



School Assistance: A Virtual Walk Through

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Our mission is to innovate, implement, and scale the environmental solutions that communities need to thrive.

Technical Assistance



Waste Reduction Assessment

In-person or virtual visit to evaluate existing waste streams and learn about waste reduction goals



Recommendations

Customized report of opportunities to prevent, recover, and divert wasted food



Follow up

Support through the implementation of new strategies, direct connections to service providers



Education

Signage, staff trainings, and more



cetonline.org/wasted-food-assistance-in-connecticut/



Prioritizing Strategies



Wasted Food Scale

How to reduce the environmental impacts of wasted food



Let's do a School Site Visit



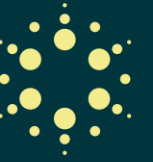
Preparation: Who should attend or be informed?

- Administration**
- Dining Services**
- Custodial Services**
- Compost Champion**

Day of the site visit:

- Arrive- sign in**
- Introductions**
- Review goals**

Conversation Tips



Areas of opportunity vs criticism

Acknowledge dining service prepares food for students to eat – not to throw away. Our goal is the same – but if food is not going to be eaten, what is the next best we can do with it.

Estimator tool – School population* for 26 ton annual threshold Elem 885 Middle 1370 High 2860

*varies based on prep methods & # meals served per day

Talk to everyone involved about their perspectives, ideas, and concerns which help shape a program that works.

Areas to Observe

Existing Operations

Where food is handled:

Preparation

Storage – Cold and Dry

Serving

Dishwashing

Cafeteria

How and where waste is moved:

Lunchroom monitor activities

Custodial process and equipment used

Dumpster area



Preparation Areas

Look at the setups

Cutting board/knife

Whole product

Finished product

Scrap bucket

Trash bin

Recycling bin

May have instruction sheet

May use tracking sheet



Prep Area Questions

- Production Sheets or Pre-Orders used for quantities?
- Scratch cooking some pre-prep?
- Are there tracking systems or waste logs being used?
- Who reviews them?
- How are they used to make changes?



Do they have any **reduction** practices already in place?

- Knife skills training

- Spatulas for portioning

Do you see opportunities for reuse?

- Trimnings to make stocks and/or soups before diverting

- Discarded foods that can be used in different menu items such as flavored water or smoothies

- Donation opportunities



Container styles for Food Scrap Collection



Serving Area

Serving Process

Menu Posted outside/advance

Separate Stations – Hot, Cold, Salad, Grab & Go

Tray material – Styrofoam, Compostable, Durable

Other possible durables- utensils, cups

Line management strategies

Offer vs Serve- Posted & Practiced

How cook/restock in-between lunch waves



Reusable Trays

Dishwasher

Air Drying Capacity

Off Site Washing Options

Funding available

Cost Saving Case Studies

Avoided disposables

Avoided waste

Ella Grasso





Cafeteria Service

Cafeteria Lines - Offer vs Serve:

Pre-load trays?

Efficient movement so students aren't using their eating time waiting in line.

What happens to food at the end of service:

Staff meals

Repurpose for other meals (chicken strips for salads)

Freeze unserved items for another day

Donate

Trash



Service Area

Grab and Go

Item rotation

Reuse of ingredients

What happens at end of service



Ella Grasso

Repurposing Ingredients

Chicken Strips
Smoothies



Dishwashing

Manual or Mechanical Process

Garbage Disposal

Space

for air drying reusables



Areas to Observe

Cafeteria Set-up

Barrel placement (wheels)

Watch flow throughout

Monitor activities (microphone)

