

# Lake Washington School District Food Share and Donation Pilot Program

## January – June 2019

### Summary Report

This project was a collaboration between Lake Washington School District (LWSD) and the City of Kirkland using a Department of Ecology Waste Reduction and Recycling Education (WRRED) grant, King County Green Schools Program, and the nonprofit OSL (formerly named Operation Sack Lunch).



## Project description

In collaboration with the City of Kirkland, King County Green Schools Program, and OSL, Lake Washington School District implemented a school food share and donation pilot program in five schools including three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school in January through June 2019. Pilot schools included AG Bell Elementary School, Ben Franklin Elementary School, Carl Sandburg Elementary / Discovery Community School, Finn Hill Middle School / Environmental and Adventure School, and Redmond High School. Emily Dickinson Elementary School also worked in recent years to be the first LWSD school to pilot a similar program in their school cafeteria. This pilot was then designed to provide data and recommendations to continue to assist LWSD in determining a sustainable program design if implemented in more schools in the future.

The goal of offering food share and donation is to minimize wasted foods and beverages and to safely distribute unwanted items from the school lunch program to other hungry students at the school and the remainder of unwanted items to a nonprofit that provides food to community members in need. Reducing food waste is an important strategy in reducing carbon emissions that contribute to climate change. And, in schools, when students eat more of the foods provided by the school lunch program, nutritional goals are met and students are better nourished.

The five pilot schools collected unopened packaged foods from the school lunch program such as milk cartons and yogurts, and whole uneaten fruits for food share baskets or donation bins during lunch periods, inventoried items and placed them in a secure refrigerator. Volunteers also recorded the time the food items were placed in refrigerators, the number and type of items, and the temperature of the refrigerator. Once a week OSL visited each school to collect food items.

“School Food Share” wire baskets and “For Donation Only” crates were stationed after the point of service in four of the five school lunchrooms for students to discard unwanted school food items they were required to select per the National School Lunch Program standards, or school foods students took but chose not to eat during each lunch period. The fifth participating school placed a “donation only” crate in the lunchroom, but opted not to pilot food sharing at this time.

Items allowed in the school food share basket included unopened packaged school food items such as milk, yogurt, cheese, applesauce, crackers, etc. Students were encouraged to eat their food and drink their beverages and if they could not, then to place the approved items in the share basket. Students were encouraged to take from the share basket during lunch if they were still hungry and would eat the item. Uneaten whole fruits with edible skins (such as apples and pears) that require washing before re-serving were accepted in “donation only” crates.

## LWSD School Food Share Table and Food Donation policies and procedures

This pilot was consistent with the district’s sustainability goals and with food safety guidelines from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and King County Public Health. As with all initiatives, LWSD strives for programs that have long term commitment and support to ensure their success. To that end, the district created Food Donation Procedures and Food Share Table Procedures documents to provide the procedures and expectations for each school participating in the pilot program. See report appendices for copies of each document.

## School recruitment

The LWSD agreed to pilot this food share and donation program with up to five schools. After approval from LWSD, schools were invited by King County Green Schools Program representatives to participate in the pilot program in February-March 2019 via email and phone. Schools that met the following criteria were invited to participate in the pilot on a first come, first serve basis.

School invited to participate in the pilot included schools that

- currently participate in the King County Green Schools Program, showing a commitment to sustainability and confirming those schools were qualified to receive the program’s assistance and resources.
- are located in the City of Kirkland so they qualified to receive a refrigerator with Department of Ecology’s WRRED grant funding obtained by the city.
  - Note: Redmond High School is an exception to this criteria in order to include a high school in the pilot data. Juanita High School in the City of Kirkland declined to participate while under construction. The principal of Redmond High School actively requested to participate and the school was able to obtain a refrigerator for the pilot program.
- require students to eat in a cafeteria rather than in classrooms, allowing for fewer logistics and easier monitoring.
- have a responsive student Green Team and/or active parent volunteers.
- have functional waste sorting systems in their cafeterias.

## Materials, assistance, and education strategies

Each participating school received a variety of resources and in-person assistance throughout the duration of the pilot program from representatives on behalf of City of Kirkland and King County Green Schools Program. Materials, assistance, and educational strategies included the following.

## Assistance

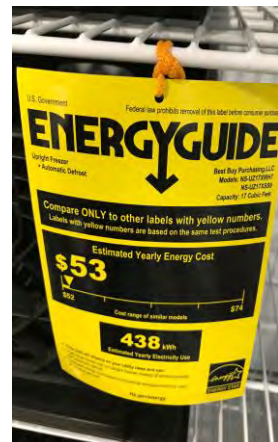
- **In-person pilot school kitchen manager informational meeting.** LWSD's resource conservation manager, Sodexo manager, and a King County Green Schools Program representative provided an informational meeting to kitchen managers at each participating school to provide a summary of the pilot program that would occur in each school, the LWSD food share and donation policies for the pilot, and an overview of City of Kirkland, King County Green Schools Program, and OSL partnership as well as King County Public Health approval and collaboration. Kitchen managers were also able to provide input on which school food items to highlight on food share and donation signage.
- **In-person school visits and follow-up phone and email assistance.** King County Green Schools Program representatives attended initial school planning meetings, trainings on proper food sorting and collection, school kickoff lunches, follow-up visits, phone calls and emails with schools, and additional ongoing assistance.

## Materials

- **Refrigerators for storing food donations.** The LWSD policy dictated that no food may be returned to a school kitchen refrigerator after it leaves the point of service in school lunchrooms. So through a partnership with the City of Kirkland and a Department of Ecology WRRED grant obtained by the city, approved refrigerators were purchased for each of the four pilot schools located in Kirkland for the sole purpose of school food donation. The fifth participating school, Redmond High School, purchased their own matching refrigerator through PTSA funds.

Refrigerators were chosen with the following criteria:

- Energy Star rating
- refrigerator only (no freezer)
- fits up to four donation crates
- has a temperature display
- is reasonably priced (i.e., refrigerators purchased cost ~\$700.00)
- seller capability to have refrigerators delivered during school Spring Break
- no more than two models installed in schools for district maintenance purposes.



