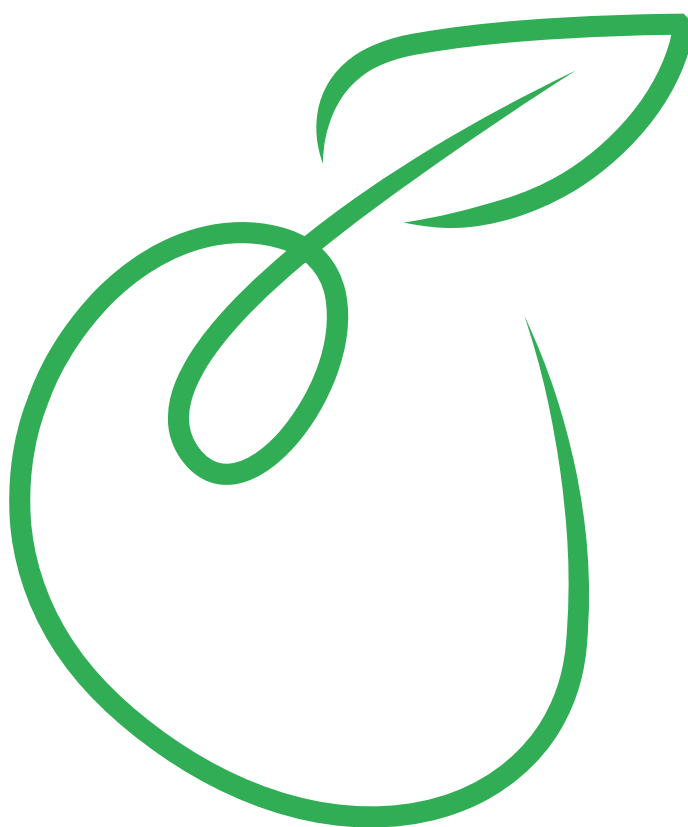


# Washington School Food Share Program Toolkit



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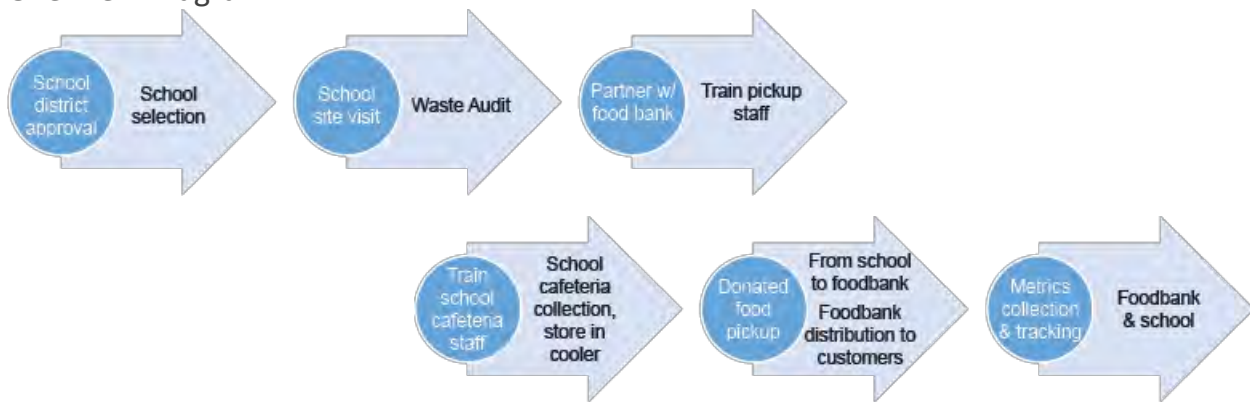
## School Food Share - Overview

### What is School Food Share?

School Food Share is a simple program that allows schools and food banks to work together to collect whole, packaged, and/or uneaten cafeteria leftovers and share it 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 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 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 Jill's Foodbank through the nonprofit FoodBus.

The pilot at Puesta del Sol elementary (student body of 575 children) has been successful, approximately 100 pounds of fresh, consumable food (primarily milk, yogurt, string cheese, muffins, bananas and other fruit) can be notated per week to the local food bank. This means over 4,000 lbs. of food per year from this one school can be shared back with the community to help those who are food insecure.

