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Washington School Food Share Program Toolkit



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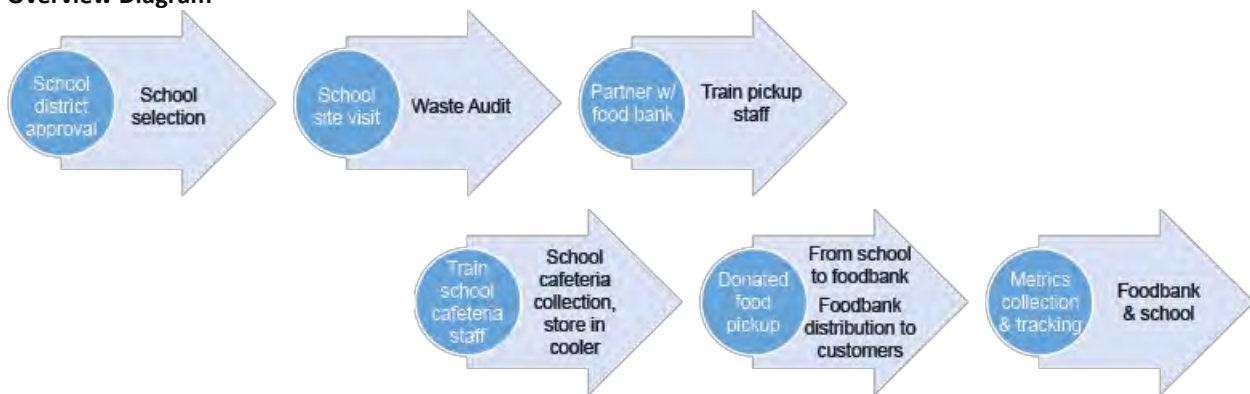
School Food Share –Overview

What is School Food Share?

School Food Share is a simple program that allows schools and food banks to work together to collect whole and packaged cafeteria leftovers and share them within their community. An average school throws away over 100 lbs. of recoverable food per week. This program helps schools use the food to 1) feed their own students and/or 2) donate the food to their local food bank to fight hunger in the community.

EPA's Region 10 office in Seattle, Washington has taken on the effort of creating a replicable model for school food recovery, called School Food Share.

Overview Diagram



A critical question...

In school year 2014-2015, the Green Team teacher at Puesta del Sol Elementary School in Bellevue, Washington asked a 'spark' question: "What are we going to do with all this wasted food in our lunchroom?" Shortly thereafter, Bellevue School District, in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency, piloted a program to donate whole, uneaten, leftover food from the lunchroom to Hopelink Food bank through the nonprofit FoodBus.

The pilot at Puesta del Sol Elementary School (student body of 575 children) was successful. Since 2015, approximately 100 pounds per week of fresh, consumable food (primarily milk, yogurt, string cheese, muffins, bananas and other fruit) has been donated to the local food bank. This means over 3,500 lbs. of food per year from one school can be shared with the community to help food insecure individuals and families.

Wasted Food

Definitions:

- Wasted food: food that could be recovered for consumption
- Food waste: food scraps that are not fit for human consumption
- Food Insecurity: lack of reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food

Wasted food in the United States, and globally, is a significant problem, rapidly gaining attention and action from governmental, nonprofit, and private interest organizations. For the purposes of this toolkit, we will focus on the local (Washington State) and national situation.

In the U.S.:

- An estimated 40% of food grown, processed, and transported in the U.S. will never be consumed.
- When food is disposed in a landfill, it rots and becomes a significant source of methane – a potent greenhouse gas with 21 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide.
- Food reaches landfills and incinerators more than any other material in municipal solid waste (MSW).

In schools, specifically:

- 40% of school cafeteria food is thrown out (landfill or compost).
- 76% of wasted food is fresh milk, fruits, and vegetables – highly valued food items in food banks.¹
- Meanwhile, 1 in 5 children in the state of Washington live in a household that struggles to put food on the table.²

For food waste in the U.S., EPA's [Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: Facts and Figures](#) provides an estimate of the amount of food going to landfills from residences, commercial establishments like grocery stores and restaurants, institutional sources like school cafeterias, and industrial sources like factory lunchrooms. USDA's Economic Research Service estimates that food waste at the retail and consumer levels in 2010 represented 31 percent of the available food supply, totaling about 133 billion pounds of food worth an estimated \$161.6 billion.³



Food Lifeline Infographic Food Safety Net from Missing Meals Report 2013⁴

¹ Issue Paper August 21, 2012 Dana Gunders. (2016, December 15). Wasted: How America Is Losing Up to 40 Percent of Its Food from Farm to Fork to Landfill.

² Northwest Harvest. Northwest Harvest: WA Hunger Facts October 2015.

³ Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: Facts and Figures Report. (2017, February 10). <https://www.epa.gov/smm/advancing-sustainable-materials-management-facts-and-figures-report>

⁴ Food Lifeline. Food Lifeline: Missing Meals Report 2013.

Program Vision

School Food Share seeks to prevent and minimize wasted food in schools, and redirect consumable food to those who need it.

Guiding Principles

- Educate students on the problem of wasted food
- Encourage activities that prevent wasted food
- Educate children about food insecurity in their community
- Redirect consumable food within the school or to hunger relief organizations
- Minimize the cost to schools of wasted food and the associated environmental impacts

Westwood Elementary

Food Waste Reduction

This elementary school in Washington's Enumclaw School District utilized a student pledge and school survey to identify a high uneaten rate for bagged carrots, resulting in a substitution, and avoided wasted food.

Information for Schools

Prevention First

The best way to minimize food waste is to prevent it. On the next page, an USDA infographic summarizes several actions schools can take today:



United States Department of Agriculture

REDUCING FOOD WASTE

WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO TODAY



USDA's Economic Research Service estimates

31%

of the overall food supply at the retail and consumer level **went uneaten** in the U.S. in 2010



Scheduling recess before lunch can reduce plate waste by **AS MUCH AS 30%**



Extending lunch periods from **20 TO 30** minutes reduced plate waste by nearly one-third



SMARTER LUNCHROOM STRATEGIES,

such as how foods are named and where they are placed in the cafeteria, can facilitate healthy choices and increase fruit and vegetable consumption by

UP TO 70%



SCHOOLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE STEPPING UP TO THE CHALLENGE WITH INNOVATIVE NEW STRATEGIES, SUCH AS:

- Allowing students to keep a lunch or breakfast food item for consumption later in the school day
- Using techniques listed on the **Smarter Lunchrooms Self-Assessment Score Card** to help reduce food waste
- Setting up a table for kids to place items they are not going to consume (packaged or pre-portioned items)
- Letting kids self-serve
- Composting food waste for school gardens
- Collaborating with local farmers on composting or food-scrap projects
- Collecting excess wholesome food after mealtimes to donate to charitable organizations
- Sign up for the **U.S. Food Waste Challenge** to share your story on how you are reducing, recovering, or recycling food waste

⁵ USDA | OCE | U.S. Food Waste Challenge | K-12 Schools. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2017, from https://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/resources/K12_schools.html

Getting Started with School Food Share

A coalition of partner organizations in Washington State has developed the School Food Share Program to recover and redirect usable food from schools to local food banks. This program outlines the steps and guidelines by which schools can – legally and with federal program support – collect the leftover, edible food in the cafeteria, set it aside in bins for donation in available cooler space, and have it delivered to the local food bank for distribution to its customers.