The refrigerator that met every criteria was purchased from Best Buy for each pilot school. The brand of the refrigerator is Insignia 17.0 cubic foot Frost-Free Upright Convertible Refrigerator in stainless steel. The model number is NS-UZ17XSS9. Refrigerator location at the school was determined by the school staff, and delivery and installation was coordinated with district staff and school custodians.

- **Refrigerator locks.** Combination locks were provided for each school for use where refrigerators were installed in a public location (such as a cafeteria) rather than a secured area of the school. All locks were set to the same code, which was shared with the schools, the district, and OSL staff.
- **Crates, bins, and signs for food collection.** Each school was provided with four unmarked milk crates for cumulative food storage in designated refrigerators. Each school was also given one milk crate with a “For Donation Only” sign attached by zip ties, and a wire basket with a “School Food Share” sign attached by zip ties. The bins provided were chosen so that the containers into which students placed food share items versus items for donation only looked visibly different. The shallow wire baskets were chosen as food share containers to allow students to easily see the contents and encourage hungry students to take the items from the share bin to eat during lunch.
- **Tracking forms.** Schools received food donation tracking forms and refrigerator temperature tracking forms. Tracking the food items donated provides the LWSD with valuable data on what school foods students do and do not eat and presents an opportunity to consider data-driven menu changes in the future. See appendices for the tracking forms.
- **Educational resources.** Schools were provided with clear LWSD pilot program policies, as well as King County Green Schools Program food waste reduction educational resources such as sample school announcements, food waste infographics, information on the myths and facts related to school food donation, a flow chart of how school food share and donation works and the steps required, resources on how to recruit student volunteers and/or leadership teams, and sample PowerPoint presentations for training volunteers. See appendices for these educational resources.





## Education strategies

Education strategies to inform the student body and school community how this pilot program works was an important step to success. All schools encouraged students to only “take what they’ll eat, and eat what they take,” and each school shared reminders that students are not required to take a milk under National School Lunch Program. An article was provided to inform student families of the school’s participation in the pilot.

The following table shows the additional education strategies implemented by each pilot school. In addition to the strategies described above and listed below, clear signs were placed on the food share basket and the donation crate in each school.

<b>Education strategies implemented by pilot schools</b>	
<b>School name</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
AG Bell Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fifth-grade leadership students were shown a PowerPoint that outlined how school food share and donation works and how to sort their school food items properly.</li> <li>• School-wide announcements were made each day during the week leading up to a donation kickoff in the lunchroom. Daily announcements continued during the first week of the program.</li> </ul>
Ben Franklin Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fifth-grade students and student Green Team were trained on how to collect the necessary data for the pilot the week before their program kickoff.</li> <li>• The Green Team students made posters and announcements during the week of kick off.</li> <li>• Daily announcements were made the first two weeks of food collection.</li> </ul>
Carl Sandburg Elementary/ Discovery Community School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A PowerPoint outlining the pilot program was shown to all students during classes.</li> <li>• Daily announcements were made leading up to the kickoff.</li> <li>• Announcements were made daily in the lunchroom at the beginning of each lunch period for the first two weeks of the pilot.</li> <li>• Parents, custodial, and kitchen staff were trained on how the pilot is supposed to work and their roles in helping make it a success.</li> </ul>
Finn Hill Middle School/ Environmental and Adventure School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Team students from both schools were shown a PowerPoint and trained on how the pilot would work and their role in making it successful.</li> <li>• Daily announcements were shared the week before and the first week of the pilot.</li> <li>• Ongoing announcements continued several times a week throughout the duration of the pilot program.</li> </ul>
Redmond High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily announcements were given the week prior to and during the first week of food collection.</li> <li>• Student volunteers and Green Team members were trained on how the pilot program worked and their role in helping make it successful.</li> </ul>

## Data collection and analysis

Each school tracked the number of specific food items donated each day. Before recording the number of food items and placing them in the designated refrigerator, volunteer monitors observed if food items were picked up by other students during lunch.. All four schools piloting a School Food Share bin reported seeing students regularly taking unopened packaged foods from the share bin and consuming those foods in the lunchroom. Keeping the school foods within the school community feeds hungry students in those schools – a success!

Four pilot schools started food share and donation in their cafeterias the week of April 15, 2019, and continued through the remainder of the school year. The fifth pilot school began the week of May 27, 2019 and collected foods for donation for the remainder of the school year. See appendices for weekly and total numbers of specific food items collected at each participating school during the pilot program.

The following is the cumulative food items collected during the duration of the pilot from all participating schools.

<b>Foods donated by all participating schools</b>	
<b>Food item</b>	<b>Total number of each type of food item donated by participating schools</b>
Apple	592
Apple sauce cup	142
Banana	18
Crackers	44
Fruit cup	15
Granola bar	7
Juice cup	184
Milk carton	411
Orange	271
Pear	80
String cheese	11
Yogurt container	6
Other (items such as peach cups, Belvita biscuits, chip bags)	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,831</b>

The data confirms a large amount of whole produce and unopened milk cartons served to students from school lunches were not being consumed by students during school lunches. These items were formerly placed in trash cans for transportation to the landfill or compost bins for transportation to a commercial composting facility, however during this pilot these items instead were diverted to hungry students and community members.

Pilot schools with collection of compostable materials in their cafeterias reported less food waste in the compost bins, and custodians and school staff shared that they saw a small decrease in the volume of food waste that was previously being thrown away or composted.

Once each week OSL picked up approved foods collected for donation from each school and weighed them. During this pilot, 301 pounds of food were collected by OSL to feed hungry community members.