## Wasted Food Statistics

### Definitions:

- Wasted food: food that could be recovered for consumption
- Food waste: food scraps that are not fit for human consumption

Wasted food in the United States, and globally, is a significant problem, rapidly gaining attention and action of 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 single 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.<sup>1</sup>
- Meanwhile, 1 in 5 children in the state of Washington live in a household that struggles to put food on the table.<sup>2</sup>

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 the amount of food that was not eaten at the retail and consumer levels in the baseline year of 2010 represented 31 percent of the available food supply, totaling about 133 billion pounds of food worth an estimated \$161.6 billion.<sup>3</sup>



4

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Northwest Harvest. Northwest Harvest: WA Hunger Facts October 2015.

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

<sup>4</sup> Food Lifeline. Food Lifeline: Missing Meals Report 2013.

## School Food Share Program Vision

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**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
- Inspire children to feed the hungry in their community
- Redirect good food to hunger relief organizations
- Minimize the cost/environmental impact to schools of wasted food

#### **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.

## School Food Share—Information for Schools

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### Prevention First

The best way to minimize food waste is to prevent it. The USDA has an excellent infographic with plenty of actions to 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

<sup>5</sup> 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](https://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/resources/K12_schools.html)



## Getting Started with School Food Share

A coalition of partner organizations in Washington State have been collaborating for the past couple years to pilot the School Food Share 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 immediate distribution to food bank customers.

School Food Share priorities, in order of preference:

1. Students eat the food they are served at school breakfast or lunch.
2. 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 salvaged 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 that is then distributed 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 primarily to the warehouse/distribution facilities described above.

Even after those within the school community have eaten their share, schools can donate thousands of pounds of food per year to help others in their community. It is a win-win-win: avoid wasted food and all the wasted resources and associated environmental impacts, help to 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.

There are a few steps to take to get started:

- 1) Talk with your local health department. Washington State has released [guidelines](#) on how to participate in this program safely and with regulatory approval.
- 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.
- 3) Decide where you will store the perishable foods – food must be stored safely.
- 4) Decide who is the recipient of the food. Sometimes existing school programs or share tables can use the food.
- 5) Get your supplies together – you will need some collection bins, signs to keep the collected food clearly labeled, ice packs to keep the food cool, and a cooler or fridge space to store the food until pick up for the food bank.
- 6) Do a one-day pilot to test the collection logistics and food storage, and to assess the volume of food collected at this school. Every school is different!
- 7) Start collecting food for use and donation. Involve students; green teams and student councils are great ideas. Students love helping in this program.
- 8) Have your food bank partner pick up at least once per week. Depending on your school schedule or the needs of the food bank, different days of the week might be better than others.
- 9) Measure your results and congratulate all the participants for making a shared difference in your community. Share results with your school community!

## 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 than others as a logical place to implement the program first in each district. Develop a list of criteria that will help you do the following:

- **Create baseline data** about food prevention and recovery practices that may already be in place. It helps to do a sample collection of food left over after lunch on a typical day and take photos of how much wasted food there is “normally.”
- **Gather information about the school:** location, student body, whether there might be support/food champions in a Green Team, student council, kitchen or janitorial staff or teacher, etc. In many districts, we have found that elementary and middle schools have better food collection results.
- **Document physical needs of each school:** refrigerator/cooler space, power, accessibility (e.g. key needed for refrigerator?), kitchen hours, container availability, etc.

The following attributes are what the School Food Share team used in developing the pilots around the Seattle area. Feel free to use this as a baseline for your data collection, the full table is in the appendix.

