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## Bringing Waste-Free Lunches to Your School Activities and Ideas

Waste-free lunches reduce the amount of waste generated in your school's cafeteria and also provide students a real-life introduction to the concepts of pollution prevention, recycling, reducing, reusing, and composting. The ideas and activities listed below provide suggestions of ways to incorporate the concept of packing waste-free lunches into your school.

While some of the ideas are for one-time events or competitions to raise awareness and teach students about waste issues, the ultimate goal is to move beyond a one-time event or activity to bring about long-term change in the way your students/parents (and faculty and staff) prepare their lunches to permanently reduce the amount of waste generated in your lunch room.

- Hang the enclosed posters in your cafeteria or on cafeteria doors.
- Use the sample menus (*Pack Waste-Free and Healthy*) to help students get started (enclosed).
- Have students create their own posters or decorate bulletin boards or the doors to the cafeteria with waste-free lunch messages. Consider having a competition among students, classes, or clubs.
- Remind students and parents through daily announcements, signs at your school, your school newsletter, Web site, and parent letters (samples enclosed).
- Encourage classes or clubs to compete to see who generates the least waste during a specified period. Recognize the winning class/club during a school assembly or during lunch.
- Have students record the amount of waste they generated from their lunches before and after your school's waste-free lunch day/week using the *Did You Pack a Waste-Free Lunch?* worksheet (enclosed).
- Have students make or decorate their own reusable lunch bags. Bags are available for purchase online and at many craft and novelty stores.
- Bring in a guest speaker to address individual classes or to speak at a school assembly about waste, pollution prevention, and/or recycling. Contact your local landfill, city/county public works department, waste hauler, or DEQ regional office for potential guest speakers.
- Have students complete the activities in the activity booklet, *Let's Talk Trash* (sample enclosed). Available online at [www.deq.idaho.gov/waste/educ\\_tools/trash\\_brochure\\_kids.pdf](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/waste/educ_tools/trash_brochure_kids.pdf) or contact your DEQ regional office for hard copies; suitable for elementary age.
- Play a game of *P2 Bingo*. Available online at [www.deq.idaho.gov/waste/educ\\_tools/bingo\\_lp.pdf](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/waste/educ_tools/bingo_lp.pdf).

- Learn more about preventing pollution through the activity, *Doing the 3R Wrap* (grades 4 – 7; sample enclosed). Available online at [www.deq.idaho.gov/waste/educ\\_tools/wrap\\_lp.pdf](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/waste/educ_tools/wrap_lp.pdf).
- Have students pick up litter on their school grounds. Determine how much of what they pick up is waste from lunches and how much of that material is recyclable.
- Have students make their own reusable, cloth “baggies” to carry cookies, grapes, or other small food items in their lunch boxes or bags (instructions enclosed).
- Visit your local landfill, recycling center, or a nearby composting facility.
- Start a compost pile at your school. Have students manage it and decide how/where the compost will be used.
- Start a recycling program at your school, if one does not already exist. If one does exist, help promote it and/or work with your local recycler to try to increase the number/types of items that can be recycled.
- Take a tour of your school’s kitchen. What waste is generated there? What do kitchen staff do to minimize waste?

Other waste and environmental educational materials are also available online at [www.deq.idaho.gov/multimedia\\_assistance/educators\\_students.cfm](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/multimedia_assistance/educators_students.cfm).