Cutting canteen waste

Learning objectives

At the end of the activity, students will:

- **Have analysed the amount and different types of school catering waste;**
- **Understand why reducing food waste and waste in general is important;**
- **Have worked as a team with adults to devise solutions;**
- **Have communicated the findings and solutions to an adult audience.**

Curriculum Links

Maths, Design & Technology, Citizenship and Education for Sustainable Development.

Sustainable Schools Doorway

1 Food and Drink, 4 Purchasing and Waste.

Introduction

A waste audit of your canteen will help you investigate school lunch waste and allow everyone involved to come up with solutions to cut down on what is thrown away.

A. Audit preparation

1 A student led audit is a great way of making your catering contractor aware of the waste school lunches produce and how this could be addressed. Agree a date for the audit with the head teacher and school caterers.

2 Appoint a group to do the work eg. a particular class, the school council or environment group.

3 Gather the resources you will need: bins, bags, rubber gloves, spring balances and clipboards with copies of the student worksheet.

4 Use assemblies to let the whole school know when and why the audit will take place and what they need to do.

B. The audit

1 Clearly label a set of five bins:
- School dinner - food waste
- School dinner - packaging waste
- School dinner - disposables
- Packaged lunch - food waste
- Packaged lunch - packaging waste

2 Ask for volunteers to monitor each bin to ensure rubbish goes into the correct container.

3 After the lunch break, remove the bags from the bins, weigh them, log the results on the recording sheet and immediately return the food waste bags to the catering staff for disposal in the usual manner.

4 Retain the bags containing the other waste and spread the contents out on a 'dirt-proof' plastic surface. Get the students to note down the most common waste items on their worksheet.

C. The follow up

1 The next time the appointed group meets, calculate the daily and yearly waste totals (multiply daily totals by 195 school days). Work out the percentage of different types of waste compared to the overall canteen waste.

2 Discuss your findings and observations. What are the most common types of waste? What can be done about it? Could certain waste be avoided eg. by providing smaller portions; by avoiding plastic wrappings, disposable plates and cutlery? Is any of it recyclable?

3 Get the students to note down at least 5 action points on their worksheets that could reduce the school's canteen waste. As a group decide what the top 5 actions are and break them down into smaller achievable steps if necessary.

4 Present your findings and solutions to the head teacher, staff, governors and the catering company and use assemblies, noticeboards or the school newsletter to inform the rest of the school.

5 Repeat the audit a few months later to measure the success of your action plan and identify areas for further work.

Waste Watch
Change the world around you

Cutting canteen waste

Lesson Summary

A waste audit of your canteen will reveal what kind of waste and how much of it is produced during your school lunches. This will help you to come up with solutions to make your school more environmentally friendly.

Did you know?

We throw away around one third of all the food we buy. Most food waste ends up in landfill sites where it rots to produce methane, a greenhouse gas twenty times more powerful than carbon dioxide. In addition, wasted food generates huge amounts of packaging waste.

Name:

Date of audit:

School Dinners	kg	%	Most common waste items
Food Waste			
Packaging Waste (eg. bottles, bags, wrappers, cans, paper)			
Disposables (eg. cutlery, plates, napkins)			
Packaged Lunches	kg	%	Most common waste items
Food Waste			
Packaging Waste (eg. bottles, bags, wrappers, cans, paper)			
Total Canteen Waste		100%	

Top 5 actions to reduce canteen waste

1
2
3
4
5