

# The NYC K-12 School Resource Guide

## Glossary

### A

**Acrostic** A series of lines in which particular letters, such as the first or the last, spell out a different word or phrase when read in order.

**Advisory Committee** A group that counsels and offers recommendations on certain topics and decisions.

**Aeration** The circulation of air.

**Aluminum** A lightweight, silver-white, metallic element that makes up approximately 7% of the earth's crust. Though aluminum is used in many ways, soft drink cans are its most common use.

**Anaerobic** Existing without air.

**Anus** The posterior opening of the alimentary canal through which waste passes from the body.

**Anterior** Situated before or toward the front; the head of a worm.

**Aortic Arches** One of the arterial branches in vertebrate embryos that exist in a series of pairs with one on each side of the embryo, that connect the ventral arterial system lying anterior to the heart to the dorsal arterial system above the alimentary tract, and that persist in adult fishes but are reduced or much modified in the adult of higher forms. Red wiggler worms have five of these "hearts," which regulate blood flow and produce a pulse.

**Appropriate Packaging** The wrapping or presentation of an item in a way that uses minimal materials to preserve or protect an item.

### B

**Bacteria** A division of spherical, spiral, rod-shaped, or comma-shaped microscopic organisms. Some bacteria are responsible for processes like decomposition and fermentation, while other bacteria can cause disease.

**Baled** Bundled or wrapped up in a contained package for transporting or storing.

**Bauxite** A rock in which high concentrations of aluminum are found.

**Behavior** A person's actions or reactions under specified circumstances.

**Biodegradable** Capable of being broken down by microorganisms, such as fungi and bacteria, into simple compounds that can be absorbed by the environment.

**Biodiversity** The variety of living things or biological diversity within a species, ecosystem, or planet.

**Bottle Bill** A law, passed in some states, which requires that the price of a beverage container include a redeemable deposit. The deposit is refunded to the consumer when the bottle or can is returned to the retailer.

**Bristles** Short stiff hairs or something like hair.

**Bulk Quantities** Food or other products that are sold unpackaged or in large containers. This allows consumers to buy goods in large amounts, which cuts down on packaging materials.

### C

**Campaign** A strategic movement of a person or group of people to convince a community or communities to do something; the act of pursuing this goal.

**Carbon** A chemical element that occurs in many compounds and mixtures, including diamond, graphite, coal, limestone, and petroleum. Carbon is found in high amounts in many composting "bins" or dead and dry items for compost, like autumn leaves.

**Cerebral Ganglion** One of a pair of ganglia situated in the head or anterior part of the body in many invertebrates in front of or dorsal to the esophagus.

**Climate Change** The long-lasting and significant change in global weather patterns, including storms and severe heat.

**Clitellum** The part of an adult worm's anatomy used in reproduction, which makes mucus to form an egg-carrying cocoon.

**Coelomic Fluid** A worm's yellow, foul-smelling secretion that remoistens its body when conditions are dry and used as a defense mechanism against predators. The fluid within the coelom; in some animal groups it functions as a hydrostatic skeleton and it may also serve as a circulatory medium.

**Coiled Sheets** In the aluminum can recycling process, cans are melted and cast in 2800-pound blocks, which are rolled into long sheets and coiled for later transportation to a can manufacturing plant.

**Combustible** Something that can catch on fire or ignite; flammable.

**Commitment** A pledge or bond to do something.

**Community** A unified group of individuals with common interests who live in an area. Also, the area itself in which people live, like a neighborhood.

**Community Relations** The interaction with a neighborhood or with a group of individuals that share common interests.

**Compacted Solid Waste** Solid waste that has been compressed, condensed, or consolidated to stabilize the landfill and extend its lifespan. The higher the compaction rate, the more trash the landfill can receive and store. This will also reduce landslides, cave-ins and minimize the risk of fire.

**Compost** Decomposed organic material that results from the process of composting. It is used to enrich or improve soil for growing.

**Composting** The natural conversion of most organic materials by active microorganisms, resulting in a soil-like component called compost.

**Compost Pile** Compost that is collected in either an enclosed outdoor area or in a large ventilated can or bin.

**Consumer** A person who buys goods or services for personal consumption, rather than resale.

**Contaminate** To make something dirty or unfit for use.

**Contract** An agreement, pledge, or bond to accomplish something.

**Contribution** The act of giving time, energy, or goods to benefit others.

**Corrosive** Something that is harmful, damaging or destructive.

**Crop** A crop (sometimes also called a croup or a craw) is a thin-walled expanded portion of the alimentary tract used for the storage of food prior to digestion.