<b>Weight of donated foods collected by OSL during the LWSD pilot program (April 15 – June 14 in four schools, May 27 – June 14 in one school)</b>	
<b>School name</b>	<b>Total cumulative weight of donated foods</b>
AG Bell Elementary School	54 lbs.
Ben Franklin Elementary School	90 lbs.
Carl Sandburg Elementary/ Discovery Community School	83 lbs.
Finn Hill Middle School / Environmental and Adventure School	65 lbs.
Redmond High School	9 lbs.
<b>Total</b>	<b>301 lbs.</b>

## Overall successes and challenges

### Successes

- A total of 301 pounds of food, in addition to all shareable foods eaten by students within the schools, was rescued and diverted from the landfill or composting facility. In addition, foods were donated by school kitchens prior to long school breaks, including spring and summer breaks.**
- Schools reported that the School Food Share basket was used by hungry students. Many unopened packaged foods and some whole fruits with inedible skins that would have been disposed, composted, or donated were consumed by students during lunch instead.**  
 Although the schools did not track how many items students took during school lunches from the School Food Share basket, all four schools that placed a signed share basket after the point of service in their lunchrooms and provided education to students encouraging the use of the share baskets, reported on the success of this approach.
- Donations of approved foods were collected weekly by OSL without issues and OSL is willing to continue school collections in 2019-20.** Both OSL and participating schools reported the collaboration process was smooth and effective. OSL noted that donation quantities were small at these schools, but the more schools that participate in a given area, the more valuable this process tends to be to justify the transportation and time.

## Challenges

- **Finding a small refrigerator without a freezer, that fits multiple milk crates, that is Energy Star rated, and sold at an affordable price was challenging.**
- **Creating space in each school for a new refrigerator** near an outlet and within close proximity to the lunchroom in each school took some time and posed a challenge at first. Ultimately each school was able to find a functional and safe location for the refrigerator.
- **The short time frame for implementation at the end of the school year was not ideal for piloting something new.** Pilot programs began after spring break in four of the five schools and ran in all five of the pilot schools for the last month of the school year. This gave some time for data collection, but made it difficult for schools to assess the sustainability of the system. Implementing future pilots earlier in the school year also would allow more time for students to form the correct daily habits. Initial planning (including finalizing policies with the school district, time for researching refrigerators, etc.) will be shortened if food share and donation programs are implemented in additional schools in the future.
- **Difficult to recruit and keep consistent volunteers for daily food tracking and storage.** Several pilot schools reported having a challenging time getting consistent student volunteers to monitor, track, and then move remaining food daily into the refrigerator during each lunch period.

## Recommendations

The partnership between Lake Washington School District, City of Kirkland, Department of Ecology grant, King County Green Schools Program, and OSL provided valuable insight into establishing sustainable food rescue programs in schools. Below are recommendations on how to sustain the food donation program in the pilot schools and to set up the program in additional LWSD schools..

### School food share and donation procedure recommendations

- **Provide the opportunity for all LWSD schools to pilot School Food Share and Donation if they meet the district criteria.** Schools that showed the most success had the following:
  - administrative (principal) support
  - staff and student support
  - ongoing education to the school community on how and why to participate
- **Allow schools to use a clearly labeled section of school kitchen refrigerators to store items for donation.** Doing so would decrease costs, eliminate logistical challenges such as finding space for a refrigerator as well as monitoring and cleaning the extra refrigerator, and avoid additional resource and energy use.
- **Encourage the continued use and expansion of share tables to successfully rescue food to feed students within each school community.** Schools such as Redmond High School with



very small quantities of food remaining for donation after daily school lunches can still continue to share approved foods during school lunches. Such schools can also choose to donate foods on an on-call basis when they have larger quantities such as before school breaks or monthly rather than weekly.

- **Before each school year, check with King County Public Health to ask if any school share table or donation guidelines have changed.**

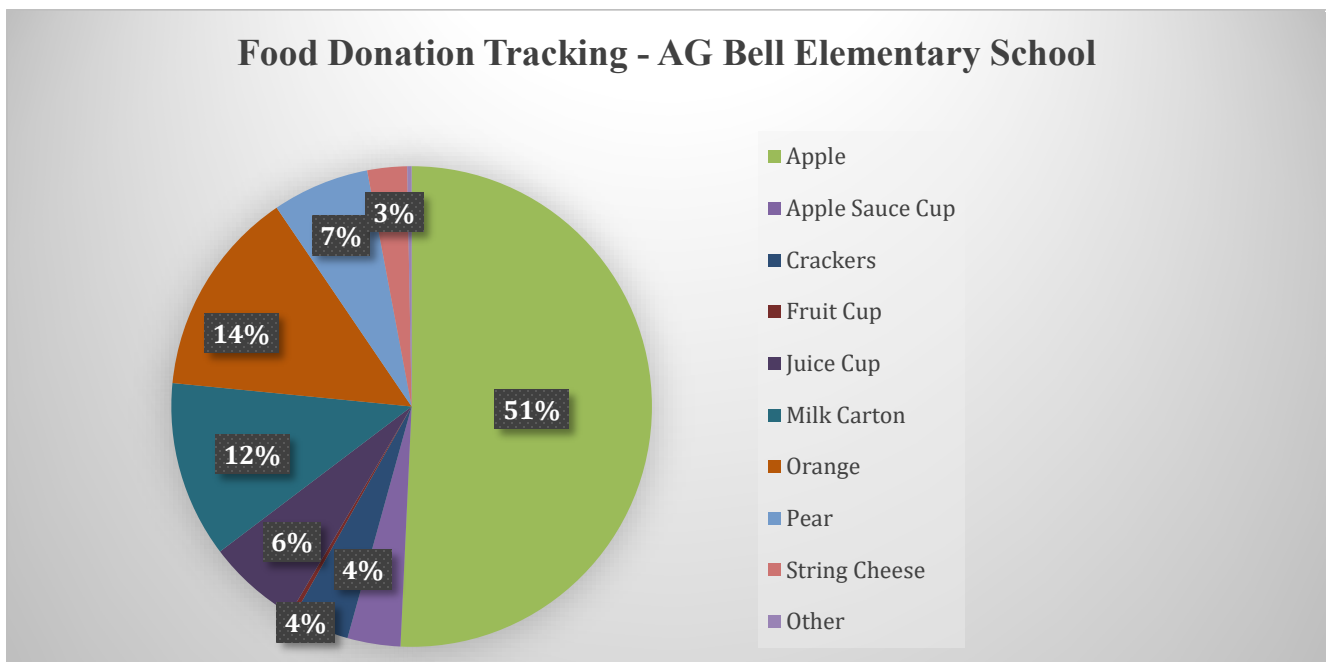
## Ongoing food waste reduction recommendations

