

Important Note: This activity was developed for the original Green Lunchroom Challenge program, a voluntary pledge program for K-12 schools to improve the sustainability of their food service



operations. The project was coordinated by the [Illinois Sustainable Technology Center Technical Assistance Program](#) with funding from US EPA Region 5.

The following page(s) represent the content of this activity as it appeared on the original project web site, complete with available points and instructions for submitting documentation. **The project is no longer funded and as of June 2018 schools may no longer submit activity documentation to earn points and recognition as described.** The activity is presented for your information to guide your organization's sustainability efforts.

If your school or district implements the suggested activity and wishes to share its experiences, please email [Joy Scrogum](#). Your story may be incorporated into a blog post on this web site, the main ISTC site, or shared on social media to foster networking and inspiration among peer institutions.

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Give students more time to eat

Activity Category: Food Presentation

Activity: Give students more time to eat

Rationale: Studies have shown that students provided with longer lunch periods eat more of their food and throw out less (see the links in the "Resources" section below). This is not only important in terms waste hauling cost savings, conserving resources, and keeping valuable nutrients out of landfills. If students are better nourished, they'll be more likely to perform better in class.



Activity Description: Experiment with offering a longer lunch period at least one day after signing up for the Challenge, and compare the amount of food consumed during a longer lunch period to the amount consumed during your typical lunch period. Your comparison of consumption amounts may include any combination of visual assessment or physical sorting of trash/tray waste, information from point-of-sale systems, and observations of food service/lunchroom staff. See the "Tray Waste" video in the "Resources" section below for tips on measuring tray waste. If possible, offer the same menu during the two different length periods to control for differing responses to food components offered. You must increase the lunch period by at least 5 minutes for the experiment.

Earn Challenge Points (200 points): Write a report summarizing the results of your experiment, in Word or PDF format, including the following information:

- ✂ The typical length of your lunch period and the length of your longer, experimental lunch period.
- ✂ How was the day's schedule altered to accommodate the longer lunch period (e.g. recess was shortened by 5 minutes, each class period was reduced by 2 minutes, etc.)?
- ✂ A summary of the results of consumption of the food during the two different conditions. Did a longer lunch time have a noticeable effect on consumption and/or waste?
- ✂ Any other observations you may have about the differences between the two lunch periods (e.g. differences in student behavior not related to food consumption)
- ✂ Whether your school/district might consider establishing a longer lunch period for the next school year

Your report should be 2-4 pages in length and should be emailed to Joy Scrogum at jscrogum@illinois.edu.

Resources:

-  [Kids Who Are Time-Crunched At School Lunch Toss More And Eat Less](#)
-  [Amount of Time to Eat Lunch Is Associated with Children's Selection and Consumption of School Meal Entrée, Fruits, Vegetables, and Milk](#)
-  [Longer Lunches, Smarter Students? The Controversy of 10 Minute or 1 Hour Lunch Periods](#)
-  [Lunch Time at School: How Much Time is Enough?](#)
-  [The Relationship Between the Length of the Lunch Period and Nutrient Consumption in the Elementary School Lunch Setting](#)
-  [Most US Public Elementary Schools Provide Students Only Minimal Time to Eat Lunch](#)
-  [Smarter Lunchrooms video: Tray Waste](#) (helpful in measuring tray waste)

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