**Cullet** Clean, color-sorted scrap glass that is broken into dime-sized pieces. Glass cullet is melted down and used to make new products.

**Custodian** A person who maintains the cleanliness and safety of a building or place of business.

## D

**Decay** The act of rotting or disintegrating.

**Decompose** To break down organic waste materials by bacteria and fungi; to rot or decay.

**Decomposition** The process of decomposing or being broken down into simpler components by active microorganisms.

**Disposable** Designed to be thrown away after a single use or within a short time, rather than reused.

## E

**Earth Cover** The layer of soil that is placed over compacted solid waste in landfills to minimize odor, pests, and wind disturbances.

**Ecosystem** The connection between a community of organisms and their environment.

***Eisenia Fetida*** More commonly known as the red wiggler worm, a species adapted from the earthworm for decomposing organic material.

**Environment** The circumstances and conditions that surround living organisms, including soil, water, plants, animals, and buildings.

**Esophagus** A muscular tube that leads from the cavity behind the mouth to the stomach.

**Extinction** The end of existence for a group of living organisms or a species.

## F

**Fiber** A thin thread or strand; a root of a plant.

**Flammable** Something that can ignite or catch on fire easily; combustible.

**Fossil Fuels** Energy-producing remains of fossils or organic materials that occur naturally and are formed over thousands of years. Examples include coal, crude oil, and natural gas.

**Fungi** A major branch of organisms that absorb their nutrients from dead or living organisms. Examples of fungi are mushrooms, yeasts, toadstools, rusts, molds, and mildews.

## G

**Gizzard** An organ found in the digestive tract of some animals. This specialized stomach constructed of thick, muscular walls is used for grinding up food.

**Goal** An end purpose, aim, or objective.

**Groundwater** Water from beneath the earth's surface.

## H

**Harvesting** The act or process of gathering in a crop.

**Hazardous Waste** Materials that are potentially harmful to our health and to the environment and must be handled very carefully. This dangerous waste can be found in liquid or solid form or anything in between. Examples include: automotive products, rechargeable batteries, cleaning products, computers and electronics, paint, paint thinners, paint strippers, pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, thermostats, and mercury devices.

**HDPE (high density polyethylene)** Tough, lightweight, colorful plastic that makes up 62% of milk jugs, detergent bottles, bleach bottles, and butter tubs; also used to make bags. It's marked with the number 2 inside the recycling logo printed on the bottom of the container.

**Humus** Don't confuse humus with hummus. Humus is organic matter that cannot be broken down further; this word is often used to describe finished compost.

## I

**Impunity** Free from harm or negative consequences.

**Incinerator** A furnace or apparatus designed to reduce the volume of waste by burning it.

**Intestine** A long tube that helps to digest food and absorb nutrients and water, and that carries waste matter to be discharged.

## J

**Junk Mail** Any mail which is not requested and arrives unsolicited. Examples include catalogs and credit card offers.

## L

**Landfill** A specially engineered land site for disposing solid waste. It should be designed to reduce risks to public health and safety.

**Landfill Gases** A natural by-product of decomposing organic matter consisting mostly of methane and carbon dioxide.

**Leachate** Rainfall that has penetrated through the solid waste in a landfill. It contains dissolved or suspended materials that could contaminate groundwater or surface water if not collected and treated.

**Leaf Litter** Dead plant materials that have fallen to the ground.

**Litter** Waste materials that are carelessly discarded in an inappropriate place or that escape from waste-handling systems.

## M

**Macroorganism** An organism large enough to be seen by the normal unaided human eye

**Manufacture** to make something.

**Material** Anything composed of matter; a component part or element.

**Melt** To apply enough heat to reduce material from a solid state to a liquid state.

**Microorganisms** Any microscopic or ultra-microscopic organism, like a bacterium or protozoan.

**Millipede** A small, plant-eating arthropod with many legs.

**Mulch** A covering for soil made from wood chips or partially finished compost, that will enhance the soil as it decomposes further.

## N

**Natural Resources** Materials created by nature that are either useful or necessary for life. Examples are wood, water, and minerals.

**Nature** The entire material universe and its phenomena; the overall pattern or system of natural objects, existences, forces, and events.

**Nitrogen** A chemical element that is found in high amounts in composting “greens,” including live flowers and freshly cut grass.

**Non-biodegradable** Not able to decompose or break down naturally.

**Nonrenewable Resource** Natural materials that are considered finite or exhaustible due to their limited supply, their scarcity, time required for their formation, and their rapid depletion. Oil, minerals, and natural gas are examples.

