

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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Employ the principles of "offer versus serve"

Activity Category: Food Presentation

Activity: Employ the principles of "offer versus serve"

Rationale: "Offer versus serve" (OVS) in the context of menu planning for reimbursable school meals in the USDA National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast program (SBP), means the practice of allowing students to decline up to two of the food components offered, selecting components which they would prefer to eat. The goal is to reduce food waste by not forcing students to take items they have no intention of eating. If all students were simply served the exact same meal with the same components, assembled to ensure that each meal is a reimbursable one, you may have some students who are given items they don't like or don't want due to variation in appetites. Guidance is provided by the USDA (see the first item listed in the "Resources" section below) on what combinations of student selections in an OVS situation constitute a reimbursable lunch or breakfast. OVS is required for high schools in the NSLP, but optional for lower grade levels.



Activity Description: Employ the principles of OVS for all grade levels present at your school (or district, if you are participating as a district) during the school year.

Earn Challenge Points (100 points): Provide a brief description of your implementation of OVS in a Word or PDF file which includes the following:

-  Whether or not OVS has been offered for all grades at your school/district previously, and if not, for which grades this is a new practice.
-  1-2 photos of your lunchroom signage explaining OVS to students (i.e. the fact that need to select a certain number of items and the types of that must be selected)
-  Any observations or evidence you may have on whether OVS had an impact or not on food waste. This may include anecdotal evidence from food service workers and/or lunchroom monitors, data from waste hauling bills before and after implementation, data from waste characterizations (see the "Zero Waste Lunchrooms" category on the main

"Activities" page for more information), data regarding fluctuations in the amount of food prepared before and after implementation, or any combination of the above.

 Whether or not your school/district plans to continue to employ OVS in the future

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

Resources:

-  [Offer Versus Serve Guidance for the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program](#) 
-  [Illinois State Board of Education Frontline Staff Training Offer Versus Serve 9-12 Grade Grouping](#) 
-  [Illinois State Board of Education Frontline Staff Training Offer Versus Serve K-8 Grade Grouping](#) 
-  [How to Do Offer Versus Serve](#) 
-  [Students Succeed with School Meals: "Offer versus Serve"](#) 
-  [Offer Versus Serve in the National School Lunch Program](#) 
-  [Offer Versus Serve in the School Breakfast Program](#) 

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