- **Adopt a district-wide food waste reduction policy and set district-wide food waste reduction each year.** Regularly address food waste reduction with staff and students at meetings, all-school assemblies, and through ongoing announcements. Check in with kitchen staff several times a year to discuss their challenges and successes. Send messaging home to families promoting the school's waste reduction goals and providing tips for how students and their families can reduce waste at school. (King County Green Schools Program provides sample e-newsletters about why and how to reduce food waste.)
- **Continually seek student input on school menu items** through strategies such as taste tests, surveys, lunchroom observations, and student interviews.
- **Provide Offer vs Serve (OVS) training resources for students, principals, any school staff involved in serving or supervising school lunches, and student families.** Adopting the Offer vs. Serve policy is one step toward waste reduction, but the policy in itself is not enough if people do not understand it or implement it correctly. Suggestions for staff training include annually reviewing the OVS policy with all affected staff at an in-person meeting, and sending periodic email reminders. OVS information can be provided to students and their families in the form of an annual email, letter home, school newsletter article, social media posts, etc.
- **Conduct a pilot program to assess the use of milk dispensers with durable cups to replace single-use milk cartons.** In schools with milk dispensers, students choose how much milk to take, resulting in less milk waste because students drink more of what they put in their cups compared to what they drink from milk cartons. Students report that milk tastes better from dispensers than from cartons – and that also leads to less milk waste. See information on the King County Green Schools website: [www.kingcounty.gov/reduce-school-food-waste](http://www.kingcounty.gov/reduce-school-food-waste)
- **Educate students at all grade levels about nutrition, food systems, and the impact on the environment of food production and transportation.** School produce gardens and student gardening or culinary clubs offer valuable lessons in food production and nutrition. For middle and high school, King County offers a classroom workshop called Food for Thought.
- **Implement recess before lunch in additional elementary schools.** Studies have found that food waste per elementary school student decreased after scheduling recess before lunch. See information on the King County Green Schools Program website: [www.kingcounty.gov/reduce-school-food-waste](http://www.kingcounty.gov/reduce-school-food-waste).

# Appendices

- Specific donated foods and photographs of food share and donation setup at each LWSD school participating in the pilot program
- LWSD Food Share Table Procedures
- LWSD Food Donation Procedures
- “How it works” flow chart
- School Food Share summary for LWSD schools
- Food tracking form
- Refrigerator temperature and time control tracking form
- Sample school invitation to participate in the program
- Sample article provided to inform student families of a school’s participation in the pilot
- Sample student announcements
- School Food Share sign
- Food Donation Only sign

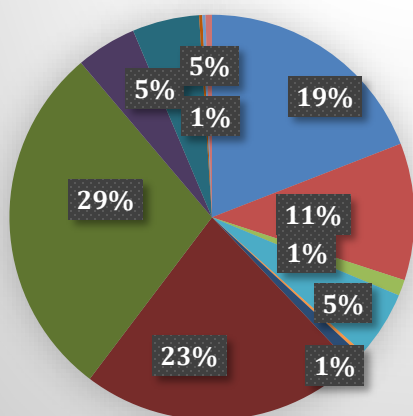
Food Donation Tracking - AG Bell Elementary School				
	June 3-7	June 10-14	June 17-21	Totals:
Apple	98	42	31	171
Apple Sauce Cup	1	9	2	12
Crackers		12	1	13
Fruit Cup	1			1
Juice Cup	1	17	3	21
Milk Carton		28	12	40
Orange	21	16	10	47
Pear		22		22
String Cheese		8	1	9
Other		1		1



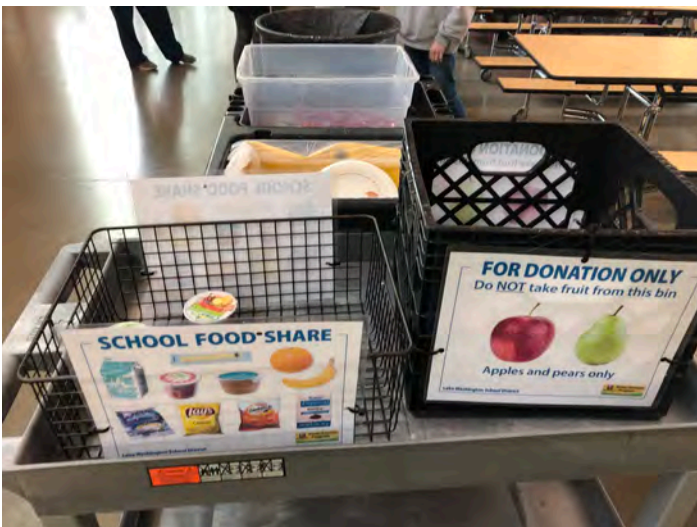
## Food Donation Tracking - Ben Franklin Elementary School

	April 15-19	April 22-26	April 29 - May 3	May 6-10	May 13-17	May 20-24	May 27-31	June 3-7	June 10-14	June 17-21	Totals:
Apple	3	2	8	11	3	5	6	12	17	8	75
Apple Sauce Cup	4	6	7	8	11	2	2		1	2	43
Banana		2			1				2		5
Crackers	4	14	2						1		21
Fruit Cup	1										1
Granola Bar			1	1	1			1			4
Juice Cup	3	8	9	3	8	9	7	6	27	8	88
Milk Carton	8	15	15	11	10	8	8	12	18	7	112
Orange	2	8	1	3	1	1	3				19
Pear	2	7		4	5			2	1		21
String Cheese			1								1
Yogurt Container					1						1
Other			1		1						2

## Food Donation Tracking - Ben Franklin Elementary School



- Apple
- Apple Sauce Cup
- Banana
- Crackers
- Fruit Cup
- Granola Bar
- Juice Cup
- Milk Carton
- Orange
- Pear
- String Cheese
- Yogurt Container
- other

