

Considerations for use of sharing tables:

1. Check with local health department to see if sharing tables are allowed in your county. The environmental health specialist that conducts food safety inspections will work with food service staff to ensure that the sharing tables are operated safely. Any changes required by the environmental sanitarian will be made.
2. Administrative and food service staff at all schools with sharing tables are making a conscientious effort to be good stewards of the federal and state funding and USDA Foods received for the school meal and afterschool snack programs.

Examples of how to reduce food waste:

- Observing meal and snack service and making improvements in an attempt to improve food acceptability so that students consume nutritious lunches and snack. These improvements include but are not limited to:
 - Program marketing
 - Increasing food choices
 - Changing food presentation
 - Allowing sufficient time for students to consume meals or snack
 - Implementing recess before lunch
 - Changing menus based on student input
 - Scheduling milk breaks and classroom snacks so students are hungry at meal time
3. Effectively implementing Offer versus Serve to encourage students to refuse what they do not intend to eat at breakfast and lunch by:
 - Providing ongoing training and supervision of food service staff and others who monitor for reimbursable meals and snacks at the end of the serving line to ensure that students receive appropriate guidance about what they must select.
 - Informing students that they may turn down up to two required food items at lunch and one required food item/menu item at breakfast.
 - Providing age appropriate signage and/or effective displays of menu items on the serving lines to assist students with selecting the correct number of items.
 4. Legal entity (school board for public schools and administrator for private schools) has stated in writing that sharing tables are allowed at the specified serving locations and accepts liability in the event of a food borne illness or injury related to the sharing table.
 5. Parents will be informed in writing about the school's sharing table policy so they can discuss the use with their children. Children with food allergies are of special concern.



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6. The food safety plan for each school with a sharing table will include a standard operating procedure (SOP) pertaining to the table. Specific information for this SOP includes:
 - What school meal or afterschool snack items are allowed on the sharing table
 - What will be used as a sharing table
 - Instructions for the designated food service employee charged with supervision of the table and the responsibility for proper disposal of any remaining items at the conclusion of meal/afterschool snack program
 - Other provisions mentioned below.
7. The items on the sharing table will be limited to school meal or snack components including condiments. Food items brought from home or prepared by another food service establishment are excluded.
8. Fruit and vegetables with an edible peel (e.g. apples, baby carrots) should be washed and pre-wrapped or packaged for meal service if these items are allowed to be placed on the sharing table.
9. The sharing table will be a designated table, counter, cart, or space where students can place unconsumed breakfast, lunch, or afterschool snack components that they choose not to eat/or drink. Food on the sharing table is not for adults. Sharing tables will have appropriate signage so it is not mistaken as part of the regular meal offerings.
10. Items reserved for another time need to be inspected by a designated food service staff to ensure that the original packaging is maintained in sound condition.



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