

CalFresh Healthy Living Share Table Implementation Guide

September 2019



Table of Contents

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION	2
ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY AND FOOD WASTE	2
STATE AND LOCAL POLICIES AND DIRECTIVES THAT SUPPORT SHARE TABLES	3
IMPLEMENTING SHARE TABLES: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR MAKING SHARE TABLES A REALITY	3
CASE STUDY: NATIONAL HEALTH FOUNDATION	3
SUPPORTING SHARE TABLE IMPLEMENTATION: ACTIVITIES FOR MAINTAINING EXISTING SHARE TABLES	12
CASE STUDY: LAWNSDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT	12
BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPLEMENTING AND MAINTAINING SHARE TABLES IN ANY SCHOOL SETTING	16
FOOD DONATION	17
REFERENCES	18

Background and Introduction

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The CalFresh Healthy Living Share Table Implementation Guide was created for those who work in public schools and are interested in reducing food waste and addressing food insecurity among low-income students by implementing share tables. This guide provides information and best practices about the process of implementing share tables at school sites. It highlights the work of two CalFresh Healthy Living funded partners in Los Angeles County. The first case study includes a step-by-step approach for initiating, implementing, and sustaining share tables in a high school setting with the involvement and engagement of high school students. The second case describes how a school district supported and maintained already implemented share tables in elementary and middle schools.

Share tables are tables or other sturdy surfaces where students can place uneaten food and beverages from a district meal service (cafeteria lunch). This increases the access to nutritious foods while allowing other students to take additional food or beverages at no cost. The use of share tables also reduces food waste by preventing uneaten food from ending up in landfills. For information regarding items that can and cannot be placed on a share table, please review the applicable California Health and Safety Code regulations in the Share Tables and Food Donations in Schools Guide.¹ This guide was created by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) Environmental Health Division's Los Angeles County Food Redistribution Initiative (LACFRI) and will be referenced throughout the CalFresh Healthy Living Share Table Implementation Guide.

School districts interested in implementing share tables are encouraged to identify a champion interested in reducing food waste and/or addressing food insecurity in their school community. An ideal champion would be someone who works within the school district, understands the implementation

process and can influence involvement from other key partners. Ultimately, the champion should be committed to leading the effort and engaging the school community to support the implementation of share tables. Identifying partners and securing funding can also help schools establish, expand, and sustain their efforts. School districts can partner with community-based organizations to provide additional resources and expertise.

ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY AND FOOD WASTE

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), establishing share tables is an “innovative strategy to encourage the consumption of nutritious foods and reduce food waste” in schools.² The USDA specifies that foods and drinks donated via share tables may be used to allow children to take an additional helping of a food or beverage item from the share table at no cost.

In the U.S., nearly 13 million children, or 1 in 6 children, experience hunger every day.³ In California, 1.7 million children, or 1 in 5 children, may go to bed hungry at night.³ In Los Angeles County, 27.7% of households (approximately 223,000 households) below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level and living with children reported experiencing food insecurity. Additionally, 9.6% of households (approximately 77,000 households) below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level and living with children reported very low food security.⁴

Individuals who live in households that experience food insecurity face consistent barriers to purchasing healthy foods. They often purchase less expensive foods that are higher in calories, salt, sugar, and fat, but low in nutritional value. Food insecurity during childhood may lead to delayed development, diminished academic performance, impaired social skills, and early onset of childhood obesity. The experience of food insecurity, particularly by students, indicates the need for achievable and sustainable solutions that improve access to nutritious food and reduce negative health consequences.

At a time when the prevalence of food insecurity is high, 63 million tons of uneaten or unharvested food is being sent to landfills each year in the U.S. The rotting food emits harmful greenhouse gases as it decomposes.⁵ This represents a significant burden to the environment, in addition to the resources and energy that are wasted.

Nationally, the USDA's National School Lunch Program, which serves 30 million students every school day, wastes \$5 million worth of edible food each day, resulting in \$1.2 billion in losses per school year.⁶ In addition, every year in Los Angeles County, roughly 1.7 million tons of food are sent to landfills from businesses, schools, and households, accounting for one-third of the state's total food waste stream.⁷ Uneaten, discarded food in schools alone creates a tremendous amount of environmental waste.