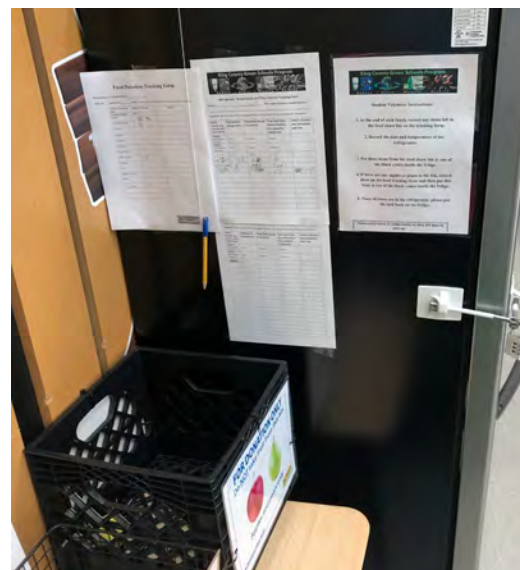
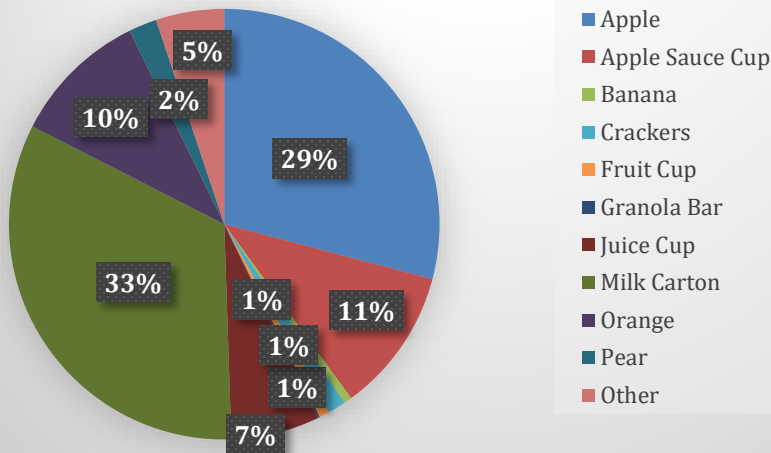




## Food Donation Tracking - Carl Sandburg/Discovery School

	April 15-19	April 22-26	April 29-May 3	May 6-10	May 13-17	May 20-24	May 27-31	June 3-7	June 10-14	June 17-21	Totals:
Apple	42	27	12	12	20	22	15	11	31	1	193
Apple Sauce Cup	18	4	8	8	10	8		2	6	8	72
Banana		1	1				1		1		4
Crackers	1		3	1	1	0			1	2	9
Fruit Cup		1	1					1	1	1	5
Granola Bar				1							1
Juice Cup	6	7	6	7	3	3		2		10	44
Milk Carton	40	28	8	7	20	20	19	14	33	30	219
Orange	14	17		1	8	6	1		13	8	68
Pear	1	1		1	1	0	1	2	2	5	14
Other	4				2	2	3	8	10	5	34

## Food Donation Tracking - Carl Sandburg/Discovery School

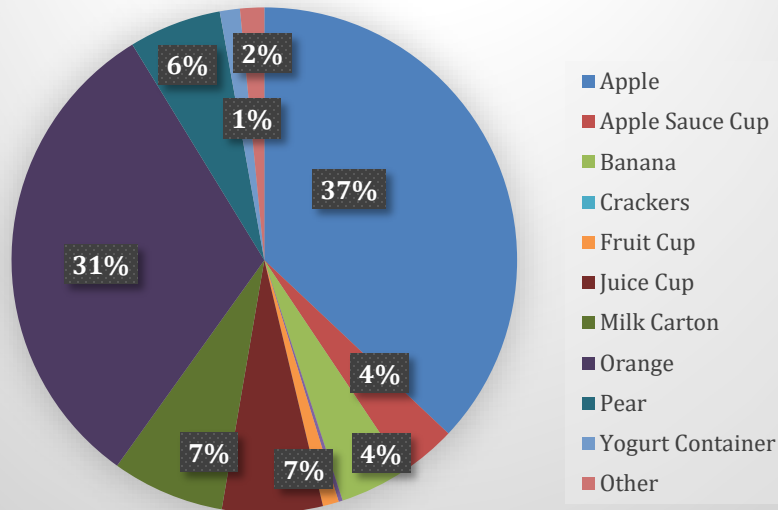




## Food Donation Tracking - Finn Hill Middle School/EAS

	April 15-19	April 22-26	April 29-May 3	May 6-10	May 13-17	May 20-24	May 27-31	June 3-7	June 10-14	June 17-21	Totals:
Apple	5	1	15	19	33	35	23		5	8	144
Apple Sauce Cup	2	1	2	1		4	2			2	14
Banana			6	2	2			4	2	1	17
Fruit Cup				4							4
Juice Cup		3	2	4	4	6		4		2	25
Milk Carton	3		2	4	2	5		5	3	4	28
Orange		6	20	19	12	28	24	6	4	3	122
Pear	3			6	2	4	3		3	2	23
Yogurt Container	1		2	1						1	5
Other				4	2						6

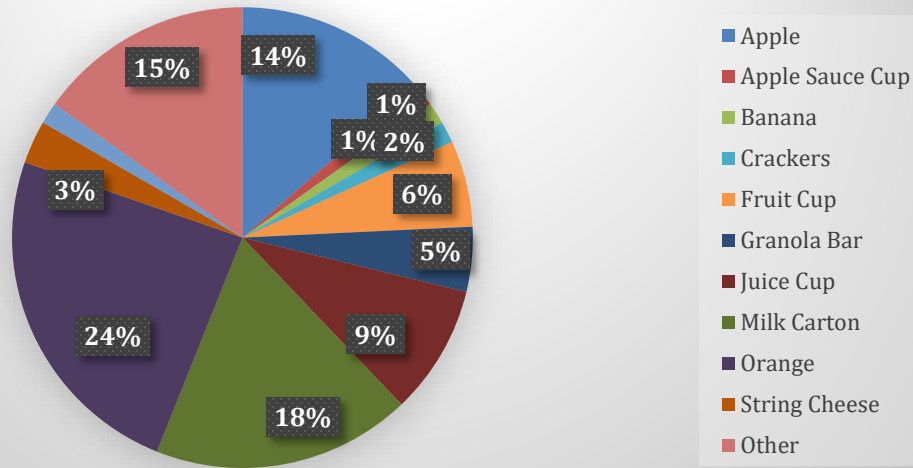
## Food Donation Tracking - Finn Hill Middle School/EAS



