

Chemain Singh

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School policies for throwing away food, and what we can do about it.

There are many factors that contribute to this problem of food waste and this concerns me on a number of levels. What are we teaching children when we make them throw out unopened, shelf stable food? What can we do to utilize the reusable food items instead of wasting them and orchestrating bad and wasteful habits? I believe the following information will aid in my attempt to explain what the policies are for throwing away food in schools and what we can do about all the waste.

The breakfast policy at our school requires that children obtain a breakfast tray commonly consisting of cereal (coco puffs), either raisins, craisins, peaches, applesauce or apple chips, toast and a carton of milk. Many of the foods that go into the trash are still edible, as they do not need refrigeration, are unopened and have expiration dates into 2019.

I have observed that majority of the time the fruit portion of the meal is usually thrown away, therefore creating unnecessary waste of healthy food items that could greatly benefit the students. The children are not allowed to put it in their pocket for a snack later or even put it aside in a box so that someone or something else can benefit from the leftover food items. A few

Writing prompt, "How does throwing unopened food into the trash make you feel?" "I feel like where wasting food and I don't want to waste food Because where just wasting money and then we have no money to buy school supplies. I think we should donate it to kids that dont have food since kids are just wasting food thats what I think."

Other students said things like:

“It is wasteful it make me feel bad.”

“In [my]opinion I think that we as the kids are wasting to much food and if we have a lit-
tle more time to eat we might finish the food and if we do not finish we can take it to class to fin-
ish it.”

“I feel that throwing good food in the trash is wrong because you can’t get that food
again and that’s rude because people don't have food to eat.”

In a small school of just 200 students the following list is what I was able to pull out of
the trash cans over the course of 2 weeks, from April 2nd through April 16th: 70 boxes of raisins,
15 packages of Craisins, 157 cups of applesauce, 22 boxes of cereal (coco puffs and Trix) and 43
peaches. Of course, this is broken up over the course of 2 weeks, but these numbers are astound-
ing in that short of an amount of time.

In conclusion I believe that a meal policy for schools, especially Title 1 schools, that re-
quires any leftover items be thrown into the trash, is not a useful or considerate policy. It not
only affects the students but decreasing the food they have access to throughout the day, but also
encourages wasteful habits of throwing out unused or reusable items instead of eating these later
on in the day when they get hungry again. Because our school provides free breakfast to so many
students it isn’t an ideal policy to encourage wastefulness in students, as the food isn’t the only
thing being wasted. The money spent to buy the food items thrown away long before their expi-
ration date is also wasted. Money the school could use on a number of other resources or even to
improve the food selection for these students. I believe that the policy creates needless waste and
if we treat these food items as reusable or even allow the kids to keep their leftovers to eat later
on we would cut back on waste and create and enforce healthier eating habits within our stu-
dents. Other schools would also benefit in considering a change of policy for such situations.

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