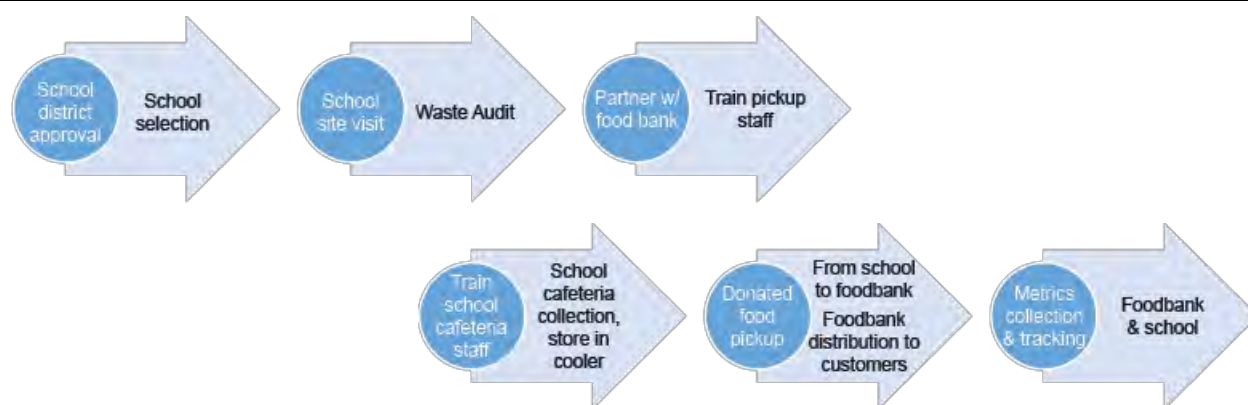
1. School Name/Contact Info
2. Geographic location (City/County)
3. Food bank or meal provider partner options – which food banks are geographically close and have the capacity (physical space and personnel/volunteers) and desire to participate?
4. Size of student body – how many students, what’s the breakdown of those who buy lunch versus bring from home?
5. Percent of free/reduced lunch – data from OSPI; schools with higher FRL tend to have more students buying lunch than bringing from home.
6. Backpack program or supplemental after school programs – 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 who could distribute the food?
7. Lunch before recess or recess before lunch? Evidence shows that students eat more after recess than before, and less food is wasted.
8. Green Team exists? Schools with a Green Team can help setup and run the School Food Share program and may have existing operations in place.
9. Works with local organizations (Eg. Washington Green Schools or King County Green Schools in EPA Region 10). Such groups have curriculum available to help schools with a variety of environmental education programs and policies as well as student learning and involvement. Also curricula may already exist at the school to raise awareness about environmental or social issues that could further support student engagement.
10. Lunch setup – “offer” vs “serve” or others – schools have different models of serving lunch. ‘Offer’ means the child chooses, although they must take a few required items; ‘serve’ means the food is prepacked (similar to airline food) and that is what each child is given. Amounts of wasted food vary with the models.
11. Refrigerator space available – does the school lunchroom have enough refrigerator space to hold leftover food for donation until pickup for the food bank?
12. Breakfast served at this school? Schools that serve breakfast have additional opportunity for food collection, and it may impact lunch totals as well.
13. Compost program in place? More and more schools compost food waste, and this is an opportunity to use food waste as a soil amendment and to keep food waste out of landfills

14. Number of clean up stations – this assists in planning for the amount of bins and signs needed. A clean up line could look like this: School Food Share collection bin, liquid dump, recycling, landfill, compost, tray stacking area.
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. This could also be an opportunity for students to learn about the composting process if food waste could be incorporated into an in-house system.

## School Food Collection Logistics

The overarching priority is to feed the students at school first. 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 real goal is to feed people, not landfills or composting facilities.*



### What *can* be donated

For the most complete list of food that can be donated, refer to the current state health department guidance document (later in this toolkit). In general, here is a high-level list of typically available school foods:

- Cartons of milk
- Packaged cheese, yogurt cups and tubes, 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/outer skin
- Sealed bottles of water, cartons of juice, other beverages.

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. Meal programs may be better equipped to take larger volumes of perishable items that can be made into servable meals. These items may not be appropriate for the School Food Share food bank partner and additional coordination may be required.

### What *cannot* be donated

- Refrigerated items brought from home in student lunches
- Any homemade items not in a commercial package
- Hot food or food that was hot at one time
- Open meat products
- Opened/resealed containers

After the program has been approved by the school administration and nutrition director, the lunchroom staff and students are provided straight-forward training on how the program works. There are many different ways of collecting the food; do whatever works best for your school.

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 then train students to help as the program becomes routine.

Each student can place their food and drinks eligible for donation in a School Food Share bin near the garbage and recycling collection area as they clear their place, or they could set those items at the end of their table for pick up at the end of lunch. We have seen a variety of successful methods.