## Food Donation Tracking - Redmond High School

	April 22-26	April 29-May3	May 6-10	May 13-17	May 20-24	May 27-31	June 3-7	June 10-14	June 17-21	Totals:
Apple	2						1	4	2	9
Apple Sauce Cup						1				1
Banana		1								1
Crackers	1									1
Fruit Cup						3	1			4
Granola Bar		1				2				3
Juice Cup	1					1	2	1	1	6
Milk Carton	1		1			2	5	2	1	12
Orange	1	1				1		1	12	16
String Cheese										
Yogurt Container		1								1
Other	2	3				4			1	10

## Food Donation Tracking - Redmond High School



## **LWSD Food Share Table Procedures**

12/6/18

LWSD schools' commitment to sustainability addresses many aspects of facilities, including reducing waste in our school lunchrooms. Placement of Food Share Tables in lunchrooms are one strategy to reduce landfill waste of edible food. As with all initiatives, LWSD strives for programs that have long term commitment and support ensuring their success. To that end, this document provides the procedures and expectations for each program.

### FOOD SHARE TABLE

A Food Share Table is defined as providing a table in the lunchroom where students can leave foods for other students to take and eat. At the end of the lunch period, any leftovers are thrown away.

To start a lunchroom Food Share program at your school, the following procedures are required:

1. A designated school contact, active Green Team, and table captain are required.
2. The table captain must be present to ensure successful, safe usage of the Food Share table, including daily monitoring and cleaning.
3. Green Team coordination with the custodian on the location of Food Share tables is required.
4. Only UNOPENED packaged foods and whole fruits may be included on the table.
5. If a school wishes to include perishable items on the table, these items must be discarded within two hours of lunch start times.
6. Students must be educated on what foods are acceptable to leave on the table, including visible signage (King County Green Schools can provide materials if the school participates in this program).
7. Table captain must throw away leftover food at the end of each lunch.
8. Teams should consider including signage and programs encouraging students to take only what they'll eat.

Please contact InfoCentre with any questions about this program at [servicedesk@info-centre.com](mailto:servicedesk@info-centre.com).



## **LWSD Food Donation Procedures**

12/6/18

LWSD schools' commitment to sustainability addresses many aspects of facilities, including reducing waste in our school lunchrooms. Placement of Food Share Tables in lunchrooms and donating leftover food to a charitable organization are strategies to reduce landfill waste of edible food. As with all initiatives, LWSD strives for programs that have long term commitment and support ensuring their success. To that end, this document provides the procedures and expectations for food donations.

### **FOOD DONATION PROGRAM**

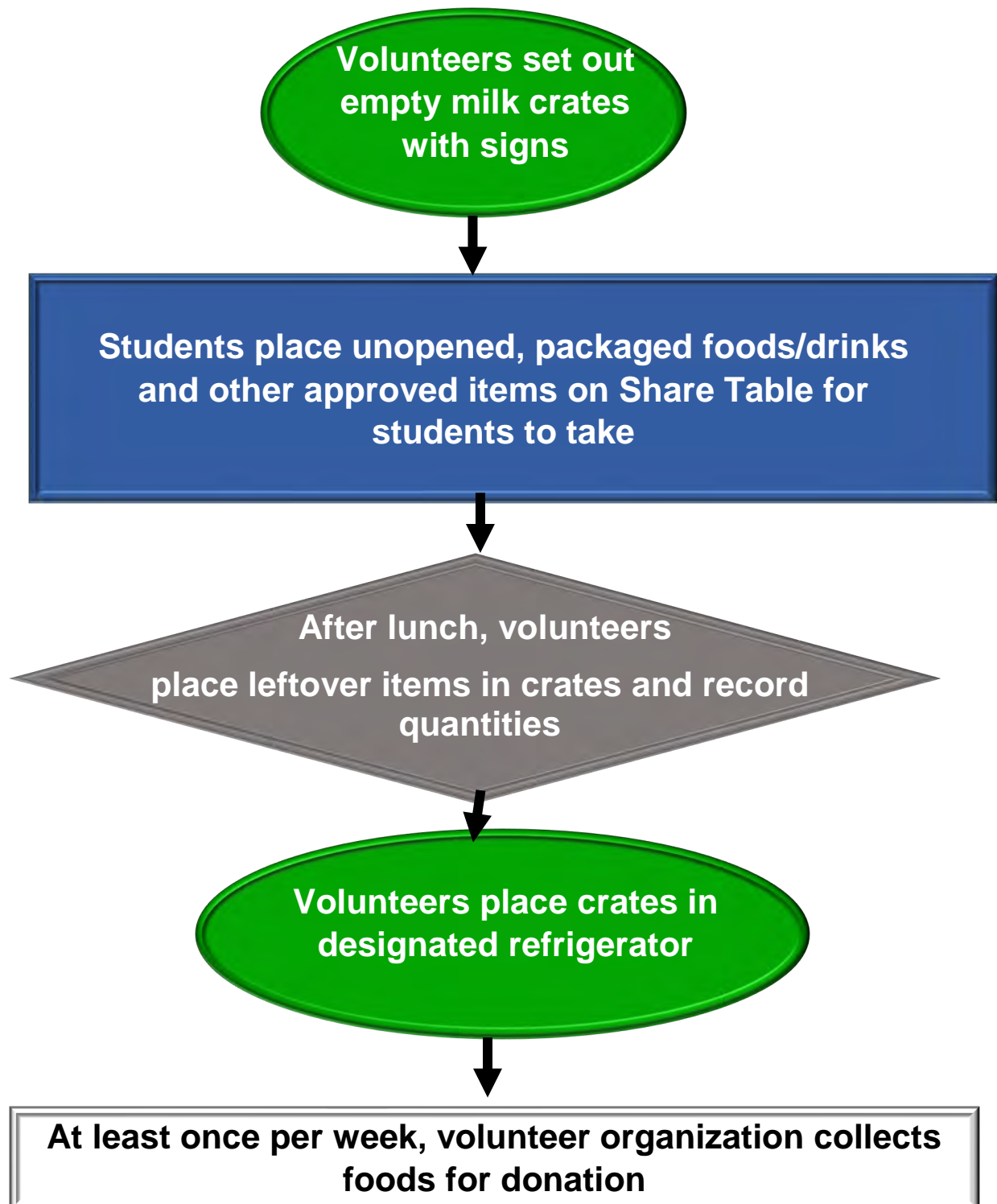
This program takes food left over from a Food Share Table and stores it for weekly pickup from a non-profit organization for reuse.