The existence of food waste and food insecurity make it critical to identify ways to address both issues. Providing healthier food options through share tables is a potentially effective way to address food insecurity among students. However, it is also important to ensure that students who live in households experiencing food insecurity are not stigmatized or feel uncomfortable taking food from share tables. Possible discomfort may be minimized by having students focus on reducing food waste and making a positive contribution to the environment. Educating them about the impact food waste has on the environment and focusing on the sense of accomplishment felt by donating or taking food is key to avoiding stigmatization. Reinforcing the positive aspects of the students' efforts can help sustain the share tables, as students better understand the effects of their actions. At the same time, students who live in households experiencing food insecurity can more easily access healthy foods using the share tables.

STATE AND LOCAL POLICIES AND DIRECTIVES THAT SUPPORT SHARE TABLES

On January 1, 2018, the State of California enacted Senate Bill 557 Food Donation and Pupil Meals: Schools.

The purpose of the bill was to minimize food waste and increase consumption of nutritious food among students. This legislation permits schools districts to set up share tables where faculty, staff, and students can place prepackaged, potentially non-hazardous food items and make those food items available to students during regular school meal times. Amendments were made to the California Health and Safety Code to specify the conditions in which food could be donated to ensure food safety. The bill also required that the California Department of Education's (CDE) Nutrition Services Division publish guidance on share tables and food donation programs in schools. For more information about Senate Bill 557, please refer to the *Share Tables and Food Donations in Schools Guide*.¹

In February 2019, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a motion titled, "Reducing Both Food Waste and Food Insecurity in Los Angeles County". The motion included a directive for the Department of Public Health to work collaboratively with other county departments and relevant stakeholders to increase awareness of and participation in food recovery efforts throughout LA County. This included calling for the development of strategies for schools to prevent food waste, redistribute surplus food, and engage in complementary efforts to address food insecurity in schools, especially through the creation of share tables.⁷

Implementing Share Tables: A Step-by-Step Guide for Making Share Tables a Reality National Health Foundation (NHF)

CASE STUDY:

Background: The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's Nutrition and Physical Activity Program partnered with National Health Foundation (NHF) to develop and implement share tables in two Los Angeles United School District (LAUSD) high schools in South Los Angeles with CalFresh Healthy

Living Program funding. NHF convened a student task force consisting of 12 students at each high school. The students in the task force played a critical role in ensuring the share tables were developed, promoted, implemented and maintained.

NHF, whose mission is to improve the health of individuals and under-resourced communities by addressing the social determinants of health, utilized the Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) framework to engage students in implementing policy, systems, and environmental changes to increase access to healthier foods. YPAR is an innovative approach to positive youth and community development based on social justice principles in which young people are trained to conduct systematic research to improve their lives, their communities, and the institutions intended to serve them.⁸ The funding allowed NHF to become more involved with the students, training them on YPAR concepts and preparing them to take on projects that focused on the health of the community. Part of this process included teaching students to propose ideas and engage stakeholders and decision makers. This led to the formation of the student task force known as Health Academy.

Health Academy exists at two LAUSD high schools and was introduced and presented to school administrators as a student leadership and development program. NHF's established, ongoing partnership with LAUSD schools, combined with CalFresh Healthy Living funding, helped make the share table program a reality.

Identifying Student Hunger Issues. After training Health Academy students on YPAR fundamentals, the students were encouraged to investigate how to improve access to healthy food and student health at their school cafeteria. One student noticed that the cafeteria was in good shape, offering plenty of healthy food options. However, they observed that some students threw away a lot of food, while many students went home and had little to eat. Other students agreed, and over the next few meetings, NHF and the

Health Academy discussed how to address the issues identified. The group also realized the need to collect data and conduct research to validate their claims and take action. Students began researching hunger statistics in South LA, student hunger, and food waste reduction initiatives. Through this research, students discovered share tables as a way to address food waste and hunger.

Pilot Testing the Share Tables. After conducting their research, the Health Academy developed a survey to assess the attitudes and perceptions of the student body. The Health Academy involved the School Wellness Council (SWC) and other school staff and administrators to discuss addressing student hunger and food waste. With help from the SWC, the Health Academy conducted the survey. They found the results



Health Academy students learn about share tables

supported their initial findings: students knew there were healthy options available, and they also threw away a lot of food. After collecting and analyzing survey data, the Health Academy discussed the following to address their findings: moving/adjusting the trash cans

and/ or getting recycle and compost bins, or starting a share table. The SWC agreed to support Health Academy's research and proposals to address student hunger and food waste.

