



Sustainable School Food Toolkit Food Rescue & Recovery

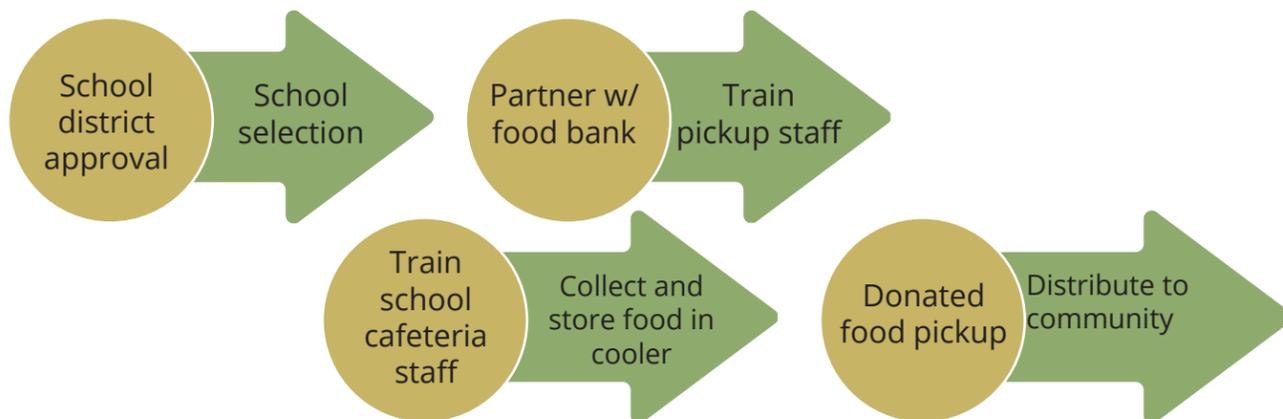
About [40%](#) of school cafeteria garbage is consumable food. In fact, **an average school will throw away roughly 30 pounds of food every day**, which leads to the emission of harmful greenhouse gases like methane and carbon dioxide when food sits in landfills, unable to properly decompose. In Washington state, where [1 out of every 7](#) children goes hungry, this wasted food also raises concerns of social injustice and inequity. Local community partners like food banks and after school programs that take place on school property can help schools in addressing these issues.

Try These Best Practices

Here are two ways to reduce wasted food in a school cafeteria while addressing the fact that many students are food insecure.

Share Tables provide an alternative to throwing away uneaten food. A designated bin in the waste sort line can offer students a space to leave unwanted food that is packaged or whole, like a box of raisins or fruits with peels. Students who would like more to eat are encouraged to take what they like from the Share Table. Once students have taken what they want from the Share Table, leftover food can be used during afternoon snack breaks, after school programming like Boys and Girls Clubs or sports teams, or backpack programs where food is sent home with students.

School Food Share is the next step in food recovery. This program guides schools and food banks to coordinate the collection of cafeteria leftovers and share them with members of their community that face hunger through nonprofit organizations and food banks. This program can also accommodate schools that have ordered too much food and are unable to serve it in a timely manner. The diagram below inspired by [EPA.gov](#), depicts the steps to begin a School Food Share program.



Success Story

Under the guidance of the School Food Share program, [Bremerton School District](#) partners with the Salvation Army to collect whole, uneaten food from its school cafeterias and donate it to local food banks. Students are taught what kind of foods are acceptable to donate and kitchen staff are educated on how to store the extra food until it could be picked up by a community partner. **As a result, the district collects between 150 and 175 pounds of food per school per week - potentially up to 32,000 pounds of food per year!**

If you have any questions or want more information about how to adopt this program at your school or district, please contact Lynn Johnson, Child Nutrition Services Supervisor, at lynn.johnson@bremertonschools.org.



Did You Know?

Organic matter, like the food scraps tossed at the end of a lunch period, can be preserved in a landfill for decades. In the early 1990s, Dr. William Rathje, a researcher from the University of Arizona, discovered that organic matter in a landfill remains [mummified](#) without access to the air, water, and organisms it needs to decompose. It really makes you think about what you throw away!

Resources for Taking Action!

1. [Washington School Food Share Program Toolkit](#): This toolkit provides detailed information on implementing a School Food Share program. It describes the program, how to get started, logistics, rules and regulations, and more.
2. [Washington State Department of Health- School Food Donation Guidelines](#): This resource offers guidelines and considerations for implementing school food donation practices.
3. [Current Food Waste and Potential Food Rescue Programs for the Auburn School District](#)