School Food Share priorities, in order of preference:

1. Students eat the food they are served at school breakfast, snacks or lunch.
2. Whole, unopened leftovers are used to feed those who need it within the school community.
3. The remainder of edible food is redirected quickly to the local food banks for distribution.
4. Finally, anything left that cannot be consumed in another way is composted.

Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Meal Programs

The term “food bank” often refers to facilities that collect and store food before distributing it to local food pantries, charities, and meal programs. “Food pantries,” unlike the banks, serve directly to hungry people (who may or may not have homes in which to prepare food). And “meal programs,” sometimes referred to as soup kitchens, offer prepared food and hot meals to hungry people. This document uses the term “food bank” to refer both to the warehouse/distribution facilities and the direct service organizations described above.

Even after those within the school community have eaten their fill, schools can donate thousands of pounds of food per year to help others in their community. It is a win-win-win proposition: avoid wasted food, wasted resources and associated environmental impacts, help to feed hungry people in the community, and save the school district waste removal expenses. In addition, students learn they can make a positive impact on the environment and their local community.

A few steps to get started:

1. Reach out to key organizations. You will need their permission to implement a program.
 - a. Your school, district and/or nutrition services.
 - b. Your local health department. Washington State Department of Health has released [guidelines](#) on conducting program participation safely and with regulatory approval. USDA has already provided approval through its guidance on Food Donation Programs in Child Nutrition Programs, available at: https://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/FNS_Guidance.pdf
2. Reach out to other partners including school district nutrition and janitorial services, food banks, local government, and the Office of State Public Instruction (OSPI). It is easier when everyone does their part, and often there are some existing programs to leverage.

Selecting Schools to Participate

While the goal is for every school to have a School Food Share program in place, some schools are better suited to become pilot programs in each district. Develop a list of criteria that will help you do the following:

1. **Collect baseline data** about existing wasted food and food waste prevention and recovery practices in your school. Conduct a sample collection of food leftovers after lunch. Weigh the food and take pictures to document the amount of wasted food. Multiply the weight of leftover consumable food by the number of school days to get an annual estimate.
2. **Gather information about the school:** location, student body, support and food champions in a green team, student council, kitchen or janitorial staff or teacher, etc. In many districts, elementary and middle schools have better food collection results.

3. **Document physical needs of each school:** refrigerator/cooler space, power, accessibility, kitchen hours, container availability, etc.

The School Food Share team utilized the following attributes in developing pilots around the Seattle area. You may use these parameters as a baseline for your data collection (full table available in the appendix).

1. School name and contact information
2. Geographic location (City and County)
3. Size of student body and breakdown of those who buy lunch versus bring lunch from home.
4. Percentage of free/reduced lunch (FRL) – data available through OSPI; schools with higher FRL tend to have more students buying lunch than bringing it from home.
5. Is breakfast or dinner served? Schools that serve breakfast or dinner have additional opportunities for food collection.
6. Lunch setup – “offer” vs “serve” or other models. ‘Offer’ means the child chooses, although they must take several required items; ‘serve’ means the food is prepacked, similar to airline food. Amounts of wasted food vary depending on models used.
7. Lunch before recess or recess before lunch? Evidence shows that students eat more after recess than before, leading to less food wasted.
8. Does a school green team exist? The green team can help set up and run the School Food Share program and may have existing operations in place.
9. Existence of local organization relationships (e.g. Washington Green Schools or King County Green Schools). Such groups have curriculum available to help schools with a variety of environmental education programs and policies, as well as student learning and involvement.
10. Refrigerator space available – does the school lunchroom have enough refrigerator space to hold leftover food for donation until pickup for the food bank? Schools typically need enough space to store two milk crates.
11. Does the school offer existing supplemental food programs such as backpacks of food to go home at the end of the day? Is there an existing after school program that could or does distribute the food?
12. Is there a share table? Share tables are an effective way of redistributing food in school cafeterias.
13. Number of clean up stations – this assists in planning for the number of bins and signs needed. A clean up line could look like this: 1. School Food Share collection bin, 2. liquid dump, 3. recycling, 4. landfill, compost, tray-stacking area.
14. Is there a compost program in place? More and more schools compost food waste, creating an opportunity to use food waste as a soil amendment while keeping food waste out of landfills
15. School garden – schools with an active school garden may have existing programs to leverage, to serve the garden food in the lunchroom, and/or to donate leftover produce with their food donations. An in-house system could also provide an opportunity for students to learn about the composting process.
16. Food bank or meal provider partner options – food banks with geographic proximity, capacity (both physical space and personnel or volunteers), and desire to participate.

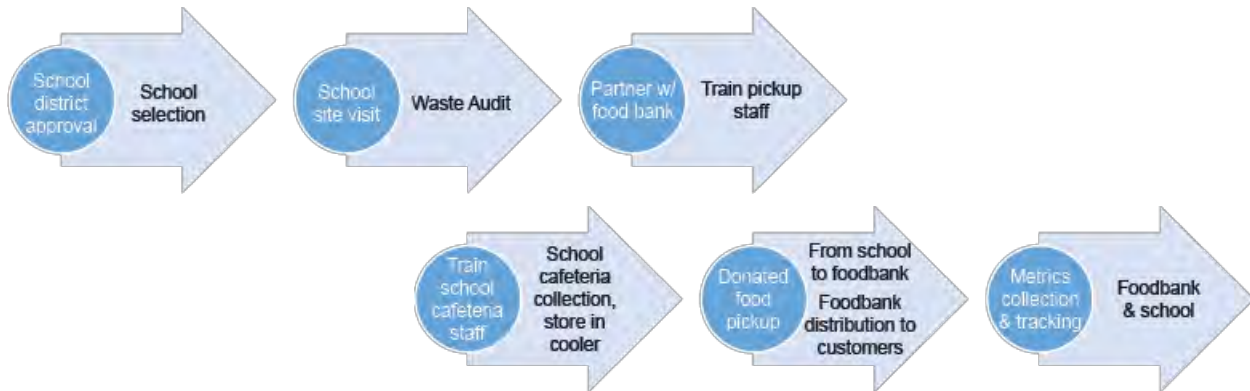


Image of waste collection bins in school

School Food Collection Logistics

The priority of the School Food Share program is to feed the students at school then to recover what students do not eat. When rolling out the School Food Share program, remind and encourage students that their food is for them, to eat as much as they have an appetite for, and only donate what they cannot eat.

