

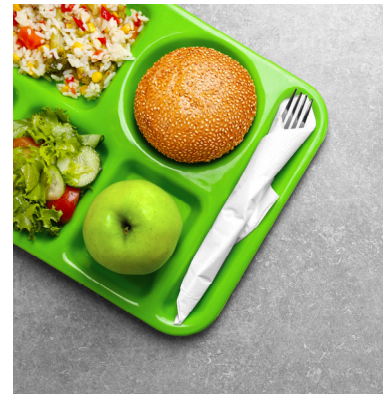
The Gainesville Zero Waste News

Zero Waste Dining in Schools: Teaching Sustainability and Reducing Waste

What if schools taught us more than just math and science? What if they also modeled sustainability and resource conservation? Schools can significantly reduce their environmental footprint by implementing zero waste practices and raise the next generation of eco-conscious citizens.

Reuse, Reuse, Reuse

Most schools already have dishwashers in cafeteria kitchens, and this allows for the convenient implementation of **reusable trays, plates, and utensils, eliminating the need for single-use plastic.** By investing in reusables, the school would quickly see a return through lower purchasing costs and solid waste hauling fees, sending less material to the landfill, and providing the students with a nicer dining experience.



Create Distinct Collection Systems

Introducing specific collection points – like liquid pour buckets, utensil bins, recycle bins, and reusable item stations – helps students put items in the correct bin. **Clear visual cues and signage** encourage students to treat reusables responsibly, reinforcing sustainable habits that extend beyond the cafeteria. Teaching students to source-separate their waste can instill a lifelong habit of conservation and respect for our earth's resources.

Incorporate Sustainability into the Curriculum

Schools can weave zero waste education into lessons, empowering students to understand their role in protecting the planet. **Hands-on activities, like classroom composting or waste audits, give students real-world experience with reducing waste.** These efforts support zero waste goals and foster a culture of environmental stewardship.

Schools can lead the charge toward a Zero Waste future by prioritizing reusables, designing effective systems, and embedding sustainability into education. Continue the educational journey at gainesvillefl.gov/ZeroWaste, and follow @ZeroWasteGNV on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for more.

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