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.

Have recess before lunch

Activity Category: Food Presentation

Activity: Have recess before lunch

Rationale: Studies have shown a 30% reduction in plate waste when elementary school students were allowed to have recess before eating lunch. Physical activity can help build up a child's appetite, plus when students are given an opportunity to burn off energy and socialize before lunch, they are more likely to focus on eating during the lunch period.

Activity Description: If you represent an elementary school, or middle school that has recess, experiment with offering recess prior to the lunch period on at least one day after having signed up for the Challenge, and compare the amount of food consumed when recess comes first to the amount consumed when recess is after lunch. If you represent a district, choose an elementary or middle school in your jurisdiction at which to conduct your experiment. 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 conditions to control for differing responses to food components offered. **Note this activity is for schools or districts which do not already offer recess before lunch at the time they sign up for the Challenge**.

Earn Challenge Points (150 points): Write a report summarizing the results of your experiment, in Word or PDF format, including the following information:

🍴 A summary of the comparison of consumption of food during the two different conditions. Did putting recess before lunch have a noticeable effect on consumption and/or waste?

🍴 Any other observations you may have about the differences between the conditions (e.g. differences in student behavior not related to food consumption)

🍴 Whether your school/district might consider putting recess before lunch during 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:

🍴 [Relationships of Meal and Recess Schedules to Plate Waste in Elementary Schools](#)↗

- Rethinking School Lunch
- Holding Recess before Lunch Increases Fruit and Veggie Consumption and Decreases Waste
- Recess Before Lunch: Playtime Before Lunchtime
- Iowa Recess Before Lunch (the guide included on this site also includes information on assessing plate waste)
- Smarter Lunchrooms video: Tray Waste (helpful in measuring tray waste)

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