The goal is to feed people, not landfills or composting facilities.



Decide on storage for perishable foods, which must be stored safely.

Decide on the food recipient. Sometimes existing school programs or 'share tables' can use the food. Once you've selected the recipient, develop a Memorandum of Understanding (template in appendix) between organizations to set out roles, responsibilities and expectations.

Conduct a one-day pilot to test school collection logistics and food storage, and to assess the volume of food collected.

What *can* be donated

For the most complete list of food that can be donated, refer to the current State Health Department guidance document (on page 13 of the toolkit). School foods that typically can be donated include:

- Cartons of milk kept at $\leq 41^{\circ}\text{F}$
- Packaged cheese, yogurt cups and tubes kept at $< 41^{\circ}\text{F}$
- Granola, muffins, meat jerky
- Prepackaged sauces (e.g. applesauce, pasta sauce)
- Prepackaged apple slices, nuts, dried fruits
- Whole fruits and vegetables with an intact peel or outer skin (washed if skin is edible)
- Sealed bottles of water, cartons of juice, or other beverages
- Other non-perishable food items

Note that "back of the house" supplies in the kitchen, such as unopened cans and jars of food, can be donated to food banks as well. Check with your food bank partner to see what items are useful to them.

What *cannot* be donated

- Any opened/resealed containers
- Hot food or previously heated food
- Refrigerated items brought from home in student lunches
- Any homemade items

There are many ways of collecting the food in the cafeteria. Cafeteria staff typically coordinate and students do the physical collection of the food. Many schools use their student council or green team to lead the effort and train students to help with collection as the program becomes routine.

Here are two examples from our pilots:

- At the end of lunch, each student places their food and drinks eligible for donation in a School Food Share bin near the garbage and recycling collection area. The School Food Share bin has an ice pack at the bottom to keep items requiring refrigeration cold until they can be moved to the refrigerator.
- During lunch, students place items for donation at the end of their table for pick up during lunch cleanup.

Successful food collection methods can follow a variety of models, depending on individual school situations.

Supplies

- 4-6 sturdy bins/baskets to collect the food – size and type varies by school/food bank partnership and available refrigerator space. You typically need 1-2 bins for each clean up line and 2-4 bins to store the food in the refrigerator.
- Ice packs to be placed in the bottom of the food collection bins/baskets. The ice packs will keep donated food items requiring refrigeration cold until they can be moved to the refrigerator.
- Large, kid-friendly signs and posters to hang in and around the cafeteria (sample signs available in appendix).
- Clearly marked labels attached to the bins, stating the contents are for donation (appendix).
- Space in the refrigerator or cooler at school to hold perishable food until picked up for delivery to food bank.



Image of food collection bins being weighed

The best bins are small enough to be easily lifted when full, have handles, and fit in the refrigerator space of both the school and food bank. Some food banks will provide their own bins to be used and swapped in and out. Consider sturdy plastic storage bins with lids that stack or milk crates that your school may already have. If these same bins are being used at a Share Table first, consider getting transparent bins shallow enough to allow young children to easily see their contents.

All bins must be clearly labeled with the School Food Share or other food bank signs to ensure the separation of donated food from food being served during regular mealtimes.

Start collecting food for use and donation. Students love helping in this program; green teams and student councils have proven to be great partners. Have the food bank partner pick up the donated food at least once per week. Identify pick-up days depending on your school schedule and the needs of the food bank.

Measure your results and congratulate all participants for making a collective difference in your community. Share results with your school community!

Hopelink, a Bellevue, WA food bank, who has been a Food Share partner for over two years, recently told EPA that on a particular day in May “the milk, yoghurt and cheese we were able to offer to our clients was all provided by the School Food Share program. Without the consistent donations of fresh food from the schools, we would not have been able to provide our clients with milk, yoghurt or cheese this week.”

Information for Food banks

For a school to be able to donate their leftover food, the receiving food bank must first:

- Have received a health department variance (described below) to distribute the donated food.
- Have physical capacity in the building and coolers or refrigerators.
- Have the physical staff and/or volunteers to collect and transport the food from the school to the food bank. Students' parents can be a source of volunteers. Some school districts use more than one food bank when donating their food. Food banks and schools work together based on their schedules, proximity to each other, and staffing capacity to collect the food.
- Have bins (purchased or donated) supplied by the school, the food bank, or any combination thereof that works for the school/food bank partnership. Bins must be cleaned; confirm with this expectation with the food bank.

The kinds of foods that schools donate are in high demand by food banks – milk, yogurt, cheese, and fresh produce – and are provided to food bank customers nearly immediately after being recovered from schools. These items are already packaged and easy to distribute to food bank clients. Note that to determine the best food bank match for school donations, you will want to ensure that the school lunch components meet the needs of the food bank or meal program provider, as well as their ability to store and redistribute the food to clients. In some cases, food banks or pantries are not equipped to store and distribute perishable items, whereas a meal program provider may use the items as ingredients or will repackage them for redistribution.

Criteria Checklist for Food banks

Example

Criteria	Description	Comments
Food bank Name	____ Food bank	
Food bank Branch Location	Address	
Capacity available in cooler/refrigerator	5 blue bins per week for school food	How much capacity (using the measurement used by the food bank)
Expected capacity from school	____ Elementary – 150 lbs. per week	580-student elementary school (see school profile checklist for averages & details)
Labeling system	Laminated tags binder clipped to bins	Way to identify foods/drinks stored in school refrigerator intended for donation
Measurement and tracking system	Upon checking in at food bank; donation is weighed and all specifics noted.	Data collected should include type of food, weight received, and person who checked it in. Receipt given to person delivering food. Reports kept by food bank.
Bin sterilization process in place	Yes, standard for all deliveries	
Bins and other supplies	Food bank to use own bins	
Pick up from school	Existing (trained food handler) volunteers will stop at school 2x per week.	Food bank-trained volunteer drivers to stop at designated schools on their routes.

