

**Waste Free Lunch Challenge Procedure**

**CONTENTS**

**Introduction:** The goal of setting up a waste free lunch challenge is to make students and families more aware of how much waste is created during lunch time, including food, wrappers, disposable containers, napkins, etc.

**Background:** Tons of waste are created every day during school lunches. Students are rushed to eat quickly, but often don’t have time to finish their lunch. Even if schools have sharing tables, so much food is being put in the trash. For those students who bring lunch, pre-packaged foods are fast and easy, yet create excessive amounts of waste. Creating a waste free lunch challenge gives students the opportunity to become more aware of their choices and is a great chance to simply talk to students during lunch about waste.

**Contacts/Resources:** I researched recent statistics about food waste, trash, and plastic consumption within our district and used information from the Eco-School Network that was collected during the fellowship with Metro.

**Materials Needed:** Class lists of students, highlighter/pen, prizes of your choosing, other volunteers. I used a thermos and many reusable snack/sandwich bags. Other ideas are durable silverware, lunch box, reusable straws, cloth napkins, etc.).

**Procedures:**

1. Check with your administrators and cafeteria staff to select a day for the waste free lunch challenge.

2. Decide how you will educate, advertise and promote the event. I did a presentation in an all school assembly. You can also make a video for teachers to show in their classrooms.

3. Get class lists from the office staff to highlight or check off names of students if they pass the challenge.

4. Set up at least four other volunteers to help monitor and check off names during lunch. Volunteers walk around (our school students are required to sit with their class) with their checklist and talk to kids about what they either brought for lunch or chose from the cafeteria. If students brought a lunch from home, they needed to have one or zero pieces of trash when they were done. If students received lunch at school, they needed to have eaten what they selected.

5. At the end of all the lunch periods, gather the class lists. I randomly selected a prize winner from each grade level and calculated the data percentages.

6. At the next assembly, I presented the prizes to the winners and shared the statistics of how many students participated overall and encouraged them to take the challenge every day!

Communication/Signage: For Earth Day, I gave a Powerpoint presentation a week before the waste free lunch challenge at an all school assembly. I promoted the event throughout the week with an email to parents, Facebook posts, and signs around the school. After the event, I presented the data and awarded the prizes.

**Forms:** I used a document that compared the cost of waste free and a letter to send home. (attached)

**Comments/Lessons Learned:** Kindergarten students can’t eat as much or as fast as the older kids, so for younger grades we were a little more lenient if we saw they were making a significant effort to eat their food. You can decide what makes sense for your population. The majority of our students get lunch at school, so it was important to find a way for them to still participate in the challenge and increase awareness. It’s not their fault our cafeteria still has paper boats for certain foods!

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**Updated:**

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