The Health Academy conducted the research necessary to evaluate both options and ultimately decided to test a share table. Though this test was smaller than a full pilot program, the Health Academy students wanted to assess the process of implementing a share table and informed the school administrators and cafeteria manager about their intentions. With assistance from NHF's CalFresh Healthy Living program, the Health Academy conducted a few days of testing. The students determined the share table project could be relatively easy to conduct, track and research, as well as be a potentially effective way to address student hunger.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING A SHARE TABLE

GETTING STARTED

The process of developing a sustainable share table at a school site can be divided into the following five steps:

- 1. Develop a share table task force**
- 2. Conduct a food waste audit and pilot the share tables**
- 3. Create a campaign to promote the launch of the share tables**
- 4. Evaluate the impact of the share tables within the school setting**
- 5. Determine how to sustain share tables once implemented**

Step 1: Developing a Share Table Task Force

The first step in developing a share table task force is to garner support from various stakeholders at a school site. Those joining the task force will be involved in

initiating and monitoring the share table process. The stakeholders involved in the task force can vary, but they should have an interest in reducing food waste, improving the school environment or improving student health. The following list includes potential stakeholders at a school site and defines what their role would be in implementing the share tables:

- 1. Students:** Student task force members can be recruited from health classes, sports teams or clubs. Students provide the best insight into where the majority of students eat, throw away their food and what food items typically get thrown away. They can also share how to promote the share table to other students. Students can also help to recruit other stakeholders, such as teachers and school staff.
- 2. Cafeteria Manager and Staff:** Cafeteria staff can explain food regulations and safe handling practices, as well as assist with maintenance, such as storing the table over school breaks.
- 3. School Administration & Teachers:** School administrators can provide legitimacy to the project by approving the implementation of share tables and encouraging school staff and students to participate.
- 4. Parents:** Parents who already volunteer at a school site can provide assistance in establishing and running a share table. Parents can monitor the usage of the table and clean up, when necessary.

Task Force Meetings: The task force should meet weekly for the first month to engage members and ensure understanding and commitment to the process. The first few meetings should focus on training and team building and include lessons about share tables and how to conduct research. Team building activities, such as icebreakers or games, should be incorporated to encourage camaraderie and foster good working relationships.

BEST PRACTICE:

Include team building activities, such as icebreakers or games, in the initial meetings to encourage camaraderie and foster good working relationships.

After the initial meetings, the following meetings should allow for planning, assigning roles and conducting research. This includes:

- Identifying key stakeholders and determining how they can support the share table
- Researching issues related to food waste and student hunger
- Brainstorming potential opportunities and challenges for engaging students in the share table process
- Creating share table presentations tailored to specific groups (cafeteria workers, school admin)
- Developing a work plan to document expected timelines for events, how resources will be utilized, and tracking the progress of assigned tasks

Meetings can be used to plan presentations to the cafeteria team and school administration. The task force can invite the appropriate people to the following meetings to present their research and ideas. Once the share table has launched, task force meetings may consist of quick updates and reporting, action planning, and deciding upon and assigning next steps.

Continuously engaging task force members to maintain their interest in and commitment to the project, without

taking up too much of their time, is important. For example, task force members can plan agendas and prepare training materials for presentations to share findings and proposed solutions. Assignments can be completed outside of the meetings, allowing members to accomplish activities at times convenient for them. Additionally, setting meeting agendas can be an informal, flexible process determined by the concerns and interests of the task force members.

Utilizing the YPAR Framework: Student task force members should be encouraged to do thorough research on student hunger and food waste to establish understanding and importance of improving health and reducing waste amongst all involved. Data collected from this research will be used to garner stakeholder support, validate the project and set up the long-term evaluation questions. The YPAR framework can be used to train students to conduct research, collect data and put relevant information into practice. YPAR concepts of self-discovery and practicing real-life skills guide students as they conduct the research process. Applying these concepts is significant, in light of a recent study, because expanding civic engagement for youth through school programs is associated with better health status, fewer sick days at school, and better grades.⁹ Students on the task force can utilize a school's computer lab or library to research statistics and other data on food waste and student hunger, with staff guidance, to find validated, evidence-based data. The information collected should be shared at the next task force meeting to promote discussion about conducting further research on any identified trends, including topics such as school food waste, student hunger statistics and best practices for share tables.