### Supplies

- 4-6 sturdy bins/baskets to collect the food – size and type varies by school/food bank partnership and refrigerator space available
- Large, kid-friendly signs and posters to hang in and around the cafeteria
- Clearly marked labels attached to the bins stating the contents are for donation
- Space in the refrigerator or cooler at school to hold the food until picked up for delivery to food bank

The best bins will be 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 so they stack or milk crates that your school may already have on-hand. If these same bins are being used at a Share Table first, consider getting bins that are shallow enough for young children to easily see the contents of the bin, to know whether or not they want to take from it first before it goes to a food bank. Transparent bins are recommended. Many local businesses will often happily donate these kinds of supplies in exchange for acknowledgement of their contribution to the program.

All bins should be clearly labeled with the School Food Share or other “food bank” signs to keep the donated food separate from food being served to students during regular mealtimes and to make it clear for the food handler who will be moving the bins from the school to the food bank location.

## School Food Share – 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 school-donated food.
- Have physical capacity/space in their building and coolers/refrigerators
- Have the physical staff and/or volunteers to collect and transport the food from the school to the food bank. Some school districts use more than one food bank for donations. This presents no problems and the food banks work together based on their schedule/days of week availability, proximity to the schools, and staffing capacity to collect the food.
- Bins used can be bought and donated, supplied by the school, supplied by food bank, or any combination thereof that works for the school/food bank partnership. Bins must be sterilized and tracked. Food banks routinely do this.

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 match for receiving 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 for redistribution.

### Criteria Check-List for Food Banks

Example

Criteria	Description	Comments
<b>Food Bank Name</b>	Jill's Foodbank	
<b>Food Bank Branch Location</b>	Bellevue/Crossroads, address,	
<b>Capacity Available in Cooler/Fridge</b>	5 blue bins per week for school food	How much capacity in measurement used by food banks
<b>Expected capacity from school</b>	Sunset Elem – 150 lbs per week	580-student elementary school (see school profile checklist for averages & details)
<b>Labeling system</b>	Laminated tags binder clipped to bins	Way to identify foods/drinks stored in refrigerator at each school and intended for donation
<b>Measurement and tracking system</b>	Upon checking at food bank. Weighed and noted all specifics.	Includes kind of food, weight received, person who checked it in. Receipt given to person delivering it. Reports kept by food bank.
<b>Bin sterilization process in place</b>	Yes, standard for all deliveries	
<b>Bins &amp; other supplies</b>	Jill's Foodbank to use their own bins	
<b>Pick up from school</b>	Existing (trained food handler) grocery pickup volunteers will be used to stop at school 2x per week	Food bank trained existing grocery volunteer pick up drivers to stop at designated schools on their routes.

## Health Department - Legalities, Rules, & Regulations

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Local (county/city) health departments take direction from the state health department who in Washington State has issued an official “guidance document” on the donation of leftover consumable school food. Local health departments may adopt additional policies, rules, and regulations in addition to what the state has provided. The current guidance is that the *receiving* organization (aka, food bank) needs a variance to receive served food. This may be one variance per school or one per school district – it depends on the local health department jurisdiction. There may be a small cost involved in this variance. We have seen \$250 per school district, but we have also seen this fee waived entirely. The food bank /receiving food distributor is responsible for acquiring this variance; expect it to take several weeks to get processed.

Below is the most recent Guidance that the Seattle area School Food Share pilot [or development?] team has been given by the Washington State Department of Health Food Safety Program. Always check with your local jurisdiction.

### Draft State Health Department Guidance for School Food Share Programs

#### **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.

##### **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. (THIS IS UP FOR REVISION)
- 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](http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Food/FoodWorkerandIndustry/CharityFoodDonations)

[www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Food/LocalFoodSafetyContacts](http://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](http://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](mailto:food.safety@doh.wa.gov).

## Share Tables

Many schools use “share tables” in which unopened, packaged foods and whole fruits served by the school lunch program – but not opened or eaten by students – can be shared among students within the school at lunch time. Some schools opt out due to specific allergy policies, however OSPI has issued the following guidance. Please check the OSPI website for any updates to this guidance after the publication of this School Food Share Toolkit document.