Signs or Digital Displays

Space reset practices



Observe opportunities to donate & divert

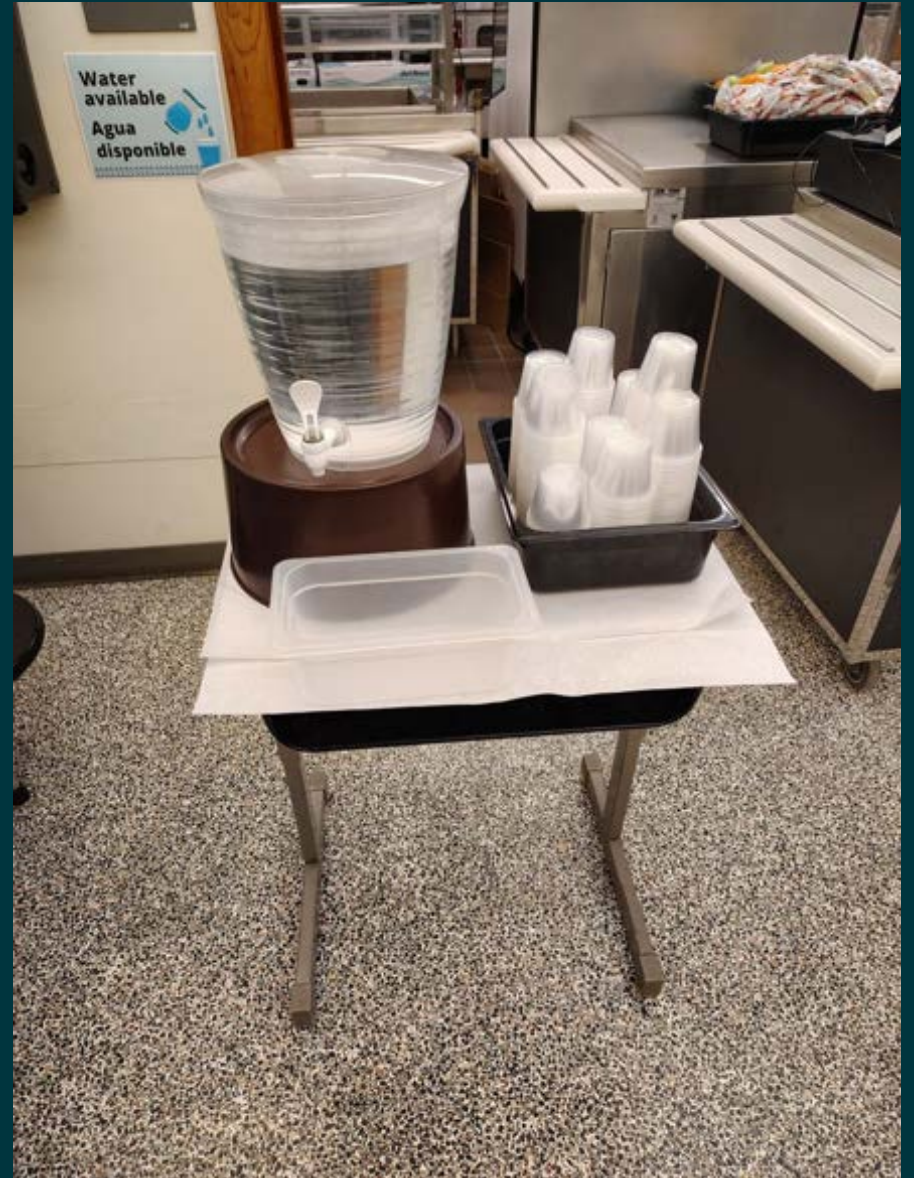


Single Use or Bulk



Look around

Water dispenser or Bottle filler
Purchasing choice of recyclable cups
Consider reusables
What else is the cafeteria used for?
Available or constrained space?



Recycling and Returnables collection

Cafeteria

Concessions

Indoor

Outdoor



Metro Business Academy



Wilbur Cross High School

Information to spark interest

Audit
Weigh Waste
Pilot

Compost Champion
Student Involvement
Team Effort



Waste Sorting

Cafeteria Separation Station

Who will set it up?

Where to locate?

Access one side or two?

Monitored?