Health Department –Legalities, Rules, & Regulations

Local county and city health departments take direction from the state health department and may adopt additional policies, rules, and regulations. Washington State has issued an official guidance document on the donation of leftover consumable school food. The current guidance mandates that the *receiving* organization (i.e. food bank) requires a variance to receive served food. Depending on the local health department jurisdiction, one variance might cover one site or all food bank sites receiving food from a school. A small cost may be involved in this variance (e.g. \$250 per site) or the cost can be waived entirely. The food bank or receiving food distributor is responsible for acquiring this variance; the variance request takes several weeks to be processed and approved.

Below you will find the most recent guidance that the Washington State Department of Health Food Safety Program provided to the Seattle area School Food Share pilot teams. Always check with your local jurisdiction.

Draft State Health Department Guidance for School Food Share Programs

Link to WA guidance

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Food/FoodWorkerandIndustry/CharityFoodDonations>

Guidance for School Food Service Programs Interested in Food Recovery and Donation

Donation Plans Must Be Reviewed by Local Health Jurisdiction September 2016

SUMMARY

Donation of food helps reduce wasted food and food insecurity concerns in communities. This document provides food safety guidance for school programs that want to recover and provide food to donated food distributing organizations such as food banks, shelters, or soup kitchens. While helping to alleviate wasted food and food insecurity concerns, donation of food has a potential risk of contamination and temperature abuse.

A list of Washington State Local Health Departments and Districts is available at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/PublicHealthSystem/LocalHealthJurisdictions>

INTENT

Provide food safety guidance to school food service programs considering donation of wholesome food to needy students or donated food distribution organizations.

BACKGROUND FOR FOOD DONATIONS FROM SCHOOL AND OTHER USDA NUTRITION PROGRAMS

On November 18, 2011, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act 2012 amended the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act which provided statutory authority for schools and other USDA nutrition programs to have food recovery and food donation policies. The statute clarifies that any unconsumed food may be donated to eligible local food banks or charitable organizations. The amendment defines eligible local food banks or charitable organizations to mean any food bank or charitable organization that is tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the *Internal Revenue Code* of 1986.

GUIDANCE

School programs planning to salvage food for donation must consult with their local health department before beginning a recovery program. The operating requirements and expectations will vary depending on the foods donated and the facilities available. At a minimum, schools should consider and be prepared to explain the following when pursuing food donation:

- **Which donated food distributing organizations will receive the donations?** Written agreements outlining delivery days, transportation plans, temperature monitoring, source tracking, and other logistics information help ensure wholesome food and traceable delivery.

- **Will potentially hazardous foods be donated?** Commercially-packaged, shelf-stable snack foods do not need special approval for donation; however, donation of potentially hazardous foods will require restrictions or additional procedures such as temperature monitoring to ensure the distributing organization may accept the food.
- **Will home-prepared food be donated?** Only commercially-packaged, shelf-stable products should be accepted from the public for donation.
- **Will previously-served foods be donated?** Distributing organizations are not allowed to receive previously served foods, even intact food items such as whole fruits or packaged dairy products, without additional safety precautions and written approval from the health department.
- **How will food planned for donation be collected and identified?** Food scheduled for donation may not be reintroduced to the food supply for the school. Participants must have a plan for safe food separation, identification, and storage.
- **Will the school participate in an internal, organized food sharing program for students such as Backpack Brigade?** Food safety standards such as temperature requirements and safety of sources extend to meals that go home with the students.
- **Who will be responsible for coordinating the donation program?** Safe donation will require a coordinated, planned effort. Ensure representatives from the school and the distributing location work together to provide safe recovery, transportation, and service of the food.

STUDENT DONATION OF FOOD FROM SCHOOL MEALS

Previously served food includes all food that has been in the hands of a consumer such as food selected by students from a salad bar or cafeteria line. Previously served food for recovery and donation should be limited to the following, unless otherwise limited by the local health department:

- Unopened, commercially pre-packaged, non-potentially hazardous food such as granola bars, apple slices, crackers, and raisins with no fire, water, or other signs of distress.
- Whole produce with an intact, non-edible rind or peel such as oranges and bananas.
- Whole produce with an edible peel such as apples, plums, nectarines, and pears with an intact, undamaged skin that are properly rinsed by kitchen staff prior to donation.
- Unopened, pre-packaged, dairy products such as string cheese, milk, and yogurt that will be maintained refrigerated and delivered at 41°F or colder.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERNAL SCHOOL DONATIONS

- Backpack Brigades and other food donations for school children to take home should be limited to school meal components or commercially-packaged snack foods (no home-prepared foods). Backpack items with potentially hazardous food ingredients must be kept refrigerated.
- School sharing tables should be limited to unopened/unpeeled school meal components (no home-prepared foods); limited to service during the current meal period; and offered from a designated collection area posted with safe operating reminders and restrictions for student sharing. All commercially-packaged, potentially hazardous foods must be immediately stored on ice followed by identification and refrigeration for recovery donation or discarded at the end of each meal service.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR SAFE FOOD DONATION

- Food past the original manufacturer's "sell by" and "best if used by" date are suitable for donation, but not foods past a "use by" date.
- Dates on most foods, such as milk, yogurt, and packaged non-potentially hazardous foods, are not "use by" dates and are suitable for donation past the marked date.

- Food establishments wanting to donate food should ensure contamination-free procedures, strict employee hygiene practices, and proper temperature maintenance procedures are written and followed.
- It is recommended that an agreement be developed between the participating organizations to indicate selected foods for donation, contamination prevention measures, temperature control, transport and delivery procedures, and source records.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Department of Health Charitable Food Guidelines

www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Food/FoodWorkerandIndustry/CharityFoodDonations

www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Food/LocalFoodSafetyContacts

USDA Guidance on Food Donation in Child Nutrition Programs

www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-05-2012-guidance-food-donation-program-child-nutrition-programs

Washington State Department of Health Food Safety Program

Questions regarding this information should be directed to your local health department or the Washington State Department of Health Food Safety Program at 360-236-3330 or food.safety@doh.wa.gov.

Share Tables

Many schools use “share tables” on which unopened, packaged foods and whole fruits served by the school lunch program can be shared among students within the school at lunch time. Some schools opt out of share table programs due to specific allergy policies. USDA has issued guidance (see below) on the program. Please check the OSPI website for any updates to this guidance after the publication of the School Food Share Toolkit document.

