

Going Green in School Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet

Energy Conservation Practices

Air conditioning/quality:

- ✓ Install a programmable thermostat in the cafeteria to minimize operating hours of the heating and cooling systems during low occupancy periods.
- ✓ Use ceiling fans to promote air circulation and reduce the need for air conditioning.
- ✓ Maintain sealing around windows and doors to close air gaps in all air conditioned spaces.
- ✓ Ensure airflow around vents is not blocked by equipment or other barriers.
- ✓ Change air filters on a monthly basis.

Energy-efficient appliances:

- ✓ As existing equipment needs to be replaced, purchase and install ENERGY STAR-rated equipment.

Lighting:

- ✓ Place light switch reminders in the kitchen to remind staff to turn off lights when not in use.
- ✓ Install motion detectors in low occupancy areas, such as restrooms, storage rooms, walk-in coolers and freezers.
- ✓ Replace incandescent light bulbs with more energy-efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) or light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs.
- ✓ Leave only necessary lighting on for security when the kitchen and cafeteria are empty.

Kitchen appliances:

- ✓ Incorporate a routine cleaning and maintenance program for all kitchen equipment.
- ✓ Maintain refrigerator/freezer doors by replacing worn gaskets, aligning doors, enabling automatic door closers and replacing worn or damaged strip curtains.
- ✓ Set defrost time clocks on freezers to avoid peak energy use periods (noon to 6:00 p.m.).
- ✓ Insulate all water heaters.

Water Conservation Practices

Dishwashing:

- ✓ Use an ENERGY STAR dishwasher.
- ✓ Only turn the dishwasher on when dishes are being washed.
- ✓ Only wash full loads of dishes.
- ✓ Use pooled water to presoak utensils, pots and pans rather than running water.
- ✓ Use a low-flow prerinse nozzle for dish scraping/precleaning.

Food preparation:

- ✓ Thaw foods in the refrigerator or during the cooking process rather than under running water.
- ✓ Steam foods rather than boil them when possible.

Plumbing:

- ✓ Repair all leaks and/or dripping faucets promptly.
- ✓ Install flow reducers and faucet aerators in all plumbing fixtures wherever possible.

Promotion:

- ✓ Display water conservation signs in the school cafeteria.
- ✓ Encourage students to choose tap water instead of bottled water and to bring re-usable water bottles.

Purchasing of Environmentally Responsible Food and Beverages***Buying local:***

- ✓ Establish a Farm to School program.
- ✓ Identify local farms and find out availability of products.
- ✓ Purchase seasonal local fruits and vegetables and serve them on the line.

Products:

- ✓ Use alternative trays to polystyrene (styrofoam), such as recyclable trays or trays made from recycled materials.
- ✓ Purchase products that are packaged in recycled materials or products that use less packaging.
- ✓ Consider recycling options when determining which products to purchase.
- ✓ Purchase food in bulk instead of individually packaged often.

Reducing, Reusing and Recycling***Reduce food waste:***

- ✓ Donate leftover prepared foods to local food banks and/or charities.
- ✓ Give food waste to farmers or compost it.
- ✓ Rotate perishable food supplies using FIFO (first-in, first-out) to minimize waste due to spoilage and damage.
- ✓ Conduct a waste audit and review it annually for new measures to implement. (Food Waste Assessment Tools can be found at the following link:
<http://www.epa.gov/foodrecovery/tools/>)
- ✓ Implement Offer vs. Serve.
- ✓ Schedule recess before lunch to reduce food waste.

- ✓ Extend lunch periods from 20 to 30 minutes to reduce food waste.
- ✓ Use Smarter Lunchroom techniques to improve participation while reducing food waste.
- ✓ Change school policy to allow students to keep a breakfast or lunch food item for consumption later in the school day.

Reuse:

- ✓ Use reusable serving pans.
- ✓ Use washable service ware.
- ✓ Freeze leftovers and incorporate them into other meals to be served.
- ✓ Set up a share table, where unused and unopened food can be placed for use by another student.

Recycle:

- ✓ Place recycling bins in key locations around the cafeteria to encourage recycling practices.
- ✓ Use refillable condiment bottles or containers instead of single-use packaging.
- ✓ Print menus on recycled paper or make them available digitally.
- ✓ Display student artwork made from recycled materials in the cafeteria.
- ✓ Give or sell used grease from fryers to someone who can convert it to biofuel.
- ✓ Only discard items if they cannot be reused, recycled or composted.

Green Cleaning

Cleaning supplies:

- ✓ Use cleaning supplies that are certified by independent third-parties such as Green Seal to clean kitchen and cafeteria equipment and other surfaces.
- ✓ Purchase cleaning supplies in concentrate rather than in ready-to-use form.
- ✓ Use cleaning products that are made from or contain ingredients from renewable resources such as corn (cornstarch), coconut oils and orange peels.
- ✓ Purchase cleaning products that are packaged in a refillable or recyclable container.
- ✓ Store chemicals properly to avoid unauthorized use or spills.

School Gardens

School gardens:

- ✓ Designate a school garden coordinator and/or team to be actively involved in the development or maintenance of the school garden.
- ✓ Utilize fruits, vegetables and herbs from the school garden in the school cafeteria.
- ✓ Spread mulch around plants and trees to help retain moisture.
- ✓ Use the garden as a learning laboratory for hands-on education for students.
- ✓ Use organic insecticides or fertilizers in the school garden.
- ✓ Plant native plants in the school garden.
- ✓ Start a composting system at the school.

Sustainability Plans

Spreading the word:

- ✓ Promote sustainability plans, policies and progress on the school's website and through other available outlets.
- ✓ Include school nutrition employees, students, teachers and parents in discussions, research and other opportunities for expanding sustainability efforts.
- ✓ Include plans for conservation and sustainability efforts in the district wellness policy.

Other initiatives:

- ✓ Join the U.S. Food Waste Challenge to recognize the school's efforts to reduce food waste.
- ✓ Implement Trayless Tuesday's during the meal service period at least once a month.
- ✓ Form a student "green team" to ensure that items are properly recycled in the cafeteria.
- ✓ Send parents information about waste-free lunches.
- ✓ Train foodservice staff energy-saving practices and the importance of energy conservation.
- ✓ Encourage employees to use public transportation, carpool or bike/walk to work.
- ✓ Create a mural in the cafeteria with an environmental theme.