Addressing Unexpected Problems. Despite sound planning, problems may still arise that the task force did not anticipate. For example, food may be left on the table and not picked up, or certain items may remain on the share table the next day. Teachers may borrow the food donation baskets to use as materials in their classroom and forget to return them.

Within a school setting, change is an ongoing factor and resources may be consistently low. In dealing with any issues that arise, it is important for the task force to address them right away. If the task force notices food is left on the tables overnight, they should connect with those monitoring and find out if assistance is needed. Understanding existing challenges allows the task force to provide additional assistance or training as needed and be better prepared to respond to similar situations in the future. While problems are inevitable, having a well-trained task force with a comprehensive plan of action will ensure problems are addressed and resolved in a timely manner.

Step 2: Conducting a Food Waste Audit and Piloting the Share Tables

Conducting the Food Waste Audit: Once the task force has been established, conducting a food waste audit to gather information about how much food is thrown away and where food is discarded will help identify locations to pilot a share table. The task force should follow the instructions for conducting the audit as outlined in the *USDA's Guide to Conducting Student Food Waste and Audits*.¹⁰

Divide the task force members into teams of two to four individuals to conduct the food waste audit and have the teams spread out across student eating areas to ensure there is no overlap. The best time to conduct the audits is immediately after lunch or during other

ITEMS YOU WILL NEED FOR THE AUDIT:

- Gloves
- Trash bags
- Long-handled trash grabber
- Food waste audit tally sheet
- Clip boards
- Pens and pencils



Health Academy students conducting a food waste audit

meal periods. Students conducting the audit should obtain permission to stay after the meal.

Piloting the Share Table: Once the food audit is complete, the information gathered will help determine the best locations for piloting and testing the share tables. Select at least three locations to test and place the share table at a different location each chosen day. The task force can plan promotional activities, such as putting up signs explaining what a share table is, having a task force member stand next to the table, and making announcements over the school intercom. The main purpose of the pilot is to determine which location garners the most attention.

A few task force members should be monitoring the share table during the pilot testing phase to keep a

ITEMS NEEDED FOR A SHARE TABLE:

- A table (lunch table or folding table)
- Baskets or tubs to collect food items
- Signs indicating where food should be placed
- A share table sign with minimal directions

tally of those seen using the share table and document whether students donate or take food. They should observe the foot traffic around the share table to note whether it is busy, if it is in the way, or if it slows down lunch lines. These observations enable the task force to determine the best location and ease for students. After the share table has been pilot tested, the task force will hold a meeting to discuss findings, decide on a location, and plan for the launch of the tables.

Step 3: Creating a Campaign to Promote the Launch of the Share Tables



Once a table location has been selected, the task force should obtain approval from the school administration and cafeteria workers. Ideally, the share table should

be launched on a Monday to allow the campaign to continue for a full week.

Prior to the launch, several activities should be conducted, including decorating or painting collection baskets and ensuring that separate baskets are used for different types of food (cold foods, hot foods, fruits and vegetables, packaged items, etc.). Colorful and concise signs should also be created to direct

students to the share table and posters can be designed and placed around the school to educate students on food waste, student hunger, healthy eating and promoting the share table.

Once the materials are ready, task force members can plan the launch. The task force should assign members to do the following activities: set out the baskets and put up signs before the meal period, clean off and put away the baskets after the meal period, and ensure that at least two task force members are available to stand by the table to speak with students about the table.

Designing a fun and creative campaign during the launch is instrumental in promoting the share table and securing the awareness of the student population. The campaign can involve posters around the school, classroom presentations, and school announcements. Social media posts and videos can be created by the task force to highlight the benefits of the share table. Student task force members should be encouraged to lead the campaign, as they know what will help students utilize and understand the share table. Providing students with examples of what can and cannot be donated to the share table will ensure appropriate donations. For example, it is

USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROMOTE SHARE TABLES:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/NHFCA>

important students understand they cannot donate food brought from home. Additional information can be found in the California Health and Safety Code, which specifies what items can and cannot be placed on a share table to ensure the health and safety of the food that is donated. This information can also be located in the *Share Tables and Food Donations in Schools guide*¹ under the section Appropriate Food Items for Share Tables.