Using “share tables” encourages the consumption of nutritious foods and reduces wasted food in Child Nutrition Programs. The USDA has provided guidance on this and the USDA memo “The Use of Share Tables in Nutrition Programs” can be viewed at: [USDA Guidance on Share Tables](#)

USDA Memo: The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition

Using “share tables” is a strategy to encourage the consumption of nutritious foods and reduce wasted food in Child Nutrition Programs. Share tables are tables or stations where children may return whole food or beverage items they choose not to eat, if it is in compliance with local and State health and food safety codes. These food and beverage items are then available to other children who may want additional servings. If a sponsor has leftover or unusable foods on a frequent basis, menu planning and production practices should be adjusted to reduce leftovers or unusable foods.

Share tables allow food or beverage items to be reused in a number of ways:

- Children may take an additional helping from the share table at no cost
- Food or beverage items left on the share table may be served during another meal service
- Food or beverage items may be donated to a non-profit organization, such as a food bank

Sponsors must follow the food safety requirements outlined in the regulations as well as local and State health and food safety codes. Sponsors should check with their local health departments regarding local requirements. The USDA guidance outlines the following steps when establishing share tables:

1. Follow Federal, State, and local health and food safety requirements
2. Establish clear guidelines for food components that may or may not be shared or reused as part of a later reimbursable meal
3. If sharing items that require cooling is permissible under local and State laws, establish strict food safety guidelines to prevent the risk of foodborne illness
4. Supervise the share table at all times to ensure compliance with food safety requirements
5. Ensure children and families understand the purpose and food safety requirements of the share table

Federal Laws and Guidance

Federal laws encourage food donation in the United States by providing liability protection to donors or tax incentives. See the [EPA's website](#) for additional information and resources.

- The [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act](#) was created to encourage the donation of food and grocery products to qualified nonprofit organizations and provides liability protection to food donors. Under this act, as long as the donor has not acted with negligence or intentional misconduct, the company or organization is not liable for damage incurred as the result of illness.
- [Internal Revenue Code 170\(e\)\(3\)](#) provides enhanced tax deductions to businesses to encourage donations of fit and wholesome food to qualified nonprofit organizations serving the poor and needy. Qualified business taxpayers can deduct the cost to produce the food and half the difference between the cost and full fair market value of the donated food.
- The [U.S. Federal Food Donation Act of 2008](#) specifies procurement contract language encouraging Federal agencies and contractors of Federal agencies to donate excess wholesome food to eligible nonprofit organizations to feed food-insecure people in the United States.
- The USDA memo <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-05-2012-guidance-food-donation-program-child-nutrition-programs> [Guidance on Food Donation in Child Nutrition Programs](#) provides information on current federal food recovery and donation policy. It also provides guidance on re-serving food in a subsequent meal service. Confirm all options with your local health department.

Farm to School – Federal and WA State guidance

- Federal: Information about school gardens, such as the approval to use the food grown in gardens in the school cafeteria: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school>
- Link to the Washington State Department of Agriculture Farm to School program: <http://www.wafarmtoschool.org/>

Data and Metrics Collection

To date, schools and public agencies have gathered metrics to show the pounds of food recovered from schools and provided to food banks. Per the MOU, food bank partners should report to the school the collected food amounts (in pounds) and meals served. Some examples of additional useful metrics schools could collect are listed below.

- Changes in the school or district's solid waste management costs.
 - This could be a driver in broader implementation.
- Pounds collected during the one-day pilot and on a similar day later in program implementation.
 - This allows for a broader understanding of the food diverted from waste.
- Number of items collected and categorized.
 - This could be useful in setting future lunch menus.
- Information on changes: recess before/after lunch, share table use, number of kids in school, number of students served lunch.
 - These could help tell a story of waste prevention or help better understand changes in consumption.

School District: Most school data is available directly from the [OSPI Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction website](#). Individual schools may track a variety of attributes beyond what is publicly displayed. Have a conversation about what data needs to be collected and tracked.

Food banks: Food banks and pantries keep detailed metrics regarding the amount and origin of their donations. Schools can and should request copies of their donation metrics for tracking, and this expectation should be detailed in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) between the school and food bank. A sample MOU is provided in the appendix.

The amount of consumable food saved for redirection to a food bank can vary depending on a variety of reasons, including:

- Style of lunch—prepack, offer/serve, kitchen/no kitchen
- Demographics – free/reduced lunch percentages, lunches brought from home versus bought
- Menu – food served (e.g. pizza versus tuna casserole)
- Time to eat – more food may be wasted if there is not enough time allotted for lunch
- Recess before or after lunch – recess before lunch results in less wasted lunch food

Local Example

The first school in the pilot in 2014 was an elementary school of nearly 600 kids with a full kitchen available to serve a hot food program. Metrics here show that roughly 4,000 pounds of food are redirected to the food bank per school year.

In a district such as Bellevue, Washington with 17 elementary schools of similar size and similar meal setups, **this could mean 68,000 pounds of food donations per school year for a single district.**

Conduct a School Food Waste Audit: A One-Day Food Collection

Before beginning a full food recovery program, you can effectively gauge the amount of food leftover per school by conducting a one-day food waste audit. The audit entails collection all leftover consumable food and weighing it at the end of all lunch periods for one typical school day. This simple audit only looks at one component: leftover food that could be donated. For an audit of all food waste, the U.S. EPA and USDA have created a helpful document called [Guide to Conducting Student Food Waste Audits](#).

To evaluate the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the School Food Share program, refer to the Waste Reduction Model (WARM), available through the EPA at <https://www.epa.gov/warm>.

The benefits of a waste audit include:

- Providing a visible collection of the unopened/usable food that is targeted for the landfill.
- Providing a sample weight of collected food eligible for donation to use in estimating food weight for a full program.
- Showing the kinds of foods that can typically be donated by the school to the local food bank partner.

Below is a link to helpful EPA tools in assessing food waste.

<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/tools-assessing-wasted-food>

School Food Share in Action



Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3

Cafeteria collects food at clean-up station (picture 1) in bins marked with Food Share signs (picture 2) and students store it appropriately before pickup (picture 3).



Picture 4



Picture 5

One to two times per week, a food bank-trained volunteer picks up the food from participating schools (picture 4) and delivers it to the food bank where it is weighed and tracked (picture 5).

Communications

Individuals and communities are interested in learning about programs designed to reduce wasted food, especially if they involve children. Through this program, students learn about the importance of reducing wasted food and how to both minimize waste and help feed hungry people. We encourage you to share your program broadly for the benefit of the school and food bank image, as well as to spread the “spark” to encourage others to participate in similar programs!

Public relation staff for the school district and the partnering food bank(s) can work together to decide how to celebrate and share the accomplishments of their School Food Share programs.

Examples

Video: Early on, the Bellevue School District worked with the EPA and the Food Bus organization to create and share a video which was posted online via YouTube and the EPA’s Facebook page:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyXH2ydZ8mc>

Print: Below, the Bremerton School District’s success story appeared in their local newspaper.

