



Empowering K-12 Schools to Take On Food Waste

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About *Sustainable Jersey for Schools*

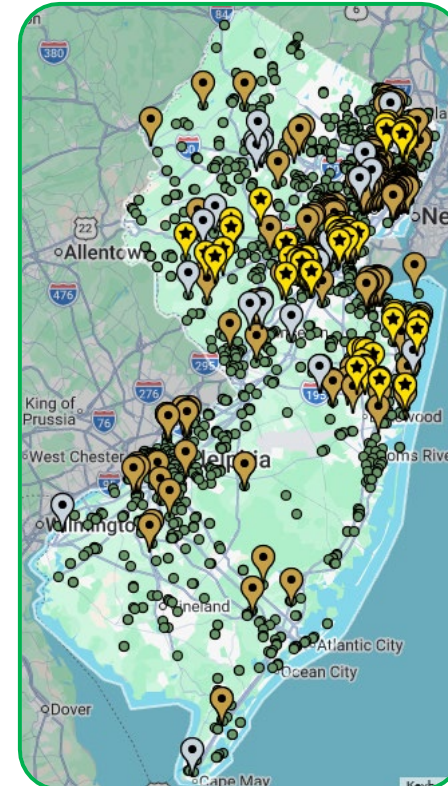
- Provides broad framework for advancing sustainability in NJ public schools
 - Choice of 100+ actions in 22 categories
- Provides guidance, training, and grants to help schools implement sustainability initiatives
- Recognizes **accomplishments** with certification and special awards

1,237 schools registered
67% District Participation

358 Schools Currently Certified

>\$3.6 Million in \$2K and \$10K
Grants Distributed

Funded by New Jersey Education Association
& PSEG Foundation.



Scale of Food Waste & The Local Hunger Paradox

School cafeterias generate substantial organic waste while local communities face food insecurity.

1 Billion Pounds

of food is wasted by United States schools each year.

WWF, 2019

- 30% to 40% of the entire United States food supply is lost or wasted.
- Resource Drain: Uneaten food consumes 16% of U.S. cropland and 15.5% of freshwater.
- Landfill Impact: Food waste accounts for 24% of municipal solid landfill inputs.

The Glaring Paradox in Our Schools

We are paying to throw away perfectly good food



1 in 7

New Jersey children currently face hunger.



That equals 271,650 kids state-wide.

<https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/new-jersey>

Double Financial Penalty

Schools pay twice—first to buy unused food, then pay trash hauling fees for disposal



Regulatory Environment Driving Action

Federal and New Jersey legislation reinforces the imperative for reducing school food waste.

2015 Federal Goal

- First national food loss and waste reduction goal launched by EPA and USDA.
- Calls for a 50% reduction in food waste nationwide by 2030.

2017 NJ State Law

- Senate Bill S3027: Mandates New Jersey reduce municipal solid food waste 50% by 2030.
- Assembly Bill A306: Establishes New Jersey's first school food waste guidelines.

2023 SJS Guidance

- Updated actions and comprehensive School Food Waste Toolkit released.
- Guides schools directly on waste audits, share tables, composting, and other practices.

2026 NJ State Law

- Bill S2464/A2090 requires solid waste management districts and the DEP to cut disposed food waste 50% by 2035 relative to a 2022 baseline.
- DEP to ease regulatory bottlenecks for building local composting and organics recycling infrastructure

Transforming School Food Waste

Pilot Study at 3 NJ Schools (1,750 Combined Enrollment)

2021-2023 Pilot study outcomes demonstrate dramatic waste reduction and organic material recycling

Baseline Waste

62,150 lbs

(31 Tons)

Initial food waste generation across pilot schools prior to intervention.

Post-Intervention Waste

34,036 lbs

(17 tons)

45% Reduction

Achieved via behavior change strategies such as Offer vs. Serve & student education.