Step 4: Evaluating the Impact of the Share Tables

Conducting an evaluation of the share table enables the task force to know if the share table is having the intended effect—reducing food waste, alleviating hunger, and promoting health. Surveying the students and assessing their understanding of share tables is an integral part of the evaluation process. Additionally, obtaining feedback at different points in time allows the task force to determine what their next steps will be. Brief, straightforward survey tool questions can be developed for students to easily complete. This tool can be used to evaluate the share table at least three different times during the school year. The task force

SAMPLE SURVEY TOOL QUESTIONS

1. Do you know what the share table is? (Yes/No)
2. Which location is best for the share table? (List of locations)
3. How accessible is it? (Likert scale with 1=Difficult and 5=easy)
4. On average, how many days per week do you use the share table? (0 days, 1-2 days, 3-4 days, 5 days)
5. Do you think the share table makes a difference? (Yes/No)

can provide input regarding the types of questions students will be most likely to respond to. The same questions should be used in each phase of the evaluation to allow the task force to assess changes in knowledge and understanding, but also gives students the opportunity to provide open-ended feedback. Based off this feedback, the task force can adjust their promotional and educational efforts as needed. A random sample of students should be surveyed during each evaluation phase. Lastly, the task force should identify several different areas where they plan

to administer the survey to ensure they capture a broad cross section of the student population.

Formative or Process Evaluation. Formative evaluation is research conducted during the development and implementation of a project. A formative evaluation will aid the task force in determining whether early improvements need to be made to the share table. Formative evaluation can be conducted within a week or two of the share table launch. Another food waste audit can be conducted during this time to determine if the share table has made an impact on the amount of edible food being discarded. In addition, surveying students will help assess whether they understand, use, or have seen the share table. If the students surveyed are unclear on the share table concept, do not use it, or food waste has not decreased, the task force should reconvene and decide how to improve their promotional and educational efforts.

Summative Evaluation. Summative evaluation is research to assess whether the project met its desired goal. A summative evaluation should be conducted a few weeks to a few months after the launch of the share table, with a focus on surveying students on their understanding and use of the share table. The results of this evaluation will indicate if the share table program is feasible for the future, if the program should be expanded to two tables, or to provide suggestions for improvement.

Impact Evaluation. Impact evaluation assesses the project's long-term effect on people by measuring awareness, knowledge, attitude, and behavior change. The purpose of conducting an impact evaluation is to gauge the long-term impact of share tables on the school. It can occur several months to a year after the initial launch and can be conducted annually after that to assess whether the share table has consistently reduced food waste. The task force can pursue other options to determine the impact of the share table, such as interviewing the cafeteria team to find out

if they reduced the amount of food purchased. As with the previous stages of the evaluation process, the students can be surveyed to determine if their understanding of the importance of reducing student hunger and food waste has changed since the implementation of the share table(s). In addition, share table use can be evaluated as well to determine if the table location needs to be changed or if another campaign should take place to educate new students and improve the functionality of the table.

Surveying the Students. NHF's CalFresh Healthy Living staff assisted Health Academy students with evaluating the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions

of the student body in relation to the share table programs at their high schools. In earlier stages of the evaluation process, Health Academy students developed and distributed surveys to students who passed by the share table. Eventually, they decided to create confidential surveys which they distributed in a few of their classrooms. They felt this would elicit more responses than having students stand by tables and fill out a survey. The survey questions resembled questions from earlier stages of the evaluation process, but also provided students with the opportunity to include comments, questions or suggestions about the share table. Obtaining more extensive input from the students allowed the Health Academy to accurately assess the impact of the share table.

The results of the confidential surveys were analyzed by NHF and the Health Academy. Initial findings showed that 35.9% reported they used the table anywhere from one to five days per week and 55% reported they felt the share table makes a difference. Other responses provided indicated students still throw food away, are unaware of the share table, or feel that it needs to be promoted more. The feedback provided by the students helped the Health Academy determine how to improve the tables and whether another week of marketing/promotion was needed.