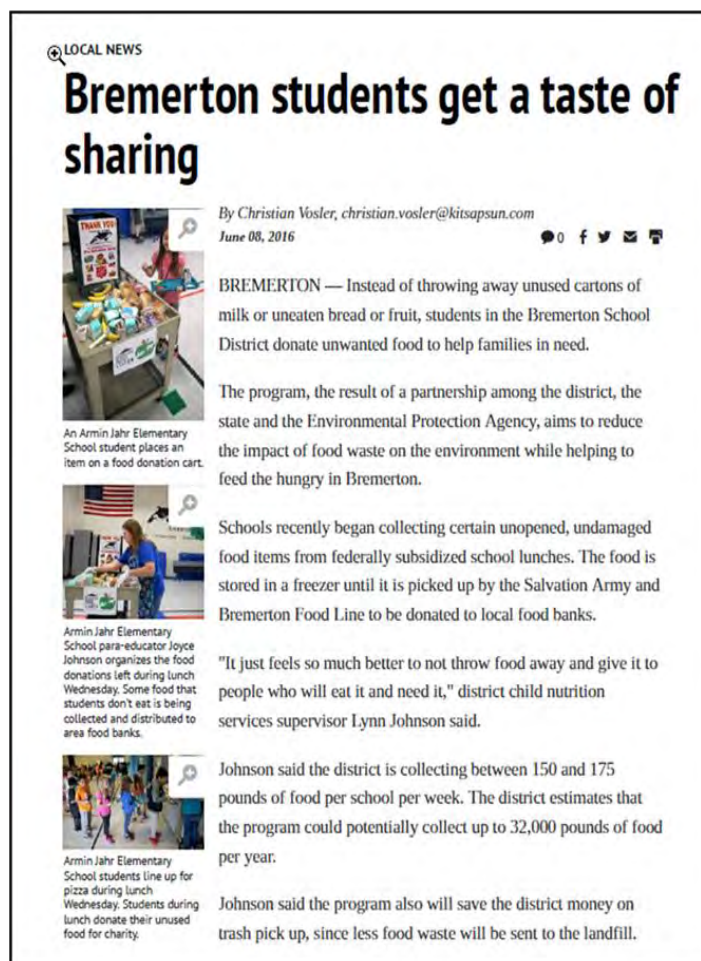


Image of Bremerton School District School Food Share Story

Related Programs and Initiatives

The School Food Share program exists as just one of many initiatives and programs in the U.S. aimed at reducing food waste and redirecting leftover school food to a usable place. Below are a few government and non-governmental (NGO) programs for additional resources and ideas.

U.S. EPA Food Recovery Challenge

The EPA's Food Recovery Challenge (FRC) rewards businesses and organizations (including schools) that reduce wasted food through a formal recognition process: www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-recovery-challenge-frc.

As part of EPA's Food Recovery Challenge, organizations pledge to improve their sustainable management of food practices and report their results. The FRC is part of EPA's Sustainable Materials Management Program, which seeks to reduce the environmental impact of materials through their entire life cycle. This includes extraction, manufacturing, distribution, use, reuse, recycling, and disposal.

Organizations are encouraged to follow the [Food Recovery Hierarchy](#) to prioritize their actions in preventing and diverting wasted food. Food Recovery Challenge participants include groups such as grocers, educational institutions, restaurants, faith organizations, sports and entertainment venues, and hospitality businesses.

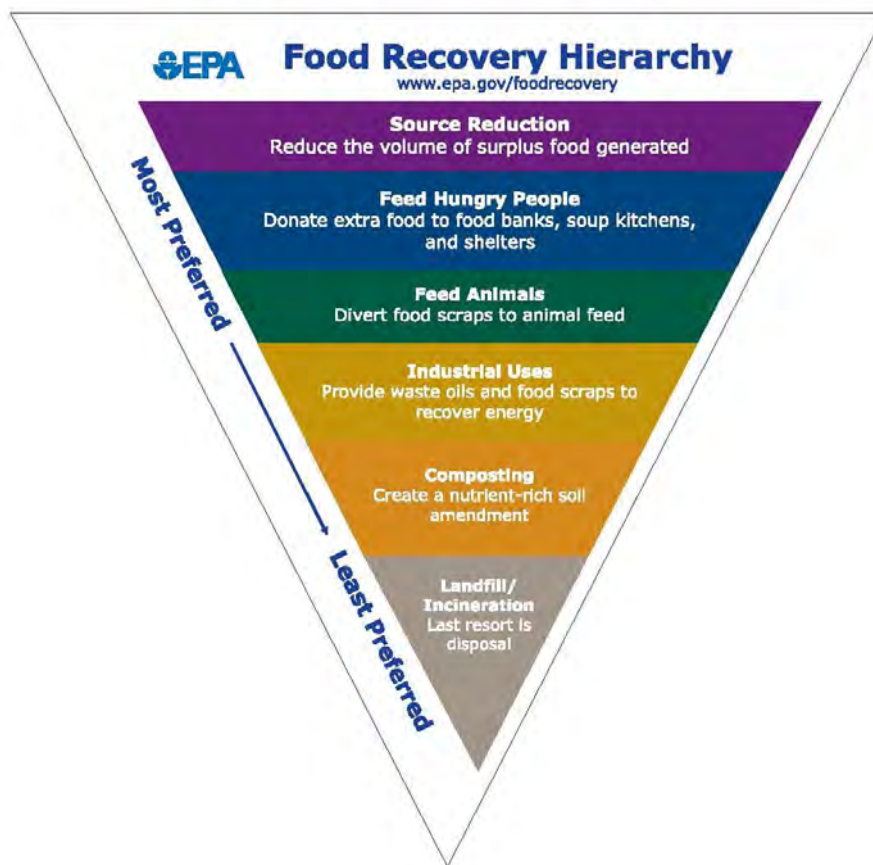


Image of Food Recovery Hierarchy

Benefits of joining EPA's Food Recovery Challenge:

- Help your community by donating nutritious, leftover food to feed hungry people, not landfills.
- Save money by purchasing less and/or lowering waste disposal fees.
- Gain visibility by having your organization's name listed on the EPA's website.
- Receive recognition through awards and social media.
- Obtain free technical assistance in the form of webinars, an online database, and resources to help plan, implement, and track activities.
- Get a free climate change report that highlights the positive effect on the environment.