### CNS Update: The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs

USDA recently released [SP41, CACFP13, SFSP15-2016, The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs](#). 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

Sponsors that use share tables or are considering their use should carefully review the entire [SP41, CACFP13, SFSP15-2016](#) memorandum.

## Federal Laws

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

- The [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act](#), which 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.

## Farm to School - federal and WA state guidance

- Federal: This includes 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>
- Washington State: This links 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 pounds of food recovered from schools and provided to food banks. However, metrics could also include the following:

**School District:** Most school data is available directly from the OSPI website. Individual schools may track a variety of attributes beyond what is publicly displayed. Have a conversation about what is needed to collect and track.

**Food Banks:** Food banks and pantries keep very detailed metrics about where their donations come from and how much, in pounds, is donated. Schools can (or should?) request copies of their donation metrics for tracking, and this is something that should be detailed in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) between the school and food bank.

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

- Style of lunch—prepack, offer/serve, kitchen/no kitchen,
- Demographics – free/reduced lunch percentages, lunches brought from home versus bought

### 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 foodbank per school year.

In a district such as Bellevue, Washington with 17 elementary schools of similar sizes with similar meal setups (offer vs serve), **this could mean 68,000 pounds of food donations per school year for a single district.**

- Menu – what is being served (pizza versus tuna casserole)
- Time to eat – more food may be wasted if there is not enough time allotted to lunch
- Recess before or after lunch – before lunch results in less waste

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

An effective way to gauge how much food per school is leftover before beginning a full food recovery program is to conduct a one-day food waste audit. Essentially, it's running a collection of all leftover food and weighing it at the end of all lunch periods for one normal school day. This simple audit only looks at one component. A comprehensive K-12 cafeteria waste audit guide will be available soon.

The benefits of this include:

- Providing a concrete, physical pile of unopened/usable food that is targeted for the landfill for that school itself.
- Providing a sample weight of collected food eligible for donation to use in estimating for implementation of a full program.
- Show what kinds of foods are typical for that school to share with the local food bank what will likely be donated.

## Metrics to Consider Collecting

Food bank partners report collected food amounts in pounds and meals served and as mentioned above, and reports on this information should be shared with the school and included in the MOU. Some examples of metrics that might have meaning within the school or could tell the bigger story are listed below.

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

The U.S. EPA and USDA have created a helpful documented called ***Guide to Conducting Student Food Waste Audits***. As of now, this writing it is not yet on the website so ask your local EPA/USDA contact for a copy. Below is an online link for some tools to assess how much food is wasted.

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

## School Food Share in Action

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Food is collected at stations in food bank provided bins and is then stored appropriately before pickup.

The sign on the cart indicates the food is for School Food Share!



One to two times per week a food bank trained volunteer picks up the food from participating schools and delivers it to the food bank where it is weighed and tracked!

## Communications

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Individuals and communities are interested in learning about reducing wasted food, especially if they involve children. Through this program, students learn why reducing wasted food is important 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/brand, as well as spread the “spark” of encouraging others to want to do the same thing!

Public relations for the school district and the partnering food bank(s) can work together to decide how they want to celebrate and share the accomplishments of their school food share programs.

## Examples

**Video:** The Bellevue School District worked with the EPA and the Food Bus organization (in 2014 when it first started) to create a video that was shared online via YouTube and the EPA’s Facebook page. The link is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyXH2ydZ8mc>

**Print:** Below is one example of how the Bremerton School District used print media in their local newspaper.

LOCAL NEWS

# Bremerton students get a taste of sharing

By Christian Vosler, [christian.vosler@kitsapsun.com](mailto:christian.vosler@kitsapsun.com)  
June 08, 2016

0 f t e

**BREMERTON** — Instead of throwing away unused cartons of milk or uneaten bread or fruit, students in the Bremerton School District donate unwanted food to help families in need.


The program, the result of a partnership among the district, the state and the Environmental Protection Agency, aims to reduce the impact of food waste on the environment while helping to feed the hungry in Bremerton.

Schools recently began collecting certain unopened, undamaged food items from federally subsidized school lunches. The food is stored in a freezer until it is picked up by the Salvation Army and Bremerton Food Line to be donated to local food banks.