To add food donation to a Food Share Table program at your school, the following procedures are required:

1. The school/Green Team/ASB must provide a separate small refrigerator to hold leftover food until weekly pickups take place. Coordinate the location of the refrigerator with custodial staff.
2. The Green Team must coordinate with King County Green Schools to secure a weekly pick-up service with appropriate organizations.
3. No food or drink may be returned to the kitchen or servery areas. Food from the refrigerator may not be returned to the Share Table.
4. The Share Table captain will be responsible for removal and storage of the Share Table's leftover food after each lunch period.
5. Arrangements for regular cleaning are required.
6. Refrigerators must be Energy Star rated and well-labelled.
7. Food service staff and custodial staff are not responsible for this storage.



## School Food Share and Food Donation: How it Works







## School Food Share/ Food Donation: Feeding People, Protecting the Planet, Saving Money

### Problems

- More than one-third of all food produced in the United States ends up in garbage bins. When we waste food, the energy, water and other resources used to produce, transport and cook food is wasted.
- Although people know they shouldn't throw food away, the habit starts young. In school cafeterias, children have to take a mix of healthy foods (required by law) and if they don't eat it, the edible foods are placed in garbage or compost bins and the district pays for collection.
- An average school throws away about 30 pounds each day of whole fruits, milk, cheese, etc. while 1 in 5 children live in homes that are food insecure.

### Solutions

- **Education:** This includes nutrition education, school produce gardens, and encouraging students to eat the foods they are served. See "Food Waste Reduction Pledge" for students.
- **Share Table:** Invite students to place on a Share Table unopened, packaged foods/drinks and uneaten whole fruits with inedible skin from the school food program. Invite students who want more food to help themselves to Share Table items.
- **Donate** items leftover on the Share Table to a food bank or other nonprofit organization that will use the food to feed hungry people in our community.
  - To collect foods that have been served (such as in a school cafeteria), nonprofit organizations must receive a variance from King County Public Health. For LWSD schools, the nonprofit OS� has received this King County Public Health approval and is available to provide weekly collection of the rescued foods.
- **Compost:** Foods not eaten or donated should be collected for composting.

## Steps

- Obtain approval from district nutrition services staff and school principal.
  - In Dec. 2018, LWSD approved a pilot involving five Kirkland schools. School principal approval needs to be obtained before the program can be planned in each school.
- Work with the King County Green Schools Program, Green Team leader and students, and parent volunteers to set up a pilot program.
- Conduct a one-week pilot to assess quantities and to test storage and collection.
- Place leftover items from the Share Table in a plastic milk crate provided by the King County Green Schools Program or the nonprofit, and label the bin with a "School Food Share" sign provided by King County.
- Record quantity of each item (e.g., number of milk cartons, etc.) on a log or worksheet provided by King County Green Schools Program.
- Place the bin in the designated refrigerator. Remember that foods and drinks must be stored safely.
- Check and record the refrigerator's temperature daily.

Schedule a weekly pick up from the nonprofit organization OSL.

## Assistance and tools from King County Green Schools Program and City of Kirkland

For schools participating in the program, the program provides

- Initial coordination with OSL. School Food Share signs for the Share Table and plastic milk crates for storage.
- Help setting up the program and educating students and employees.
- Helpful tools such as a
  - How it Works chart
  - Myths and Facts about School Food Share Programs
  - Tracking form to record quantities donated
  - Food Waste Reduction Pledge for students
  - Articles about reducing food waste for parent newsletters



# Daily food donation tracking form

Names of persons completing this form: \_\_\_\_\_

School name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ **Note:** In each row, note the **number of items** set aside for donation.

Food or beverage item	Number of packaged, unopened items	Number of pieces of whole fruit (completely uneaten)	Notes
Apple			
Applesauce cup			
Banana			
Carrots			
Crackers			
Fruit cup			
Granola bar			
Milk carton			
Orange			
String cheese			
Yogurt container			

<b>Food or beverage item (write in items not included on p. 1)</b>	<b>Number of packaged, unopened items</b>	<b>Number of pieces of whole fruit (completely uneaten)</b>	<b>Notes</b>









## School invitation to join the LWSD School Food Share and Donation pilot program

Hi  Principal and Green Team,

Lake Washington School District has approved a School Food Share and Donation pilot in five Kirkland schools this winter/spring—and we think your school is a great candidate! See the new district policies attached that pertain to this pilot. (Please note that kitchen staff will not be involved in this pilot).

**Please let me know by  if you are willing to participate in the pilot. I'd love to set up an initial meeting to talk through details!**

The goals are to minimize wasted foods and beverages and to safely distribute unwanted items from the school lunch program to a nonprofit that provides food to community members in need. This program is consistent with the district's sustainability goals and with food safety guidelines from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and King County Public Health. This is a win-win: Avoid wasting food and reduce environmental impacts of food waste; help feed hungry people in our community; teach students about the value of food; lengthen the life of our local landfill; and possibly reduce district waste removal expenses.

The City of Kirkland received a grant to purchase refrigerators for schools if needed and to provide hands-on assistance in partnership with your King County Green Schools Program representative.

“Share bins” (that we provide) can be stationed after the point of service in the lunchroom for students to discard unwanted items they are required to select per the National School Lunch Program standards. No foods or drinks from home will be accepted. We will collect the following unopened and uneaten **school lunch program items**:

- **Uneaten, whole fruits**
- **Unopened packaged items** such as milk, yogurt, cheese, applesauce, crackers, etc.

**I look forward to hearing from you.**



*Sample school e-newsletter article for schools participating in the pilot*

**Food Share and Donation Pilot Program - spring 2019**  
**In collaboration with City of Kirkland and King County Green Schools Program**

Lake Washington School District is piloting a food share and donation program in five schools, including your school. The goals of this partnership are to reduce food waste and divert uneaten, edible foods to community members in need. This program is consistent with the district's sustainability goals and with U.S. Department of Agriculture and Public Health Seattle-King County food safety guidelines.

