

Central Texas kids to learn how to recycle, compost in school



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Texas Disposal Systems launches new trash, recycling, and compost bins in Central Texas schools. (Kate Weidaw, KXAN)

AUSTIN (KXAN) — In an effort to get kids more involved in recycling and composting in school, the Texas Disposal Systems is rolling out a brand new curriculum for elementary school students Friday at Odom Elementary School in south Austin. It's called the Eco Academy. By the fall, it will be in over 300 Central Texas elementary schools.

The curriculum aims to teach kids what happens to their trash. After students are done with lunch in all Austin ISD school, they have to separate what's on their tray into the trash, recycling and compost bins. The composting is relatively new having just launched about two years ago. Part of the Eco Academy curriculum teaches students how long trash takes to decompose. For example, students will create a landfill in a jar with potato peels in one and, in another, an aluminum can covered with dirt.

"For example, it takes two to four weeks for a potato peel to decompose where it takes 200 years for an aluminum can to decompose, so, if you recycle those things, you keep them out of the landfill," says Stacy Schmitt, Director of Communications for Texas Disposal Systems.

The hope is also that students will take home what they learn in the classroom and encourage their parents to consider recycling, like when packing a child's lunch.

"What can I pack that I can then decompose and put in compost or what can I pack that can be recycled or used again later so maybe using plastic containers instead of sandwich bags all the time," says Christina Nelson, Odom Elementary's librarian.

Texas Disposal Systems also tracks how much waste they are diverting from the landfill. Last year, Odom Elementary kept 3500 pounds out. Part of the new curriculum may lead to schools competing against each other to see how much they can keep out of the landfill.

Texas Disposal Systems says the Eco Academy curriculum should be in every school it serves, including middle and high schools, by 2019.