"It just feels so much better to not throw food away and give it to people who will eat it and need it," district child nutrition services supervisor Lynn Johnson said.

Johnson said the district is collecting between 150 and 175 pounds of food per school per week. The district estimates that the program could potentially collect up to 32,000 pounds of food per year.


Johnson said the program also will save the district money on trash pick up, since less food waste will be sent to the landfill.



An Armin Jahr Elementary School student places an item on a food donation cart.



Armin Jahr Elementary School para-educator Joyce Johnson organizes the food donations left during lunch Wednesday. Some food that students don't eat is being collected and distributed to area food banks.



Armin Jahr Elementary School students line up for pizza during lunch Wednesday. Students during lunch donate their unused food for charity.

## Related Programs and Initiatives

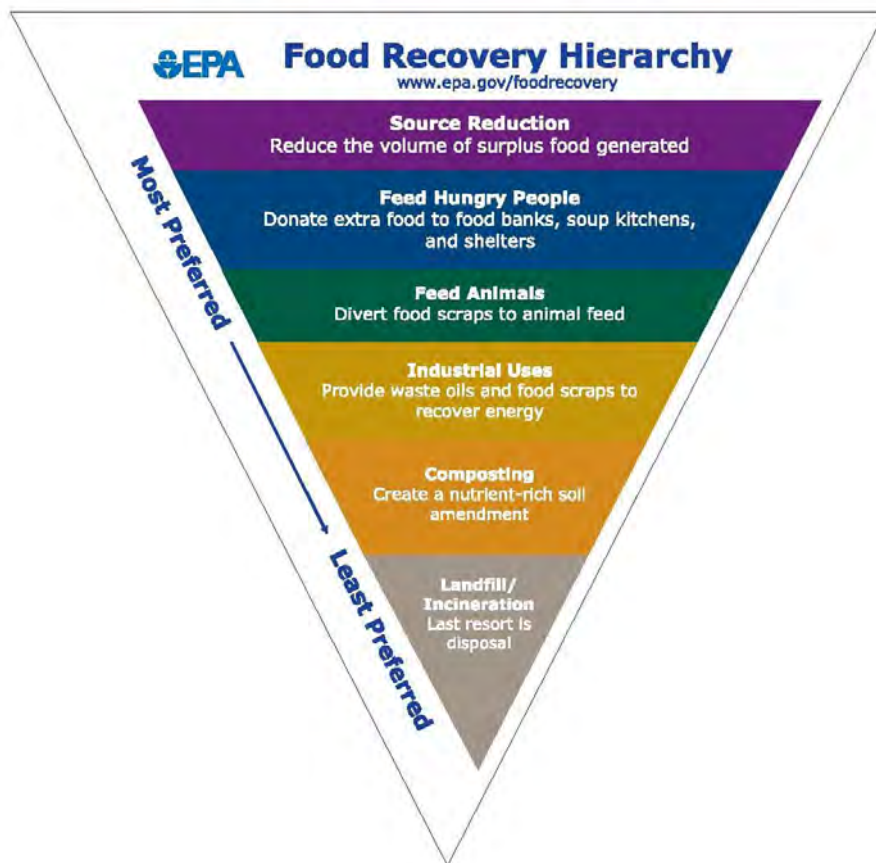
School Food Share is just one of many initiatives and programs in the U.S. aimed at reducing food waste and redirecting leftover school food to a usable place. Below are a few government and non-governmental (NGO) programs in place today for additional resources and ideas.

### U.S. EPA Food Recovery Challenge

The EPA has a recognition program for businesses and organizations (including schools) that reduce wasted food called the Food Recovery Challenge (FRC): [www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-recovery-challenge-frc](http://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 (SMM). Sustainable Materials Management seeks to reduce the environmental impact of materials through their entire life cycle. This includes how they are extracted, manufactured, distributed, used, reused, recycled, and disposed.

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





#### 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 name listed on the EPA's website.
- Receive recognition through awards and social media.
- Get free technical assistance in the form of webinars, an online database, and resources to help you plan, implement, and track your activities.
- Get a free climate change report to highlight your 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

The USDA offers a variety of food waste education, prevention, and reduction programs, including:

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 about 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

WA Green Schools is a local nonprofit that helps students and communities across Washington State work to create greener, healthier school environments. It 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 and water conservation, 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.