We want students to eat the delicious, healthy foods they've selected for lunch. We also want to waste less food, keep it out of the landfill, and help feed others. When we waste food, we waste the water, energy, and money that was used to grow, transport, and cook that food.

You can help by talking with your student, using the information and tips below. Although donating food is better than placing it in garbage or in a compost bin, it's best when students eat their food!

1. Encourage your student to take only what they'll eat and drink during lunch, and eat and drink the items they take. When selecting a school lunch, students are required to take at least three items including a fruit or a vegetable, but are not required to take milk if they won't drink it.
2. Talk with your student about foods they like, whether they bring lunch from home or choose foods at school. What are their favorite types of sandwiches, yogurts, fruits, vegetables, or other foods? If your student brings lunch from home, involve them in helping to select foods they will eat and ask them to bring leftovers home so you can see what they are able to eat in a lunch period. Only pack a half-sandwich and two apple slices if that's all your child can eat at lunch.
3. Food Share and Donation bins: After lunch, items from both bins will be refrigerated and then donated to feed hungry people instead of feeding the landfill. No homemade foods are allowed in the bins. During lunch, students may take items from the Share Bin if they want more food.  
Share Bin: For unopened, packaged school lunch items such as milk, yogurt, cheese, and applesauce; commercially packaged items such as crackers and granola bars; and uneaten, whole fruits with inedible peels such as oranges and bananas.  
Food Donation Bin: For uneaten, whole fruits with edible peels such as apples and pears. Students cannot take fruits from the Food Donation Bin.

Questions? Contact LWSD Support Services at [servicedesk@info-centre.com](mailto:servicedesk@info-centre.com) / 425-936-2811.



*Sample announcements*

## **Reduce Food Waste / Food Share and Donation Bins**

### **WEEK 1**

#### **Day 1**

Stay healthy by eating the delicious, nutritious foods you've selected for lunch. We also want to waste less food, keep it out of the landfill, and help feed others in the community. When food is wasted, we waste the water, energy, and money used to grow, transport, and cook that food.

Let's reduce how much food needs to be composted or landfilled. You can help! Try to take only what you will eat and drink – and then eat and drink what you take. If you get a school lunch, you are required to take at least three items including a fruit **or** a vegetable, but you are **not** required to take milk if you won't drink it. If you choose to take a milk, what's the best thing to do? Drink it! What's the best thing to do with your food? Eat it! Thanks for reducing food waste!

#### **Day 2**

Food makes up about 30 to 40 percent of the waste collected at lunch. That's a lot of wasted food! You can help reduce food waste by only taking what you'll eat and drink during lunch – and then eating and drinking what you take.

Also, to reduce wasted food, we set up a Share Bin where you can place unopened, packaged items such as milk, yogurt, cheese, and applesauce from the school lunch program, and whole, uneaten fruits such as oranges and bananas with peels that can't be eaten. You also can place unopened packages of crackers and granola bars in the Share Bin. Students can take items from the Share Bin if they want more food. Whole, uneaten apples and pears – fruits with peels you can eat – can be placed in the Food Donation Bin. **(Note where bins are located.)**

At the end of lunch, remaining items will be placed in a refrigerator and a local organization named OSL will pick up the foods to share with people who need more food. Thanks to King County Green Schools Program, City of Kirkland, and OSL for helping us start this program.

#### **Day 3**

Remember to take what you can eat and drink – and then eat and drink what you take. And, at the end of lunch, place unopened, packaged items and uneaten fruits in the Share Bin or Food Donation Bin. **(Note where bins are located.)** See signs on or next to each bin to remind you what items can be placed in each bin.

What can you place in a **Share Bin**? (*Hold up the School Food Share sign.*)

1. Unopened, packaged items from the school lunch program such as milk, yogurt, cheese, applesauce, or fruit cups. Remember you do not have to take a milk if you won't drink it.
2. Uneaten, whole fruits with peels you don't eat such as oranges and bananas.
3. Unopened, packaged items such as crackers and granola bars.

What can you place in a **Food Donation Bin**? (*Hold up the Food Donation Bin sign.*)

Apples and pears – fruit with peels you can eat. Thanks for reducing food waste!

#### **Day 4**

Did you know that most food scraps in the U.S. end up in a landfill? Food waste takes up space in landfills. And food waste accounts for 23 percent of all methane emissions in the U.S. - and those emissions contribute to climate change. Let's keep edible food out of our landfill!

- 1<sup>st</sup>. Only take what you can eat -- and try to eat what you take. Remember, you are not required to take milk if you won't drink it.
- 2<sup>nd</sup>. Place unopened, packaged items and whole fruits in a Share Bin or Food Donation Bin. See signs on or next to each bin to remind you what items can be placed in each bin.
- 3<sup>rd</sup>. Take items from the Share Bin if you want additional food.

Items left in the Share Bin or Food Donation bin at the end of lunch will be refrigerated and then donated to help feed hungry community members instead of feeding the landfill.

#### **Day 5**

Did you know that every year, King County residents compost enough food scraps to fill over 200 Olympic-sized swimming pools? It's great that people are composting food waste instead of throwing it away. But it would be **even better** if we didn't waste so much food every day.

If you bring a lunch from home, help pack your own lunch. That way, you can help decide what healthy foods and how much you'll pack. Also, take home leftover foods from your home-packed lunch so your family will see how much you can eat at each lunch.

If you are too full to eat a packaged item and have not yet opened it, or have uneaten, whole fruit from the school lunch program, you may place those items in the Share bin or Food Donation bin. See signs on or next to each bin to know which items can be placed in each bin.

**WEEKS 2, 3, 4, and beyond –Repeat above messages and then share the message below.**

We've learned to reduce food waste by taking only what we can eat and eating what we take. And we know we help our environment when we waste less food. Last week we were able to keep a lot of good, edible food out of the garbage. (***If possible, share quantities of food collected last week for donation.***) Keep up the great work. Let's keep reducing food waste!



# SCHOOL FOOD SHARE



Lake Washington School District



# FOR DONATION ONLY

Do NOT take fruit from this bin



Apples and pears only