



FERNBANK ELEMENTARY SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

Contribute to and support Fernbank Elementary in becoming environmentally mindful, resource responsible and sustainability integrated.

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SUSTAINABLE CAFETERIA INITIATIVE

Fernbank Elementary has initiated sustainability programs collaborating with the county, students, teachers, custodial and administrative staff and parents and community partners



BACKGROUND

Invested/interested/concerned parents, took action in our school cafeteria. Conducting several waste audits produced these results:

1 SCHOOL 850 STUDENTS 1 LUNCH PERIOD 1 DAY

- 10-12 65 gallon trash bags EACH LUNCH period
- Styrofoam Trays: 700
- Styrofoam bowls (for baked sweet potatoes) : 120
- Plastic cups (for apples, oranges, pineapple slices, broccoli, salad) : 500-1000
- Cutlery (Plastic Bag with a plastic spork, tiny straw, thin napkin): 600 (most of these were unopened)
- Compostable food waste (fruit and vegetables): 90 pounds!
- Food waste: 1 trash bag
- Unopened Milk: 50 cartons
- Half finished milk: 7 gallons
- 1 trash bag of packaging:
 - ziplock bags, packaging, styrofoam cups, juice boxes, pouches, foil, yogurt cups, plastic containers, straws (from packed lunches)



GOALS

Greatly reduce our school's garbage footprint and become a model school for our entire school district, Create a zero waste school culture.

- ✓ Reduce waste
- ✓ Replace Styrofoam trays and single use plastic containers with sustainable serviceware
- ✓ Eliminate Styrofoam from the school
- ✓ Improve Health and Wellness of students and staff
- Integrate Sustainable practices into every School Event
- ✓ Create environmentally sustainable practices/habits
- ✓ Support & collaborate with other community schools
- ✓ Inspire students, faculty, families, community + beyond

WHAT WE DID

By involving the curriculum coordinator, principal, parent led Sustainability Initiative, custodial and janitorial staffs, Fernbank has become the pilot school for Dekalb County Nutrition and Operations to test programs like reusable silverware and trays, compostable trays and water refill stations, composting and recycling services and the staffing and cost implications.

COMMUNICATION: *created an explanatory video using students as instructors, to create awareness and excitement in our school (the video is used by other schools as their guide for the program)*

Replaced Styrofoam trays with COMPOSTABLE TRAYS

Replaced Single-use plastic cutlery with RESUABLE CUTLERY

COMPOST all food waste (Compost Now)

SHARE TABLE for untouched food
SORTED cafeteria waste :
(compost, share table, recyclables, landfill)

Shared monthly impact reports to motivate & inspire

Fernbank became the first public school in Georgia to Pilot compostable trays, reusable silverware and reusable trays, and to Pilot Composting as part of wellness program.

IMPACT

Cost, employee time and morale, environmental impact, student involvement/education/awareness, sustainable culture shifts, inspiration/collaboration with other schools and communities

REDUCES OUR SCHOOL'S ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:
GREENHOUSE GASES
CARBON EMISSIONS
AIR POLLUTION
WATER CONSUMPTION

WASTE: Significantly reduced cafeteria landfill waste and compactor and hauling fees



SEPTEMBER 2018-MARCH 2019
21,793 LBS. DIVERTED FROM LANDFILL

5,448 LBS. COMPOST CREATED

Food scraps will be used to make rich compost and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfills.

The program has added less than an hour of dishwashing time, reduced janitorial time in the cafeteria, added less than 3 minutes to the students lunch disposal.

INSPIRES OTHERS:
OTHER SCHOOLS, DISTRICTS, STUDENTS, FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES
CREATES A MOVEMENT
COLLABORATION

INSPIRES AN INTEREST IN HEALTH AND WELLNESS
STUDENT INVOLVEMENT, EDUCATION, AWARENESS
IMPROVES HEALTH AND QUALITY OF FOOD

15+ Schools have toured our cafeteria waste line. We have inspired other schools to launch the program on their own- Sagamore Hills launched 3/14/19 without county funding! Our students have shared our story with other schools.

INTERNAL CULTURE CHANGE:
TEACHERS, CAFETERIA STAFF, ADMINISTRATION, PARENTS AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, KIDS
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AWARENESS

Noticeable cultural shifts that help support additional initiatives around energy and water and ensure the success and sustainability of these efforts.

Cultural shifts for resource mindfulness and other teacher, student and parent initiated programs:
Marker collection for Crayola Colors diversion program; Plastic Film Collection, demonstrating how much plastic we use; Girl Scouts Troop added a water bottle re-filling station in the cafeteria

School lunches are often the best or only meal served to many students

Food and waste audits and share tables provide information about what food that is actually eaten -informs what to serve or not to serve to reduce food waste

Sharing helps foster an understanding of the value of food and food access

The share table and visibility to the amount of uneaten or unopened food has created an urgency to connect this food to food banks and service providers for those without enough to eat.

The data and processes create savings to reinvest in food and nutrition and also supports opportunities for food based learning to be integrated into classrooms and for the cafeteria to become a classroom itself.

Waste visibility helps focus on whole and real foods, connect to healthy soil and healthy farms. Policies that support this connection can improve mental, physical and economic health.

MOVING FORWARD

Styrofoam Free School

Recycle milk containers

Deepen garden and food based learning programming in corporation with DOE

Integrate education and learning as part of cafeteria experience

Replace Grab N Go with compostables.

Secure dishwasher and reusable trays to more significantly reduce waste

Introduce energy, water and air programming for Sustainable School - 2021

PLANTING SEEDS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN STUDENTS

Creating a culture for the kids that they can apply to the rest of their lives