Food Share in Schools



Buri Buri Elementary School

<https://www.cetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CT-School-Donation-Resource.pdf>

Share Table Best Management Practices

- Understand what is allowed to be collected under state and federal law
 - o Link to [Connecticut Food Donations: Liability Protections Created by the Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic](#)
- Coordinate who will oversee this operation
 - o Tasks can include: removing unacceptable items
 - o Daily set up and break down
- Coordinate where items will go for redistribution i.e. nurse's office, main office, after school program, or pantry donation



Collection for Donation

Whole Fruit
Aseptic Containers

Collection monitored for acceptable items
Stored safely for weekly pickup



Amity High School & Haven's Harvest have recovered 18,000+ pounds of food in 3 years!

Sorting station components

Liquid pour off

Reduces weight & mess

Empty into grease trap sink



Empty out the milk or juice before you recycle the carton.



The straw goes in the trash.



Food Scrap collection

Specifications:

Composting

Anaerobic Digestion



Sorting Station Examples



Sorting station at Webster Hill
Elementary



Sorting station at Charter Oak

Observe

Cafeteria Collection

Collected items

Flow

Supervision

Contamination Correction



Truman School

[Link to New Haven Independent Article](#)



The third graders bringing the message to second graders.





The second graders got this!

Custodial Input & Assistance

Concerns

Extra Work

Nuisance pests or odors

Reality

Same volume

Same material

Separation can make
waste system cleaner



Thank you
Head
Custodian,
Mr. John
for our apron
glove and
trash-grabber
station!

Who moves the materials?

What works for your school?

Custodians

Students

Volunteers



The Details

Who moves the materials and with what equipment?

Are there stairs or space challenges to consider for making waste changes?

Replicate the flow and path as much as possible.



Observe

How and where waste is collected indoors and outdoors

Watch for contamination near exits, break areas.
May have to secure with bungee, locks or fence.
Or relocate.



Outdoor Storage Practices



Good Housekeeping Practices



On-site Compost

Management

Recipe

Vegetative + Leaves

Garden Club



Sound School

Components of an Optimal Facility Recycling Program

✓ Signage with Clear Specifications



✓ Separated Materials



Different Levels of Contamination

Bottles, cans, cardboard, & paper are banned from trash disposal.
Contamination observed at levels A-C should be recycled.
Level F should go to trash, with feedback for correction.



✓ “Oops” notices & grabbers to safely and easily correct contamination



Recycling – lightly contaminated

Specifications- what's accepted
Threshold
Materials



Observe

Recycling procedures

Black Bags are likely trash or trashed



What Happens After the On-Site Assessment?



Structure of Recommendations

Summarize Goals and observations from the site assessment

Share Guidance for wasted food tracking and prevention

Provide Recommendations for food donation and food scrap separation best practices including service provider options

Provide Recommendations for recycling best practices and tips

Offer Guidance on signage and employee training

Reporting Observations



Food donation refrigerator



Bins should be clearly labeled



Separates wasted food
for compost



Equipment options





Customizable Signage & Training Tools

Food Scraps



ALL FOOD SCRAPS & SOILED PAPER

Fruit & vegetable peels
Dairy, eggs, grains, bread
Meat, fish, poultry
Bones, shells
Soiled cardboard
Napkins, paper towels



NO

Compostableware
Coffee cups, wrappers
Plastic, metal, glass



Contenedores y Botellas



CONTENEDORES Y BOTELLAS

Contenedores y botellas*
de bebidas limpia y vacías

*deja las tapas y las etiquetas
puestas



NO

Líquidos, materiales
manchados por alimentos
Bolsas de plástico,
utensilios, sorbetes



¡No embolsar productos reciclables!

Food Scraps



FOOD SCRAPS & PACKAGING



Items will go through a depackaging process and be
turned into energy by anaerobic digestion

No Glass or Chemicals





Reusables



Food Scraps Diversion Guide - West Hartford
Schools



Ask

What changes are most interesting & feasible?

