

Make lunchtime
green and
healthy with
these fun ideas

Lunch Activities

Lunch is one of the most important meals of the day. And it is one of the most wasteful due to the tons of trash which it generates each and everyday. It has been estimated that on average a school-age child using a disposable lunch generates **67 lbs.** of waste per school year. That equates to **18,760 lbs.** of lunch waste for just one, average-size elementary school! In other words, **3.5 billion pounds** of lunch garbage nationally every year. Our landfills are nearing capacity. Help reduce waste!

Educate

Teaching kids how to eat green is more than just bringing healthy foods. Consider how food is packaged. Plastic bags and bottles need to be recycled and unfortunately most of it just ends up in the trash. Using reusable lunch items not only can save families money, but also keeps waste out of our landfills

Here are a few ways to teach children how to be environmentally conscience at lunchtime.

Cafeteria Trash Sort

- Collect all cafeteria waste from one day (include all lunch periods and collect milk/juice in a bucket)
- Sort into 5 categories
 1. Items that could have been recycled
 2. Single use packaging (plastic bags, yogurt containers, etc)
 3. Food waste
 4. Unopened packaged food (oranges, boxes of raisins)
 5. Buckets of left over juice/milk
- Have each grade preview the piles of garbage to better understand the amount of waste generated each day and that your schools contribute to landfills.



Garage Graveyard

- Supplies: bring a bag of common household trash
- Explain what decomposition is to kids.
- Let kids sort the items by placing trash on a timeline from zero to infinity years guessing when they think they will decompose.
- Overall the most common items will take hundreds of years to decompose.
- See attachment for decomposition standards.
- The goal is to have kids understand the longevity of items they use daily
- Checkout the full instructions on Peace, Love and Planet website.

Waste-Free Lunch Program

Promote

Repeating your message is important. Up posters and add a green tip during morning announcements. The more you promote, the greater the impact and the longer your message will last.

Add recycling bins to cafeteria

- Make sure they are easy for students to use.
- Clearly mark with signs with pictures of what items go into what bins.
- Place adjacent to trash bin providing easy access.

Waste Free Lunches

- Once a month, create a day promoting no waste during lunchtime.
- Encourage kids to bring reusable plastic containers instead of plastic bags.
- For a child who buys lunch, encourage them to eat as much of their lunch as possible in order to reduce waste.
- Track waste generated by each class by either weighing it or whatever works best for your school.
- Recognize class with the least amount of waste during morning announcements or prize (like popcorn party).

Plastic Trays or Baskets

- Switching from Styrofoam trays to plastic trays is instrumental in reducing waste at lunchtime.
- Not only is it a more environmentally friendly option, but can actually reduce your budget for school lunches.



Check out Trays

- KaTom Restaurant Supply offers wholesale pricing on trays
- A great option for schools is item 370-FFT1014
- A variety of colors and only \$1.65 per tray
- www.katom.com

Baskets

- TableCraft
- www.tablecraft.com
- (800) -323-8321

Composting

- One of the most effective ways to reduce food waste at lunch time is composting food waste.
- Not impossible!!! Many schools throughout Michigan such as Pembroke Elementary in Birmingham currently have composting programs.
- Encourage students to compost at home too!
- Maxi containers offers discounts to schools.
- [Visit their website to learn more!](#)