If you are implementing a School Food Share program, you are already eligible to join. [Sign up today for the Food Recovery Challenge.](#)

USDA – Department of Agriculture

The USDA offers a variety of food waste education, prevention, and reduction programs available at <https://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/>

The Smarter Lunchroom Assessment: <http://smarterlunchrooms.org/resource/lunchroom-self-assessment-score-card>

K-12 schools have a special role in not only reducing, recovering, and recycling food waste on their premises, but also in educating the next generation about recovering wholesome excess food for donation and reducing food waste to conserve natural resources.

"I know schools are already doing so much to cut food waste and educate children about food and agriculture. It would be great if we could get hundreds of schools to join the Food Waste Challenge and spread the word about these good efforts...and stimulate more!" – Janey Thornton, Deputy Undersecretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services, USDA

Washington Green Schools

The Washington Green Schools nonprofit organization helps students and communities across Washington State to create greener, healthier school environments. The nonprofit organization provides a system of support for school communities to set and achieve sustainability goals, including classrooms resources on minimizing waste.

King County Green Schools Program

Program representatives provide hands-on guidance, recommendations tailored to each participating school and district, and support to student Green Teams. The program offers Best Practices Guides in waste reduction and recycling, healthy schools, energy, water and other conservation areas, and recognizes schools and districts for Green School actions. King County also provides recycling bins and signs, as well as free classroom workshops for grades K–12 and an assembly program for elementary schools at <http://your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/greenschools/>

Oakland, California Unified School District Green Gloves Program

For additional resources, best practices, and ideas on school food waste reduction programs, visit Oakland Unified School District's Green Gloves Program at <http://www.ousd.org/greengloves>.

Seattle Public Utilities

Seattle Public Utilities offers information and free tools to reduce waste of all kinds, including food waste. <http://www.seattle.gov/util/ForBusinesses/GreenYourBusiness/ReduceWaste/index.htm>

USDA, WSDA, WSU – Feeding Food Scraps to Animals

When food is still edible but not fed to people, feeding it to animals could be the next best option. Some schools and food banks work with local farmers who receive the food scraps to feed their animals. According to Dana Dobbs, the Swine Health Cooperative Agreement Manager and a Field Veterinarian at WSDA, feeding animals produce and bakery food items complies with all appropriate regulations. However, any person collecting meat scraps or food that has come into contact with meat, must have a permit from WSDA (currently \$10 per year), and must cook the food to a temperature of 212 F for 30 minutes before feeding it to pigs.

RCW 16.36.105 Swine, garbage feeding, license – Application – Fee – Inspection

<http://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=16.36.105>

WSU Small Farm Finder – Use this to find chicken and pig farmers that might want food scraps.

http://smallfarms.wsu.edu/farms/locate_search.asp

USDA information sheet – Summarizes “Garbage Feeding & the Swine Protection Act,” and suggests calling the WA State Department of Agriculture (360-902-1878) or Stacy Woznik with USDA in Tumwater, WA at 360-753-9430.

Appendix

Templates & Examples

U.S. EPA Region 10 has provided the following templates as examples for schools to modify and use in their own school food recovery programs.

Program At-A-Glance Overview



School Food Share

Feeding People, Protecting the Planet, Saving Money

Well over one third of all food produced in the United States ends up in a landfill (NRDC, August 2012). A typical elementary school throws away about 30 lbs. per day of whole fruits and unopened milk cartons, string cheese, yogurts, muffins, and other packaged food. The wasted food arises from many factors; school cafeterias funded through the USDA School Nutrition Program require students to take set servings of particular foods, which often times results in food going directly into the trash. Meanwhile, one in five children in the U.S. live in homes that are food insecure ([Northwest Harvest, October 2015](#)).

A coalition of partner organizations in Washington State has been collaborating since 2015 to pilot and implement a School Food Share program to recover and redirect usable food from schools to local food banks. This program outlines the steps and guidelines by which schools can – legally and with technical assistance – collect the whole, unopened, leftover edible food items in the cafeteria, set them aside in bins for donation in available cooler space, and have the food delivered to the local food bank for immediate distribution to its customers.

School Food Share priorities, in order of preference, are:

1. Students eat the food served at school breakfast or lunch.
2. The whole and unopened food feeds those who need it within the school community.
3. The remaining usable food is redirected quickly to local food banks for distribution.
4. Finally, anything left that cannot be salvaged gets composted.

Even after those within the school community have eaten their fill, schools can donate thousands of pounds of food per year to help others in their community. It is a win-win-win situation: avoid wasted food and all the associated environmental impacts, help feed hungry people in the community, and save the school district waste removal expenses. Reducing wasted food and supporting food banks is the right thing to do and teaches students they can make a positive impact on the environment and their local community.

Steps to get started:

Reach out to key organizations. You will need their permission and assistance to implement a program.

1. Your school, district and/or nutrition services.
2. Your local health department. Washington State Department of Health has released [guidelines](#) on how to participate in the program safely and with regulatory approval.
3. USDA has already provided approval through its guidance on Food Donation Programs in Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/FNS_Guidance.pdf



Preliminary Email to School Employee Community

From: School principal
Subject: New School Food Share Program
Hello Teachers and Staff,

Next week, our school will begin a new district-approved, Environmental Protection Agency-encouraged School Food Share Program in the cafeteria. The goal of the program is to minimize wasted food. We want to encourage students to save unopened and whole food they don't care to eat, rather than throwing it away. This food will be collected and sent to our local food bank for immediate distribution to their customers. Each day, students will be invited to donate any whole or packaged food (muffins, yogurts, string cheese, milk, etc.) from their school meals for redistribution as an alternative to putting it in the trash or compost bins.

There is no action required on your part, but your support for the program is appreciated. There may be a tie-in to your current curriculum and our Green Team, including science, math, English, art, or other courses.

Thank you!

Email or newsletter to Parents

From: School principal
Subject: Announcing School Food Share Program
Hello Parents,

The ____ School District, with support from the Environmental Protection Agency, is launching the School Food Share Program in our school this week. This program is intended to recover edible food from school cafeterias to distribute to local food banks.

Each day, students will be invited to donate any whole or packaged food from their school meals (unopened milk, yogurts, applesauce, string cheese, muffins, etc.) that they don't care to eat. This food will be collected and redistributed as an alternative to putting it in the trash or compost. We always encourage kids to eat as much as they'd like, and then donate anything that is leftover and unopened.

We are excited to participate in this program which helps teach our children about the importance of not wasting food and helping to feed others in our community.

If you do not want your children to participate in this program, please reply to me directly.