Composted

31,680 lbs

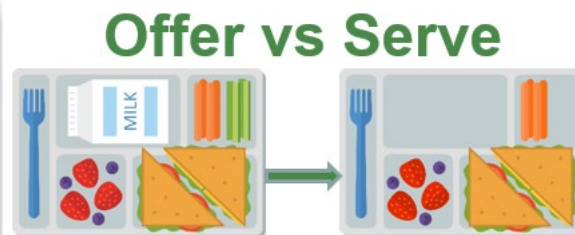
92%

Remaining waste diverted from trash via composting.



Share Tables

Students place unopened snacks, milk, and whole fruit on share tables for peers to enjoy, rescuing edible food from trash.



Offer vs Serve

Students are allowed to refuse some components of a meal that they do not want.

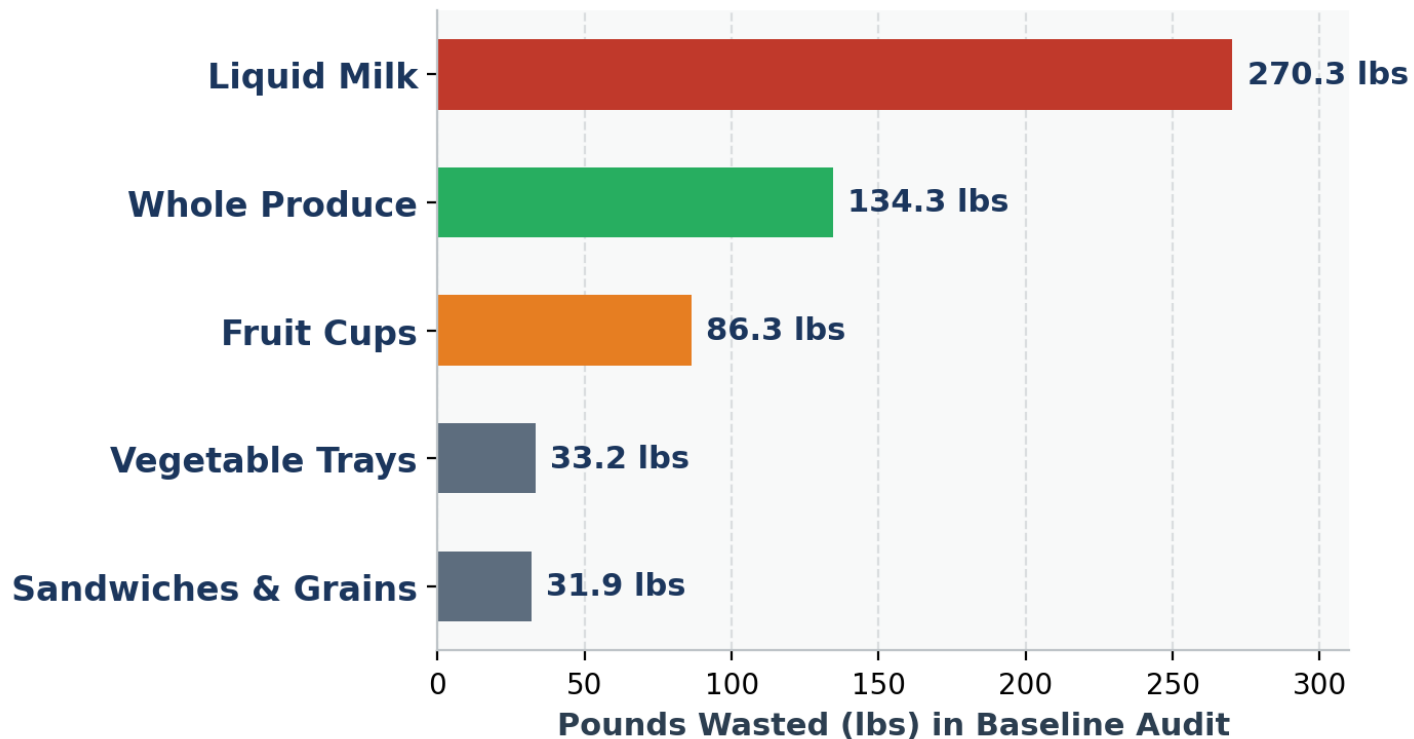


Composting

Food scraps separated at cafeteria sorting stations were composted on site, turning waste into nutrient-rich soil.