**Nutrients** Substances that provide food or nourishment, like vitamins, minerals, proteins, and carbohydrates.

## O

**Obstacle** Someone or something that stands in the way, is a hindrance, or creates a barrier to achieving an end result.

**Open Dump** An uncovered space used for depositing municipal garbage, and often a source of sanitation and health problems. Most open dumps have been replaced by modern sanitary landfills that cover wastes and contain environmental controls to prevent contamination of the surrounding areas.

**Operational Definition** A set meaning of something within the context of certain conditions or circumstances.

**Organic** Derived from the animal or vegetable world (living organisms) or containing carbon compounds.

**Overpackaging** Excess wrapping or containment of a product. Overuse of materials to display, protect, or transport a product.

**Oxygen** A colorless, odorless, gaseous element constituting about one-fifth of the volume of the atmosphere and present in a combined state in nature.

## P

**Packaging** A container or wrapping made from a variety of materials which is used to store, display, protect, or transport a product.

**PET (polyethylene terephthalate)** Usually clear, or transparent green, plastic that makes up most of the recyclable plastic containers, like soda and vegetable oil bottles, and peanut butter jars. It has the number 1 in the recycling logo printed on the bottom of the container, and can be recycled to make many new products.

**Pharynx** An organ found in animals that is part of the digestive system and also respiratory system.

**Poisonous** Containing poison; toxic, extremely harmful and damaging.

**Pollution** The contamination of an environment caused by human behavior or activities.

**Posterior** Near or toward the back of something (such as the body).

**Public Relations** The management of information presented about a person or an organization to the public.

**Pulp** Crushed or soggy material.

## R

**Recovered Materials** Natural resource materials that are used again.

**Recycle** To collect and reprocess materials such as glass, newsprint, steel, and aluminum for reuse, either in the same form or as the raw material to manufacture a different product.

**Recycled Content** Containing raw material that has been recycled.

**Recycling Loop** The process of using the same material, like glass from bottles or aluminum from cans, over and over again to make the same product or its equivalent.

**Red Wiggler Worm** A common name for the *Eisenia fetida*. Red wiggler worms thrive in rotting organic materials and are used for vermicomposting.

**Reduce** To use less of; to decrease in extent, amount, number, or other quantity.

**Refund** An amount paid back or reimbursed. For example, in some states, we can get a refund of the deposit paid on a soda bottle when it is brought back to the store (redeemed).

**Renewable Resource** A naturally occurring raw material or form of energy derived from an endless or cyclical source like the sun, wind, falling water (hydroelectric), plants, and animals.

**Resolution** The act of making a decision or commitment to do something.

**Reusable** Able to be used again, either as it is or by repairing or altering it.

**Reuse** To extend the life of an item by using it more than once, repairing or modifying it, or by creating new uses for it.

## S

**Segments** Any of the parts into which a thing is divided or naturally separates. In worm anatomy, these are the small rings that surround the worm's body.

**Shredded** Torn or cut into strips or shreds.

**Slurry** A pulpy liquid formed when paper collected for recycling is mixed with warm water. It is further processed to make recycled paper.

**Smelt** To melt metal and separate the metal from other materials.

**Solid Waste** Any unwanted material, either solid or semi-solid, that is discarded from households, industries, or communities, including recyclables and trash (garbage).

**Sow Bug** A bug also called a wood louse or a pill bug, gray in color and oval in shape, capable of curling itself into a ball. Sow bugs like dark and moist places, like leaf litter and the earth beneath stones.

**Sustainability** The act of preserving or not damaging the environment and not depleting natural resources, striving for long-term, balanced ecological systems.

**Sustainability Coordinator** A representative at a school or place of business that defines and implements sustainability standards and policies, including energy conservation and recycling.

## T

**Toxic** Something that is poisonous or contains poisonous or extremely dangerous substances.

**Transported** Taken from one place to another, usually by truck, car, train, barge, or airplane.

**Trash** Things that are made or used by people that are discarded as garbage because they are considered worthless, unnecessary, or offensive.

## V

**Vapor** A gas, steam, or mist.

**Ventilation** The circulation of air.

**Vermicompost** A soil amendment made of food scraps processed by worms into worm castings. Vermicomposting is the act of using worms to create nutrient-enriched soil.

**Virgin Materials** Natural resources that are being mined or extracted for the first time and have never been recycled, as opposed to Recycled Content.

**Volume** The quantity of a three-dimensional enclosed space.

## W

**Waste** A thing that has been discarded because it is worn out, used up, or no longer needed. "Waste" includes recyclables and trash (garbage). Many things thrown away could be recycled or reused.

**Worm Casting** The processed food scraps after the worm has digested and expelled it from its system; worm manure.