How can they communicate new program practices into their existing staff communications?

Resource Documents



Connecticut Food Donation Made Easy

This food rescue guidance document is part of a series aimed at helping commercial food service providers – e.g., restaurants, hotels, corporate cafeterias, and supermarkets – reduce the volume of organic waste they dispose.

The US EPA's Wasted Food Scale ranks feeding hungry people near the top of its priorities as a strategy to reduce wasted food. Businesses and institutions should consider how each strategy on the EPA Scale can contribute to a comprehensive food waste reduction plan.

This document is intended to provide guidance to organizations interested in establishing food donation programs by offering a broad overview of how successful food donation programs should be structured. In order to have a successful food donation program there are four key steps that must be taken:

1. Identify the types and amounts of food to be donated
2. Identify partner organizations in your area with which to work
3. Determine packaging, storage, and labeling requirements to ensure food safety
4. Determine how food will be transported as well as pick-up frequency and quantities



[cetonline.org/wasted-food-assistance-in-connecticut](https://www.epa.gov/waste/wasted-food-scale)



Cafeteria Sorting Station

Cafeteria Sorting Station infographic. It shows a row of six sorting bins with instructions for each: 1. Food Share, 2. Liquids, 3. Recycle Bin, 4. Landfill Bin, 5. Compost Bin, and 6. Stack Traps. Each bin has a 'Why Here?' section, 'Best Practices', and a 'General Tips & Best Practices' section at the bottom. The infographic is labeled 'Cafeteria Sorting Station'.



FOOD DONATION BY CONNECTICUT SCHOOLS Guidelines & Resources

The US EPA's Food Recovery Hierarchy ranks feeding hungry people as a top strategy for reducing wasted food. Schools should consider how each strategy on the EPA Hierarchy can contribute to a comprehensive food waste reduction plan. The Center for EcoTechnology (CET) has worked with stakeholders including the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Connecticut Department of Public Health, Connecticut State Department of Education, Connecticut Department of Agriculture, food rescue organizations, food banks, and local health officials to develop this guidance document.

This document, produced in 2019, is intended to provide guidance for Connecticut schools on opportunities to donate food internally and externally, including information on liability protection, health codes, and more.

Food Donation Laws and Liability Protection

The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (42 U.S.C. § 1791) encourages food donations by providing liability protections for businesses that donate "apparently wholesome" food in "good faith" to nonprofit organizations. [42 U.S.C. § 1791](#) explicitly states that schools participating in the national lunch program that donate excess food "retains liability protection" under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act. [Connecticut legal research](#) does not turn up a single legal case related to food donation liability. There are several laws pertaining to food donation at the federal and state level.

Connecticut has also passed [public legislation](#) to provide additional liability protection for donors. These laws protect donors that donate food to nonprofits for distribution by that nonprofit or to nonprofits that distribute it to other nonprofits, unless the donor "knew or had reasonable grounds to believe" that the food was not fit for human consumption.

SHARE TABLES IN CONNECTICUT - INTERNAL DONATION

"Share tables" are tables or stations, some of which include small refrigerators with glass doors, where children may return whole food or beverage items they choose not to eat. These items are then available for other children who may want additional servings.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Connecticut State Department of Education support the use of

CET Guides: [Wasted Food assistance in Connecticut](#) • CET

RecycleSmart.org: <https://www.recyclesmart.org/Documents/Schools%20Program/Cafeteria%20Sorting%20Station.pdf>

Just start... with one item, one area of focus, one meal...

Champions for success:

- ❖ Someone who has been involved in waste reduction in another position.
- ❖ An advocate who has once faced food insecurity.
- ❖ Local initiatives such as community fridges.
- ❖ Corporate sponsors to support a pilot.
- ❖ You.



THANK YOU

Any questions? Want to get started?

Contact us!

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🌐 cetonline.org



CET

Resilient climate solutions



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