



Waste Less, Enjoy More

Cafeteria Checklist for Strategy Development

The Waste Less Cafeteria Checklist is a great way to understand when, where and why food is thrown away at your school. Based on the information learned, you can identify which strategies will be the easiest and most effective ways for your play to succeed!

Students should complete the checklist with help from a teacher volunteer, answering **Yes** or **No** to each question. Any question that you do not answer **Yes** to is an opportunity to reduce food waste through the strategies outlined in your play!

To answer all of the questions you should talk to your school's principal, food service and nutrition staff, and janitorial staff. Make sure each of your teammates knows when you will complete the checklist and is available to help answer the questions.

Check for Yes – Leave blank for No. In evaluation, the Nos are the areas to target when developing your strategies!

Waste Collection

- Are garbage and recycling bins labeled indicating which types of waste should be thrown out in each?
- Are garbage and recycling bins labeled with images or pictures of types of waste that should be thrown out in each?
- Do garbage and recycling bins have any educational messaging or instructions on or near them?
- Are different colored bins used for recyclables, trash, and any other waste streams that your school collects?
- Does your school follow a recycling policy for paper, plastic, cardboard and aluminum? *(These are materials commonly used in school cafeterias that should be recycled whenever possible.)*
- Are bins set up so that it is quick and easy for students to dispose of their waste after meals? *(Use a map or floor plan of the cafeteria to identify where garbage and recycling bins are located.)*

Make the Most of Waste

- Does your cafeteria use recyclable plates, utensils or service ware?
- Do students separate recyclable and non-recyclable waste after meals? (*Many mealtime items are recyclable – cans, bottles, napkins, plastic cutlery and paper plates. If students are not already separating recyclable service ware, consider encouraging increased recycling when you implement your play as students will already be separating food scraps from the rest of their waste.*)
- Does your cafeteria use reusable plates, utensils or service ware?
- Does your cafeteria use compostable plates, utensils or service ware?
- Has your cafeteria eliminated lunch trays?

Lunch Time Design

- Do students spend less than 1/3 of their lunch period waiting in line?
- Do all students have recess before lunch?
- Is a weekly or monthly menu posted in an easy-to-read place in the cafeteria?
- Are weekly or monthly menus posted in an easy-to-read place in classrooms or other areas in the school?
- Are weekly or monthly menus sent home with students?
- Are healthy and local options labeled with fun, creative names?
- Are signs or posters displayed encouraging students to only take as much food as they will eat?
- Are students allowed to return to the line to purchase additional food items?

Food Presentation

- Are individual food items such as apples or bananas displayed without individual wrapping such as plastic wrap?
- Are cut or sliced fruits and vegetables offered?
- Does your school participate in Offer vs. Serve?
- Are a la carte and self-serve options refrigerated or kept at the right temperature throughout all meal periods?
- Are bulk dispensers used for condiments instead of individual packet?

Right Sized Portions

- Are portion sizes displayed for self-serve food items?
- Are the right sized serving utensils being used for different food items to encourage proper portion control?

In the Kitchen

- Are leftovers and trimmings safely repurposed in 'wasteless' recipes such as soups, sauces, smoothies or even to make croutons or as pizza toppings?
- Are 'wasteless' meals promoted to students using creative names for menu items?
- Are 'wasteless' meals promoted to students with easy-to-read signs in the cafeteria?
- Are all foods in the kitchen and prep area labeled with the date they were purchased or open?
- Does your school's food service staff follow a policy of using older ingredients and food items first?
- Does your school's food service staff keep track of food that is thrown out before it is prepared or served?
- Does your school's food service staff ask students before plating each food item during a meal?
- Does your school's food service staff sell or recycle oil and grease?
- Does your school's food service staff purchase food from local producers whenever possible?
- Does your school's food service staff purchase in bulk whenever possible?
- Are students invited to provide feedback on breakfast and lunch menus?
- Does your school's food service staff offer a taste test to students at least once a year?