Thank you,
Principal Name

Lunchroom Staff and Student Instructions

At the beginning of school or before lunch, on the school intercom – principal or lunch supervisor:

Hi everyone! Today, *[School Name]* is starting the School Food Share Program. We will collect whole, unopened food you don't want or can't eat, and give it to people in our town who don't have enough to eat. We don't want to give away food that you want to eat, just the extra.

The way you can help is very simple. At the end of lunch, just put the extra food in the School Food Share bin at the end of your table. Student volunteers will collect it and put it in the refrigerator for the food bank to pick up. There are a few rules to follow, so please pay attention!

As lunch time ends, any whole or unopened food you do not want or cannot eat needs to be put in the new School Food Share bin. The food you can donate includes milk that is not open, unopened packaged food, and whole fruits and vegetables. Examples of good things to donate include unopened applesauce, yogurt, muffins, apples, bananas, and granola bars. Please do not donate food that you bring from home that was homemade or was hot at one time.

After lunch, we will put the food into the refrigerator and give it to *[Food Bank]* that gives it to people who don't have enough food to eat! Thanks for your help.

REMEMBER, eat your food first. We only want to donate food you can't eat, not food you want to eat. We will remind you again right before lunch is over. Thanks so much for your help!

Kitchen Manager Checklist – Items needed to start

1. Announcement to be read to students
2. Crates and ice packs for collecting recovered items and storing them prior to pick-up
3. Signage for collection containers
4. Posters for cafeteria
5. Sufficient storage in refrigerators
6. Explicit protocol for people handling perishable items (make sure perishable items do not stay out for more than one hour unless held on ice)
7. Agreed upon storage areas from which food banks pick up donated items (both refrigerated and non-refrigerated)

Example Memorandum of Understanding between School District and Food Bank

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is intended to clarify the roles, responsibilities and expectations between the _____ School District (SD) and ____ Food bank to create and implement a school lunchroom food recovery and redirection program, aka School Food Share.

Background

The _____ District is piloting/implementing a program to donate unwanted, unopened and whole school food to the _____ food bank. We expect approximately ____ pounds of fresh, consumable food (primarily milk, yogurt, string cheese, muffins, bananas, and other fruit) can be donated per month to the local food bank. The ____SD plans to implement a food recovery program in ____ more schools under the U.S. EPA Region 10's School Food Share program.

Purpose

This MOU will:

- Educate students on hunger in their community
- Educate students and the school community on the environmental benefits of minimizing wasted food
- Save the school system money on food waste disposal costs
- Provide increased healthy consumable food to the ____ food bank program
- Serve as a local ____ area model of an innovative and progressive full circle educational program of food production and conservation, in keeping with the Washington Green Schools programs.

The above goals will be accomplished by undertaking the following activities:

_____ food bank will:

- Provide a ____ food bank representative (staff and/or volunteer) to meet with the school liaison to provide information and training on the program.
- Provide a volunteer to pick up the school food ____ times per week at an agreed upon schedule.
- Provide pre-sterilized bins to transport the food from school to the ____ food bank.
- Weigh and record all food received from each school upon arrival at the food bank and provide a copy of this data monthly to the ____SD.
- Provide ongoing assistance, support, and consulting to participating schools
- Agree to be mentioned in EPA documents and case studies as an example School Food Share program.



_____ School District will:

- Provide a point of contact at the District and at each school that joins the program to work with the ____ food bank.
- Support and proactively encourage participation with lunchroom supervisors and students.

- Provide cooler/refrigerator space to store food for donation until a ____ food bank volunteer can pick it up per schedule.
- Agree to post flyers/posters in the lunchroom that are provided to educate students on the program.
- Agree to be mentioned in EPA documents and case studies as an example School Food Share program.

Important regulatory information

A number of federal laws encourage food donation in the United States by providing liability protection to donors or tax incentives.

- The [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act](#)  was created to encourage the donation of food and grocery products to qualified nonprofit organizations and provides liability protection to food donors. Under this Act, as long as the donor has not acted with negligence or intentional misconduct, the organization is not liable for damage incurred as the result of illness.
- The [U.S. Federal Food Donation Act of 2008](#)  specifies procurement contract language encouraging Federal agencies and contractors of Federal agencies to donate excess wholesome food to eligible nonprofit organizations to feed food-insecure people in the United States.

Duration

This MOU is at-will and may be modified by mutual consent of authorized officials from the _____ SD and _____ food bank. This MOU shall become effective upon signature by the authorized officials from both partners and will remain in effect until modified or terminated by any one of the partners by mutual consent.

Date: _____

Authorized representative
_____ School District

Authorized representative
_____ food bank

School Site Visit – Evaluation Form

Basic School Information:

School _____

Name/ School District: _____

Date visited: _____

School Contacts/role: _____

Participants in visit: _____

Number of _____ students/% free and reduced cost meals : _____

Green Team? YES___NO___ Green Schools program participant? YES___NO___ Name of program: _____

Backpack/After School Feeding Program: YES___NO___ Please describe: _____

Cafeteria-Specific Information

Recess before Lunch_____ Recess after Lunch_____ Mixture of both before and after lunch _____

Number Served: Lunch:_____ Breakfast:_____ Other (describe):_____

Food Served in Cafeteria / Lunch room / Classroom? _____

Is the food offered_____ or served_____

Date	Name of School
Current Food Recovery System:	Share Table: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO How much food is left at the end of lunch (number of items/lbs): Please describe existing system:
Composting:	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Please describe (including cross-contamination you observe):
Recycling:	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Please describe (including cross-contamination you observe):
Garbage:	Please describe (including cross-contamination you observe):

Date	Name of School
What is the existing mealtime and cleanup process/What is happening now?	
Observations (please identify name by each observation)	
What opportunities do you see? (please identify name by opportunity)	School Food Share? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> NEED MORE INFORMATION
Suggested next steps	

Date	Name of School
Other notes and comments:	
Pictures and attachments:	

Signs and Posters

Please keep perishable
foods at proper temperature.

_____ **Elementary**

Pickup Days: Tuesdays &
Fridays 1-2pm



Kids Care School Food Share

*Logo
Space*

Logo Space



Logo Space

For additional pickups or questions:
Contact information for _____ Food
Bank at (email address) or (phone
number)



KIDS CARE SCHOOL FOOD SHARE

FEEDING PEOPLE. PROTECTING THE PLANET. SAVING MONEY.

WHAT CAN I DONATE?

- Un-opened Containers like Milk, Cheese, Yogurt
- Un-opened Bags like Apple Slices, Carrots
- Un-peeled Fruits like Oranges, Bananas

WHAT CAN'T I DONATE?

- Anything opened or with a bite out of it!
- HOT food or food that was heated



hopelink



Seattle
Public
Utilities





USEPA Region 10
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900