Waste Audits Set the Stage for Taking Action

Top 5 Items Wasted by Weight (Catrambone Elementary)



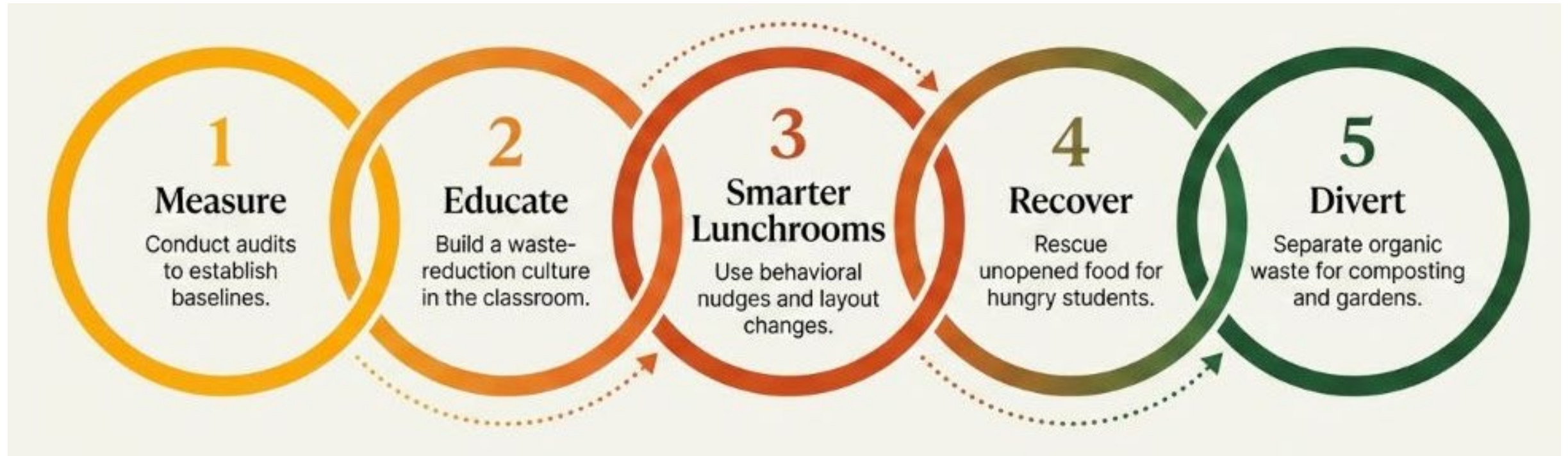
Key Audit Discoveries

- **Liquid Milk is #1 Wasted Item**
Accounted for 270.3 lbs in baseline audit (single largest waste stream).
- **Whole Fruits & Produce #2**
Apples, oranges, and fruit cups totaled over 220 lbs of avoidable waste.
- **Data Drives Strategy**
Audits inform what interventions (Offer vs Serve, Share Tables) are needed.



The 5-Pillar Playbook

How New Jersey schools achieved significant results to reduce food waste.





Actions To Reduce School Food Waste

The *Sustainable Jersey for Schools* program offers guidance and incentives to complete these actions – schools earn points toward the 150 points needed for certification.

- **Waste Audit 10-20 points – priority action**
- **Campaign To Reduce School Food Waste 10 points**
- **Food Recovery - Share Tables & Donation 10-20 points**
- **Food Service Training & Best Practices to Reduce Food Waste 10 points**
- **Food Waste Recycling/Composting 15 points**
- **Recycling Non-Mandated Materials 5-20 points**
- **School Gardens 10-30 points**

View all actions at: <https://www.sustainablejerseyschools.com/actions/>