Resource management, or sustainable food management, typically involves understanding existing food waste within an organization and working to minimize that waste. Options include composting programs, education and awareness about existing waste, and preventing or diverting waste in the future.

Q: How do I measure food waste?

A: Food waste can be measured by completing a school food waste audit. A food waste audit measures the amount of food being thrown away in the cafeteria. Food waste audits can help to reduce food waste and can be used as an educational tool for students.

Q: How do I measure recycling at my school?

A: Recycling audits measure the amount of trash being thrown away in your school. Recycling audits can help to reduce paper and plastic waste and can be used as an educational tool for students. (Conduct a recycling audit similarly to the school food waste audit, above.)

Q: How do I engage students with resource management projects?

A: Resource management curriculum used in the classroom and the cafeteria is a great way to educate students on reducing environmental waste. Engaging children in waste audits and projects, such as composting, provides hands-on learning opportunities. It also provides a sense of ownership and responsibility in reducing your school’s waste. Check out the curriculum matrix to find relevant available curriculum.

Q: What composting programs exist for schools?

A: School composting programs provide a partial solution to the issue of food waste. Composting provides a way to reduce the amount of waste, and convert it into a product useful for gardening or improving the soil. Composting provides an opportunity to instill a sense of environmental stewardship in students, staff, and the community at large. Many educational programs focus on reducing, reusing, and recycling our solid wastes. Composting fits in with this idea and takes it a step beyond.
Here are two examples of composting programs schools can use:

- **Vermicomposting**: working with worms.
- **School yard composting**: outdoor methods and bins that collect school food waste. This can be small-scale where one or two classes contribute food waste, or larger scale where waste from the cafeteria and classrooms is collected for on-site composting.

**Resources**

- [Composting in Schools: Why Composting?](#) (Cornell University)
- [Food Waste Reduction in School Meals](#) (Iowa Department of Education)
- [Iowa Schools Food Waste Minimization Toolkit](#) (Iowa Department of Natural Resources)
- [School Compost Programs: Pathways to Success](#) (EcoCycle)
- [The Ultimate School Composting Resource Page](#) (Life Lab)
- [Vermicomposting for Schools](#) (North Carolina State Extension)

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The Cass County Farm to School Coalition was started in 2016 as a part of the Community Food Systems Program collaborating with Cass County Food Action Coalition. The coalition's goal has been to create a collaborative network of organizations, school and institutions to work together to develop educational programs with schools around nutrition, agriculture basics and farm to school procurement. Additionally, one of the first collective efforts was to develop a toolkit of resources that highlight the opportunities that exist for schools to begin farm to school programming.

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