



# Tips: COVID-19 and Green Schools

## The Zero Waste Lunchbox

Sending your child to school with a reusable lunchbox saves the school district money and reduces the workload for cleaning staff. It also eliminates the need for staff and students to come into close contact at waste stations, or when students need help opening food packaged in tough-to-open disposable containers.

- ✓ **Health experts agree that reusables are just as safe as disposables during COVID-19 when washed frequently.**
- ✓ **Reusables stay with the owner all day, whereas disposables must pass through numerous hands before reaching the student.**
- ✓ **The “pack-it-in, pack-it-out” philosophy reminds students that waste doesn’t “just go away.”**

Help schools and parents maintain social distancing, save money, and save time. Pack your child’s lunch with reusables that go right back into their bag when they are done eating.



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## ZERO WASTE LUNCHBOX CHECKLIST

- 1 Reusable water bottle and straw.** Helps children stay hydrated without putting their face near water fountains. Replaces plastic bottles, saving the school district money.
- 2 Easy-to-pack, healthy snacks.** Apples, bananas, and citrus fruits don’t need packaging and save you time. Reduces mess for custodial staff.
- 3 Reusable lunchbox.** Durable lunchboxes keep spills contained and reduce need for mingling at waste station common areas.
- 4 Silicone bags, cups, and wax wrappers.** These products can hold a variety of wet and dry foods. Use these to replace disposable plastic baggies and wraps. Reusable food containers are easier for students to open, saving teachers time spent needing to open lunches and helping with social distancing.
- 5 Reusable cutlery and napkin.** Saves money, reduces mess and waste, and cuts down on visits to common areas.
- 6 Washable placemat.** This will be helpful if your student is assigned to eat lunch in the classroom. Teachers will need to transition quickly between recess, lunch, and lessons and may not have time to clean every student’s desk after meals. A placemat can help keep desks clean and can be washed with facemasks at home.
- 7 Facemask and hand sanitizer.** Send your student to school with a clean facemask and some hand sanitizer every day to protect them as well as other students and staff.



Managing the risk of COVID-19 doesn’t have to come at the expense of your school’s environmental programs. With regular washing, reusable products are just as safe as disposables and can help reduce the number of hands that food ware has to pass through during the day. It also helps maintain social distancing.

With zero waste programs, schools can invest their resources on social distancing strategies proven to reduce the spread of COVID-19, such as outdoor classrooms or walk/bike-to-school programs.