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## Etobicoke students launch garbage revolution

by CYNTHIA REASON  
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Something smelled in the hallways of the Etobicoke School of the Arts (ESA) on Tuesday.

"Eww, what is that?" asked Caleigh Spiers, 14, holding her nose as she walked by the two-and-a-half-day-old mountain of garbage accumulating in the school's main foyer.

No, the janitors weren't on strike. The garbage was more of an environmental installation piece, explained SEEDS (Student Educators for Environmental Development Sustainability) facilitator Enid Wray.

"We've been trying to work on our waste reduction here at the school," she said. "We've had some teeny success, but this was our way of showing students directly how much waste we make. The kids decided to wallow in their own garbage for a few days."

As part of their awareness campaign, SEEDS, in conjunction with the geography and drama departments, also presented a special school-wide screening of local filmmaker Andrew Niskier's *Garbage! The Revolution Starts at Home* ([www.garbagerevolution.com](http://www.garbagerevolution.com)).

The film chronicles the tale of one Toronto family as they collect their garbage over a three-month period to see how much waste they generate. The end result? Eighty-three bags of mixed recycling and garbage, 320 pounds of wet compost materials, and a slight maggot infestation.

Taking a page from the film, SEEDS students decided to re-create the experiment at school, albeit on a much shorter-term basis (and without the maggots), to increase their classmates' awareness of pollution.

"Two days! That's it? And we made all of this?" Spiers asked in amazement, as she looked down on bags upon bags full of wrappers, scrap paper and food waste.

"Just imagine what it'd look like if we did this for three months," exclaimed classmate Jackie Sirois, 14.

That's just the reaction SEEDS member and aspiring filmmaker Justin Friesen, 16, said organizers were hoping for when they planned the event.

"A lot of people are shocked and complaining about the smell," he said.

"But hopefully that shock value will raise awareness about waste issues...most people I've talked to don't have a lot of knowledge about what happens to their garbage once they throw it out and what they can do to reduce waste."

But Friesen said he hopes to lead by example. At his house every effort is made to separate waste from recyclables, so the least amount of packaging is thrown out. They also have a strict no-plastic-bag policy, opting instead for cloth bags, and they all carry reusable water bottles and travel mugs with them whenever possible.

It's that kind of mentality that carried over to Tuesday's post-screening activities, where SEEDS members served up free cider and hot chocolate to anyone who could produce a reusable mug or cup - no paper cups allowed.

Filmmaker Niskier, who was on hand for the screening and stuck around after the show to talk, said the reaction from kids across the city to *Garbage* has been amazing. The most heartening part for him, he said, have been the student-driven initiatives.

"I'm so glad that the kids have been doing these types of things to raise awareness and have a real impact on their communities," he said.

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