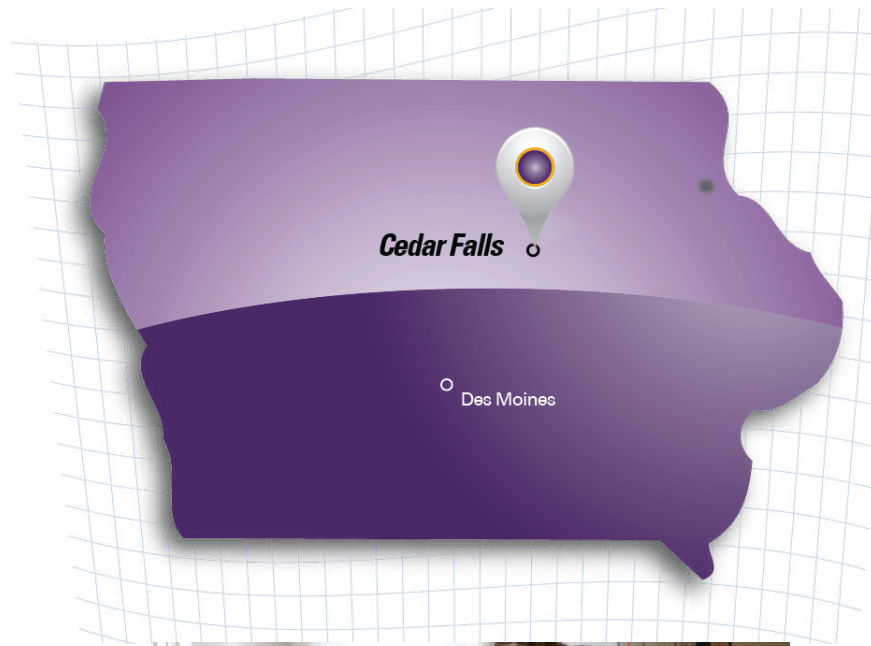
Case Study

Cedar Falls, Iowa

Holmes Junior High School was visited by the Iowa Waste Reduction Center in October of 2020 to observe their new food waste and composting systems. The system that they currently use has been in place since September with the start of a new school year and works to eliminate student food waste through composting.

During each lunch shift, the school sets up four labelled buckets for students to separate their lunch waste with a staff member standing behind the buckets to assist students in the separation process. Two of the buckets are used for compost items like leftover food and paper napkins, and the other two buckets are for landfill items including wrappers, non-recyclables, utensils, and milk cartons. In addition, the staff member assisting the students also collects and recycles plastics.

In total, around 600 7th-9th grade students participate in this food waste reduction program. As students are finished with their lunch they go through a line to separate out their lunch tray. Most students have a good handle on where different items from their tray should be placed and are really learning a lot about the process, but a few still need the assistance of the staff member to properly place the items.



Each day at lunch, students work with faculty to organize their food waste into different bins



The food waste is separated into four bins. Two bins for landfill items and two bins for composting and food waste

Continued...

Last school year, Holmes Junior High also had a donation table where whole, uneaten, unopened food could be placed for other students to take, however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this system has been put on hold for the time being to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus.

The food waste that is collected by Holmes is then picked up by Rite Environmental, a local recycling and waste removal company. The food waste is picked up almost weekly and brought to Rite Environmental's new composting site in Waterloo where they are allowed to accept 2 tons of food waste per week. Right now, Holmes Jr. High is their first and only customer that is taking advantage of this opportunity. With each pickup, Holmes Junior High is sending around 40 gallons of food waste that is composted which equates to roughly 300 pounds a week, greatly improving upon the amount of waste that would have originally gone to the landfill.

Holmes Junior High is one of only a few schools in Iowa taking these strides to divert food waste from the landfill. They have created an amazing system that other schools could replicate. Not only are they reducing landfill waste, they are changing the way kids view food waste.



Food waste is emptied into garbage bags which are picked up by Rite Environmental and taken to a new composting site in Waterloo.



Every week these junior high students learn more and more and continue to gain better knowledge on how to eliminate food waste.



Each week about 96 gallons of food waste is composted by Holmes Junior High students.

Food Waste Composted:
Holmes Junior High

10 Collections of Food Waste	4 Collections of Plastic Waste
Total Collections	
3000 lbs Food Waste	90 lbs Recycling
Total Amount	