### 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 a viable option. Some schools and food banks work with local farmers who receive food for 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 is not an issue. However for meat scraps, or food that has come into contact with

meat, the person collecting the “trash” must have a permit from WSDA (currently \$10/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 farmers that have chicken and pigs that might want food scraps.  
[http://smallfarms.wsu.edu/farms/locate\\_search.asp](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

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### Templates & Examples

U.S. EPA Region 10 provides these as samples that schools can use with their own school food recovery programs. Feel free to use and modify as necessary.

## 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) Shocking but true statistic. In school cafeterias that are funded through the USDA School Nutrition Program, students are required to take set servings of some foods, which often goes uneaten and directly into the trash. A typical elementary school throws away about 30 lbs. per day of whole fruits, unopened milk cartons, string cheese, yogurts, muffins, and other packaged food. Meanwhile, 1 in 5 children in the U.S. live in homes that are food insecure. ([Northwest Harvest, October 2015](#))

A coalition of partner organizations in Washington State have been collaborating since 2015 to pilot School Food Share 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 in the cafeteria, set it aside in bins for donation in available cooler space, and have it delivered to the local food bank for immediate distribution to food bank customers.

School Food Share priorities, in order of preference:

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

Even after those within the school community have eaten their share, schools can donate thousands of pounds of food per year to help others in their community. It is a win-win-win: avoid wasted food and all the associated environmental impacts, help to 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.

There are a few steps to take to get started:

1. Talk with your local health department. Washington State has released guidelines on how to participate in this program safely & with regulatory approval.
2. Reach out to other partners – school district, food bank, government. It is easier when everyone does their part and often there are some existing programs to leverage.
3. Decide where you will store the perishable foods – food must be stored safely.
4. Decide who gets the food – sometimes school programs or share tables can use the food.
5. Get your supplies together – you will need some bins, signs to keep the collected food clearly labeled, ice packs to keep the food cool, and cooler or fridge space to store the food until pick up for the food bank.
6. Do a one-day pilot to test the collection logistics and food storage, and to assess volume of food collected at this school. Every school is different!
7. Start collecting food for use and donation. Involve students; green teams and student councils are one idea. Students love helping in this program.
8. Have your food bank partner pick up at least once per week. Depending on your school schedule or the needs of the food bank, different days of the week might be better than others.
9. Measure your results and congratulate yourself for making a difference in your community.



## Kick Off Email to School Community

To be sent by principal:

Subject: New School Food Share Program

Hello Teachers and Staff,

Next week, our school will begin a new district-approved, EPA-encouraged School Food Share Program in the cafeteria. The goal of the program is to minimize wasted food: to encourage students to eat their lunch first, but then to save consumable food that is unopened, and have it sent instead to our local food banks for immediate distribution to their customers. Each day, students will be invited to donate any uneaten 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 others. See [\[weblink\]](#) for some example curricula that have already been created.

Thank you!

## Email to Parents

Email notification for parents to be sent by principal in newsletter or other medium:

Subject: Announcing School Food Share Program

Hello Parents,

The Blank School District, with support from the Environmental Protection Agency Region 10, is launching the School Food Share in our school this week, a program to recover uneaten food from school cafeterias to distribute to local food banks.

Each day, students will be invited to donate any uneaten whole or packaged food from their school meals (unopened milk, yogurts, applesauce, string cheese, muffins, etc.) for redistribution as an alternative to putting it in the trash or compost. We always encourage kids first to eat as much as they can, and then to donate anything that is leftover and unopened.

We are excited to participate in this program which helps teach our children about the importance of wasting less food, saving it from the landfill, 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 & 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. Always eat your own food first. 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. Volunteer students will collect it and put it in the fridge 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, packaged food is unopened, and whole fruits and vegetables. Things like unopened applesauce, yogurt, muffins, apples, bananas, and granola bars are examples of good things to donate. 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 we can't eat, not food we want to eat. We will remind you again right before lunch is over. Thanks so much for your help!

