



"How to Conduct... Program & Project" Series It's as Easy as 1, 2, 3!

Number 7

Adapted from Crabapple Middle School PTA, Roswell, GA

Waste Free Lunch Day

How to Conduct a Waste Free Lunch Day



Step 1: Learn about the program.

What is a Waste Free Lunch Day?

As Americans we have come to depend on the many convenience products that are available to us, and no where is this more evident

than in the school lunch room. Most parents pack lunch items in single-use plastic bags, aluminum foil, or wax paper, or they purchase single-serving items that come in their own disposable package. Admittedly, these products are extremely convenient, but what is the environmental cost to a country that relies so heavily on them? Landfills are full and overflowing. Incinerators pump contaminants into the air. Communities are battling over who will accept the nation's trash. We all enjoy these conveniences, but few of us are willing to allow new landfills and incinerators to be built in our own backyards.

For each student packing a school lunch, it is estimated that 67 pounds of waste is generated per school year. Project that number to your school population and the number quickly grows to tens of thousands of pounds of waste! You may shrug and say, 'What can I do about it?' Never fear, there is a lot that both you and your students can do to impact this number and help preserve our earth for many years to come. Read on about actions you can take and goals we can achieve!

A waste-free lunch program is a process of educating students, parents, and school staff about where our trash ends up and how we, as individuals, can reduce the amount of trash we generate. Waste-free lunch programs favor the use of reusable food containers, drink containers, utensils, and napkins. They discourage the use of disposable packaging, such as prepackaged foods, plastic bags, juice boxes and pouches, paper napkins, and disposable utensils. And also very exciting is that waste free lunches actually reduce the lunch budget cost by about 1/3.

Here is one of many success stories...Crabapple Middle School in Roswell, Georgia completed a Waste Free Lunch Day established as one of three goals toward their EverGreen Program adoption during the 2005-2006 school year. A waste baseline was discovered to be 255 pounds of trash per day produced from student lunches. Projected over 180 school days, this represents almost 46,000 pounds of trash going to landfills! After education, communication, and execution of the program a reduction of 25% resulted. This meant that an annual waste reduction of 11,500 pounds could be realized with just a little care on our part!

Step 2: Plan and publicize the program.



Great Resources for a Waste Free Lunch Day

There are many web sites available to assist with planning your waste free lunch day. These are just a few.

www.wastefreelunches.org
Great success stories.

<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/education/lunch.htm>

Nicely broken down by grade levels for a focused program development.

http://www.trash4kids.org/act_wfl.html

Simple but brief detail of a basic program.

<http://www.globalstewards.org/lunch.htm>

Nice detail of waste quantities produced: Waste Facts

Build Your Team

A combination of school staff, parents, PTA, and students can formulate and execute a great waste free lunch day. Many schools have environmental groups (ie. S.A.V.E. Students Against Violating the Environment) already established who would likely enjoy an opportunity to spearhead a waste free lunch day. Anyone with a wish to favorably impact our environment for our future can be a part of a great program. And

don't forget those Beta Club members. This is one example of how you can build your team and achieve success.

Dear S.A.V.E.,

To recognize the upcoming Earth Day we (PTA) propose a Waste Free Lunch Day. You are invited, as a member of S.A.V.E. to formulate and participate in the project.

The project will start with a simple baseline waste measurement of trash quantity collected in the cafeteria. More involved activities will then include the decoration of a hall display case and drafting of distribution materials to go out to students, staff, and parents. All of this will build to Earth Day, the waste free lunch day when we will measure our results against our pre-established goal.

Your PTA Environmental Chairperson

Getting the Word Out

No matter what type of Waste Free Lunch Day you formulate, communication is the key to success. Using creative displays, posters, announcements, and more you can get the word out. The more everyone hears about it the more they will participate and be part of the success. The following is a series of sample announcements made by students which can educate and build up the enthusiasm for all.

Thursday

Next Friday is Waste Free Lunch Day at CMS. Why a waste free lunch day? Because landfills do not make waste go away, it simply sits there for many years! Did you know that newspapers found in landfills after 40 years can still be opened and read! Tomorrow you will receive a flyer with Waste Free Lunch day details along with your Friday Notes. This is a challenge! Can we reduce our waste by ___%, YES we can!

Friday

Watch closely for the Waste Free Lunch Day flyer accompanying your Friday Notes today. Your participation is very important for success on this day and for many years to come for our earth!

Monday

Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle are all part of success in reducing waste. This Friday we can reduce our lunch waste and achieve our goal if we all try. Each day this week, a tip for waste reduction will be shared. If you take it home and use it....you can make a difference! Tip for today---only buy or bring what you intend to eat at lunch! Don't throw it out.

Tuesday

Our Waste Free Lunch day is now 3 days away. What will you do to reduce the 46,000 pounds of lunch waste generated each year at our school? Be a part of a great trend by putting your carry lunch food items in reusable containers. Don't throw out what you don't need to!

Wednesday

Only two days until TGIF Waste Free Lunch Day. Tip for today-when possible, avoid prepackaged foods. Individual portions from bulk food reduce waste significantly and can help us reach a goal of ___% waste reduction.

Thursday

Tomorrow is the big Waste Free Lunch Day. Tip for today-If you cannot use reusable containers, at least use recyclable containers. Recycle is the third phase of waste reduction.

Friday

Okay, can we reach our goal for reduction in Lunch Waste Today?!! Yes, we can! I hope you have learned to reduce, reuse, and recycle throughout the week and can be proud of the impact you will have on our earth for years to come. Go (name of school)!

This is part of a flyer designed for education and distribution throughout the school.



Step 3: Conduct and evaluate the program.

Establish your Waste Baseline and Go For It!



Use your team to 'weigh in' and determine how much waste your school is producing during a lunch period. A fish scale works great for this purpose and it's cheap or maybe even in your tackle box.

Educate, Educate, Educate

Reducing waste is a learning process. The more we hear about it, the more we do it. The more we do it, the more we want to do it. And you know what that means.....success! When the habit of throwing things out becomes a habit of reducing, reusing, and recycling, think of how much we have accomplished. Cheer each other on during the Waste Free Lunch Day. Makes goals and challenge the school to achieve them. Only team work can make it happen.

After Waste Free Lunch Day is Done, It's Not Over

Make sure you get the word out, how much waste did you reduce and did you meet your goals. Use the enthusiasm you have built and start planning the next step in your environmental program. This earth is way too wonderful to neglect!