



Food Systems and Food Waste Reduction: Green Team and Classroom learning and activities

Focus on food systems and reducing food waste near Thanksgiving and other holidays – or anytime! We recommend pairing contextual information with activities your class or Green Team can carry out. Encourage critical thinking about ways students can take action on food justice. Activities on page 2 can be used in-person, in virtual meetings, or via email or community boards.

Resources to build context

Questions for students. Can be used with the reading or video recommendations.

- When you hear food waste, what do you think?
- Why do you think food gets wasted?
- What are the impacts of food waste?
- Does everyone have access to the same food?
- What benefits would we experience if we reduced food waste?
- Are there things you heard today that you want to understand better?
- What have you heard that inspires you to take action to reduce wasted food?

Reading recommendations

Elementary school recommendations

- [Don't Waste Your Food \(Good to be Green\)](#) by Deborah Chancellor (grades 2-3).
- [Scraps to Snacks: A Cookbook for Kids by Kids to Reduce, Reuse, and Re-Eat](#) by Lightsabers Phoenix Squadron Kids (grades 4-9). Written by students for students, it's free to download and offers helpful context. Students can prepare a recipe from the book and then share with classmates a photo or drawing of what they prepare.
- [The ugly vegetables](#) by Grace Lin (elementary grades). Includes a 7-minute read-a-loud.

Middle and high school recommendations

- [How cutting your food waste can help the climate](#) by Kelly Oakes, BBC, 2/25/20 (grades 6-12).
- [Food Insecurity In the U.S. by the Numbers](#) by Christianna Silva, NPR, 9/27/20 (grades 8-12).

Video recommendations

- [Kids go green: reducing food waste](#) (elementary school).
- [Food waste footprint](#) (middle and high school).
- [What we're getting wrong in the fight to end hunger - Bing video](#) (middle and high school).

- [Food waste is the world's dumbest problem](#) (middle and high school) – find video link in the “Education” section of this Green Schools Program web page. Learn about reasons we waste food and hear from leading scientists researching what we can do about it.

Activities

- **Track food waste**
 - Elementary school students: [Create a “secret mission” to save food, money and the planet](#). Write observations about what foods are wasted at home and then become waste detectives to figure out why this is happening.
 - Middle and high school students: Track food waste at home following instructions in this [King County’s Too Good to Waste](#) guide.
- **Imperfect produce challenge/food scavenger hunt (grades 6-12)**. Students can find and buy imperfectly shaped fruits and vegetables at a grocery store, bring them home, and make sure they get eaten! Students can draw or take photos of the imperfect produce along with the snack or meal they made with it. See [“Celebrate Individuality Taste Tests”](#) on this “How to teach kids to waste less food” website.
- **Meal planning**. Encourage students to help with grocery shopping so they know what goes into meal planning.
- **Shop your fridge and make soup** (grades 6-12). Do you have an onion? Then you can make soup! This resource offers tips on how you can quickly make a soup from what you have.
- **Food storage challenge** (grades 6-12). How we store food impacts how long it lasts. Students can use this King County [guide](#) to learn about food storage best practices and then share tips with folks at home. Students could share before and after photos with the class.
- **Connectivity activities**. As a warm-up to discussing food systems and food waste reduction, use a short connection game with your class or student team in-person or virtually.

Twenty Questions about food (secondary school students)

The teacher, student volunteer, or other leader can pick a holiday themed dish or a traditional family dish or specialty. Allow class or team members one question each as they try to figure out the identity of the dish. The number of questions can be changed to match the class or team size.

For my holiday meal, I’m making..... (elementary school students)

This classic memory game is a warm-up to talking about food systems and food waste reduction. Tell students they will have fun making an imaginary holiday meal. The healthy meal should include as many vegetables and fruits as possible. It is up to students’ imaginations to decide what they will make!

Each student in turn needs to remember what the previous student said they are “bringing” and then add their own dish or ingredient. If needed to help students remember, the teacher or leader can write the words in a text box. *Example: Student #1 - For my holiday meal I’m making lasagna; Student #2: For my holiday meal I’m making lasagna and a green salad.*