

Fresh Perspectives Series

Examining common misconceptions surrounding school meals to offer guidance on how to steer the conversations within your community!



Claim: “School Meals Contribute Too Much Food Waste”

Let’s Take a Closer Look...

Response: While that claim may hold some truth, it certainly doesn’t imply that all school nutrition professionals are ignoring the issue. On the contrary, there are **numerous strategies** actively implemented to **combat food waste** in school meals, many of which have been effective in addressing this intractable problem. By promoting an overall culture of mindfulness and accountability, schools are not only reducing food waste but also influencing future generations to be more aware of their environmental footprint.

Current Strategies that Effectively Reduce Food Waste



Share Tables

A designated table/area for students to place unopened, unwanted food items for others who may want them.



Longer Lunch Periods

Advocating for extended lunch periods is one of the most effective strategies to encourage greater food consumption and reduce waste in schools.



Offer vs Serve

This system allows students to decline certain food items they don't plan to eat, preventing unwanted food from being served in the first place.



Menu Innovation

Holding taste tests, recipe competitions, and/or using student advisory committees are effective in creating more appealing, less wasteful meals.



“Nudges”

Implementing small changes, like creative naming, or pre-slicing fruits and vegetables, have shown to increase consumption.

Crucial Points to Chat About...

Here are our recommended points to offer during any discussion to effectively **express your commitment and efforts** to reduce food waste at your sites:

- ✳ **Implementation of Waste Reduction Strategies:** Highlight your commitment to implementing strategies such as menu planning, portion control, and the use of food service technology (i.e. production records, Point of Service system) to forecast meal demand accurately.
- ✳ **Partnerships and Collaborations:** Discuss partnerships with local farms, food banks, and community organizations to redirect surplus food to those in need.
- ✳ **Composting and Recycling Programs:** Describe the implementation of composting food scraps and recycling programs (i.e. share table) within the cafeteria.