## Kitchen Manager Checklist

1. Announcement to be read to students
2. Crates 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, if needed
6. Explicit protocol for who brings perishable items to the refrigerators (make sure items do not stay out for more than one hour)
7. Agreed upon storage areas from which food banks are to pick up donated items (both refrigerated and not)

## Example Memorandum of Understanding between School and Food Bank

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is intended to clarify the roles and responsibilities and expectations between the SD and Jill's Foodbank to create and implement an elementary school lunchroom food recovery and redirection program, aka School Food Share.

### **Background**

In 2014, the BSD piloted a program to donate unopened elementary school food to Jill's Foodbank via a nonprofit based on the east coast. The pilot in Sunset elementary (575 kids) has been hugely successful and metrics show that approximately 400 pounds of fresh, consumable food (primarily milk, yogurt, string cheese, muffins, bananas, and other fruit) is donated per month to the local Blank Jill's Foodbank food pantry (4K pounds per year for one school). The BSD now plans to implement a food recovery program in more schools in this and future years based on an updated program in partnership with the U.S. EPA, Region 10 called School Food Share. We are looking to partner with a local, well-established local nonprofit in establishing a school food recovery program to serve this need in Blank and beyond in the Northwest.

### **Purpose**

This MOU will:

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

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

#### Jill's Foodbank will:

- Provide a Jill's Foodbank representative (staff and/or volunteer) to meet in conjunction with the EPA with the school liaison to provide information and training on the program
- Provide a volunteer to pick up the school food X many times per week at an agreed upon schedule.
- Provide bins to transport the food from school to Jill's Foodbank.
- Weigh and record all food received from each school upon arrival at the food bank, and provide a copy of the metrics monthly to BSD.
- Provide ongoing assistance, support, and consulting to their partner schools
- Agree to be mentioned in EPA documents, case studies as an example School Food Share.

#### BSD will:

- Has already cleared with their legal team that this program is acceptable and encouraged (2014).






- Provide a point of contact at the district and at each school that comes onboard the program to work with the EPA and Jill's Foodbank
- Support and proactively encourage participation with the lunchroom supervisors
- Provide cooler/fridge space to store food for donation until a Jill's Foodbank volunteer can pick it up per schedule
- Agree to post flyers/posters in the lunchroom that are provided to educate on the program
- Agree to be mentioned in EPA documents, case studies as an example School Food Share.

U.S. EPA, Region 10 will:

- Provide the school lunchroom staff and the information needed to implement the program logistically, including a point of contact.
- Provide the School Food Share Toolkit that details the program operations & best practices
- Provide supplies, bins, labels and posters as needed.

**Important regulatory information**

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

- The [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act](#),  which 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 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 BSD and Jill's Foodbank. 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  
Blank School District

-----  
Authorized representative  
Jill's Foodbank

## School Site Visit- Evaluation Form

### Basic School Information:

School Name

School District:

School Contacts/role:

People attending visit:

Number of Students:

% Free and Reduced:

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 vs. Lunch: Recess before Lunch

Recess after Lunch

Mixture both Before and After

Number Served: Lunch:

Breakfast:

Other?

Food Served in Cafeteria / Lunch room / Classroom?

Offer vs Serve: Offer Serve

<p>Current Food Recovery System:</p>	<p>Share Table: YES NO How much is left at the end of lunch (number of items): Please Describe existing system:</p>
--	---

Composting:	YES   NO Please Describe including cross contamination you observe:
Recycling:	YES   NO Please Describe including cross contamination you observe:
Garbage:	Please Describe including cross contamination you observe:
What is the existing Process/What is happening now?	
Observations (please identify your name by your observation)	

What opportunities do you see? (please identify your name by your opportunity)	School Food Share? YES NO NEED MORE INFO
Suggested Next Steps	
Other Notes and Comments:	
Pictures and Attachments:	

## Signs and Posters

Please keep perishable  
foods at proper temperature.

**Blank Elementary** Pickup  
Days: Tuesdays & Fridays  
1-2pm



*Logo  
Space*

*Logo Space*



*Logo Space*

For additional pickups or questions:  
Contact information for Food Bank  
[contact@foodbank.org](mailto:contact@foodbank.org) or 425-555-1234



# 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





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USEPA Region 10  
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900  
Seattle, WA 98101-1128

