



Food Waste Reduction Awareness Campaign

Weld County School District 6

“American families throw out approximately 25 percent of the food and beverages they buy. The cost estimate for the average family of four is **\$1,365 to \$2,275** annually.”⁽¹⁾ It’s been reported that food waste makes up 23.9% of total waste generated by schools.⁽²⁾ The following is a recap of D6 Nutrition Services’ efforts at reducing the amount of food wasted in our schools-

Here are some ways D6 Nutrition Services is globally addressing food waste by students:

- **Choice of Entrees-** Simply by providing choices in entrees, D6 hopes to reduce the amount of waste generated by allowing students to choose an entrée they enjoy.
- **Salad Bars-** Variety is key here. By offering a selection of 6-8 different fruits and vegetables every day, students are more likely to find something that suits their taste buds.
- **Educating Students on Meal Requirements-** While Nutrition Services is required to offer all 5 meal components (Milk, Meat, Fruit, Vegetable, Bread/Grain), students are only required to select 3 of the meal components, 1 of which must be a serving of fruit and/or vegetable. Signage is posted by every serving line and items are identified on the line as to their contribution. A district wide waste awareness campaign aimed at students is launching Fall 2014.
- **Speed of Service-** The goal of the Nutrition Service’s team is to provide quick service in the cafeteria line so students can maximize their seated time to eat. Speedy service is achieved in a number of creative ways- multiple points of sale (including standalone ‘build your own’ meal stations) and reimbursable vending machines.
- **Offer vs. Serve-** We have chosen to use the serving method of Offer vs. Serve for all D6 locations. By choosing this allowable USDA method of menu planning, students are not forced to take a meal with all 5 components. Instead, they are allowed to choose from 3-5 meal components, meaning they can leave behind some food items that don’t suit their taste needs.

Here are some unique ways individual schools are helping us address food waste:

- **Sharing Tables-** Several D6 locations allow students to share approved food items by placing uneaten full portions on a convenient table in the cafeteria to share with other students.
- **Food Waste Awareness-** Some locations have clubs that address waste reduction issues or have created a culture of waste reduction for their campus.
- **Reminders and Modeling from Staff-** School staff are often seen modeling good meal behaviors and providing verbal reminders to students to only take what they will eat and to concentrate on eating when seated.

Here are some ways Nutrition Services addressing food waste reduction during food preparation:

- **Batch Cooking-** Individual cafeterias ensure that they are cooking food based on demand and as it is needed. Therefore, food is cooked between meal service times to avoid cooking too much at the beginning of service and then having waste at the end of service.
- **Educating Staff on Meal Requirements-** Staff training is focused on making certain that employees understand Offer vs. Serve requirements. They learn that students only have to select 3 of the 5 offered meal components. It is a common misconception that students are required to take certain meal components. For example, milk is not a required portion of the meal. Students have the option to decline it if they so choose.
- **Inventory Control-** Proper inventory control is critical for reducing food waste. Nutrition Services employees are trained to order quantities that meet the needs of the students they serve. They utilize the First In, First Out method to ensure that food items remain fresh and high quality.
- **Leftovers Plan-** Many menu items can be utilized for other meals. Menu items that are appropriate for reserving are identified and standard operating procedures have been developed to make certain these food items remain safe and high quality while not being wasted.
- **Forecasting-** Nutrition Services staff members utilize a number of tools and resources to help them accurately forecast their future food needs based on the quantities utilized and leftover after previous meals. This prevents over ordering and waste.

⁽¹⁾ [Wasted: How America Is Losing Up to 40 Percent of Its Food from Farm to Fork to Landfill](#). National Resources Defense Council, 2012.

⁽²⁾ [Digging Deep Through School Trash: A waste composition analysis of trash, recycling and organic material discarded at public schools in Minnesota](#). Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, 2010