

RETHINKING SCHOOL LUNCH

A planning framework from the Center for Ecoliteracy

SECOND EDITION



CENTER FOR ECOLITERACY

4,000

Approximate number of school meals a student might eat between kindergarten and 12th grade



WHAT IS RETHINKING SCHOOL LUNCH?

Rethinking School Lunch is a planning framework for redesigning school food systems.

The outcome of more than a decade of work by the **Center for Ecoliteracy**, a public foundation dedicated to education for sustainable living, the Rethinking School Lunch framework identifies 10 aspects of school operations that relate to food change—10 pathways that educators, parents, and concerned citizens can follow as they plan for innovation and change in school food.

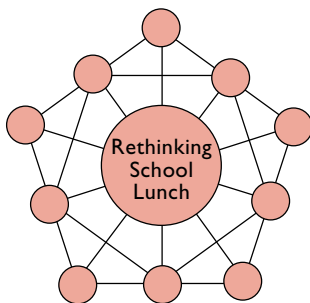
This change process can eventually lead to other areas that affect the more than 5.5 billion lunches and

nearly 2 billion breakfasts served yearly in school programs—areas that can generate positive effects on issues of public health, academic performance, economics, justice, national security, the environment, and community well-being.

Rethinking School Lunch is based on the realization that change can begin at any of several points, depending on resources, interests, and opportunities.

The Rethinking School Lunch Guide is designed to provide an introduction to these 10 pathways, to suggest questions to ask in order to begin thinking about them, and to show how planning in one area can be connected to planning in others.

FOOD AND HEALTH
WELLNESS POLICY
TEACHING AND LEARNING
THE DINING EXPERIENCE
PROCUREMENT



FACILITIES
FINANCES
WASTE MANAGEMENT
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

THE RETHINKING SCHOOL LUNCH FRAMEWORK

This framework identifies 10 related pathways that you can follow as you plan for innovation and change in school food.

The Rethinking School Lunch Guide identifies 10 aspects of school operations that relate to school food change. You can begin at any point, depending on your resources, interests, and opportunities.

RETHINKING SCHOOL LUNCH
A planning framework for change for elementary

100% MILK

CENTER FOR EQUITY

5,500,000,000 Estimated amount of food waste generated in the United States each year

OVERVIEW

THE GOAL
To ensure school lunch food systems support sustainable food systems, and work as a platform for addressing the interconnected issues of climate, equity, health, and the environment.

1 in 3 of children in the United States are obese | **3 TIMES** as much as children in other countries

FOOD AND HEALTH

THE GOAL
To offer students, especially underserved and underserved children, more nutritious and affordable options and support for their families and communities to make better health choices.

1999 First time that the USDA's National School Lunch Program was required to include wellness policies | **2006** USDA's National School Lunch Program was required to include wellness policies

WELLNESS POLICY

THE GOAL
To develop, implement, review, and update policies that allow schools and districts to be providing healthy meals as well as creating a healthy school and community environment that supports the health and well-being of all students.

13 states require schools to have a nutrition education program | **50** states require schools to have a physical education program

TEACHING AND LEARNING

THE GOAL
To ensure students learn about healthy eating and physical activity, and understand how these choices can help them live healthy and active lives.

19.5 million pounds of food waste generated in the United States each year | **100%** of school lunch programs are required to have a food waste reduction plan

THE DINING EXPERIENCE

THE GOAL
To ensure an inviting dining environment that encourages healthy decisions and healthy eating. A clean dining experience that makes the lunch period a time that students look forward to and that helps them feel safe and valued at school.

1,500 schools are required to have a food safety plan | **9,000** schools are required to have a food safety plan

PROCUREMENT

THE GOAL
To help schools and districts support the local food system and ensure that schools and districts are getting the best quality products at the best prices.

80% of schools are required to have a food safety plan | **100%** of schools are required to have a food safety plan

FACILITIES

THE GOAL
To ensure that schools have the right tools, healthy green food, and safe eating and drinking spaces to support the health and well-being of all students.

88% of schools are required to have a food safety plan | **72%** of schools are required to have a food safety plan

FINANCES

THE GOAL
To ensure the school lunch program is financially sustainable and that the program is able to provide healthy meals to all students.

\$600 million in food waste generated in the United States each year | **18,670** pounds of food waste generated in the United States each year

WASTE MANAGEMENT

THE GOAL
To ensure a waste management program that reduces the school lunch program's carbon footprint and that is financially sustainable.

80%+ of schools are required to have a food safety plan | **100%** of schools are required to have a food safety plan

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

THE GOAL
To provide ongoing training and support for all professional staff and to ensure that all staff are equipped with the skills and knowledge to support the school lunch program and to ensure that all staff are equipped with the skills and knowledge to support the school lunch program.

\$10 million in food waste generated in the United States each year | **7,600** pounds of food waste generated in the United States each year

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

THE GOAL
To help school districts successfully promote healthy meal programs and meaningful learning opportunities to parents and students.



MICHAEL POLLAN SAYS:

“There is a lot of momentum behind the school lunch reform movement right now and it is a great time to get involved. Consider starting with the Center for Ecoliteracy’s *Rethinking School Lunch Guide*, which contains tools for improving school lunch programs, showcases success stories, and offers a list of resources.”

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR ECOLITERACY

The Center for Ecoliteracy is a nonprofit dedicated to education for sustainable living. Known for its pioneering work with school lunches, gardens, and integrating sustainability into K–12 curricula, the Center has worked with schools and organizations in more than 400 communities. The Center offers seminars, consulting, curriculum development, and numerous books and guides, including *Smart by Nature: Schooling for Sustainability*; *Big Ideas: Linking Food, Culture, Health, and the Environment*; *Cooking with California Food in K–12 Schools*; and the *Food, Inc. Discussion Guide*.

Visit www.ecoliteracy.org

Rethinking School Lunch Guide Second Edition

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Center for Ecoliteracy
at the David Brower Center
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