Step 5: Determining how to sustain the use of the share tables once they have been implemented

The ongoing operation and maintenance of share tables is a key component to the success of reducing student hunger and food waste. Having a sustainability plan for the share table is necessary to ensure it continues to have the intended impact. Part of the plan should include selecting a diverse group of members, such as teachers, parents, cafeteria staff and students as outlined in Step 1: Developing a share table task force. Recruit parent volunteers from the parent center if possible; parents can take responsibility for checking the share table and reporting if there is damage or an



Share Table Guidelines developed by the Health Academy and NHF



Share table at an LESD elementary school

unusual amount of food leftover on the table. Consider turning the task force into a school club with an adult lead or sponsor if students are involved. Including the members listed above will make it easier to transition from year to year as those who are involved will already be familiar with the operation of the share tables.

The sustainability plan should also include regularly scheduled meetings for the task force to determine how the share tables are operating. In the first year of operation, the task force should attempt to meet twice a month to conduct and discuss evaluation activities. After the first year, the group can decide frequency of

meetings. The meetings can be an opportunity for the task force to discuss recruitment of new members as well as other ways to address food waste and student hunger. Some options for the task force to consider include having an annual food waste campaign highlighting the share tables, advocating for compost bins, or working with the school garden.

Ultimately, the goal for sustainability is to make sure information gathered from the evaluation activities is used to plan and adjust the way share tables are operated to keep them functioning optimally.

Supporting Share Table Implementation: Activities for Maintaining Existing Share Tables

LAWNDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT (LESD)

Case Study: The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's Nutrition and Physical Activity Program partnered with the Lawndale Elementary School District (LESD) to train school staff, educate students and monitor the share tables implemented by district administrators in LESD. The example conveyed here explains how the CalFresh Healthy Living program at LESD assisted with crucial share table duties that came about as a directive from school district administrators.

LESD staff and parents identified food waste as a substantial concern across all schools in the district. Parents specifically noted that students threw away whole, uneaten fruit, as well as packaged food and beverage items. To address these concerns, teachers and staff began implementing a recycling and composting program at several schools. While these programs increased recycling efforts, they had little impact on the amount of food being thrown away, yet further action had to be postponed due to restrictions pertaining to leftover food from meal service.

With the enactment of Senate Bill 557, LESD was able to explore share tables as an avenue to help minimize food waste and reduce food insecurity. Using California Department of Education (CDE) Management Bulletins, LESD's Food Services Director developed and distributed a document to provide guidance regarding the operation of share tables. This information was presented to the district's leadership team during their monthly meeting and the guide was shared electronically with all district staff. During this time, it was also made clear that Food Services did not have the capacity to operate or monitor share tables, but technical assistance could be provided. If sites elected to offer a share table, they would be responsible for implementation and monitoring would

need to be conducted by a site employee, such as a noon duty aide, custodian, or teacher.

Though it was not mandatory, all six elementary schools and both middle schools in the district chose to implement and operate share tables at their sites during the 2017/2018 calendar year. To ensure uniformity and compliance, principals at each site provided training on share table best practices during their monthly staff meeting. Staff volunteered or were elected to monitor share tables at each site. These individuals were given further training and instruction on unallowable food/beverage items and storage. Food Service and CalFresh Healthy Living staff also provided technical assistance concerning food safety at sites.

Furthermore, all LESD staff were invited to attend a training on share table best practices led by a Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Environmental Health Division representative. Education for students around the topic of food waste and share tables varied at each school depending on its needs.

All sites were provided with two large National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) certified plastic food storage bins for food collection; one for whole fruit and the other for non-perishable packaged foods. Large insulated bags and ice blankets were also purchased to maintain the appropriate temperature for cold food and beverage items. These food service supplies were provided to the schools along with signs that included visuals regarding what items should be placed on the share table. Food continued to be collected during breakfast and lunch service and was primarily redistributed at recess, lunch and dismissal time. If food remained after dismissal, it was either discarded or saved for distribution during the following school day.

ACTIVITIES FOR MAINTAINING SHARE TABLES

LAWNDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT: STAGES OF IMPLEMENTATION

During the 2017/2018 school year, all eight schools in LESD voluntarily implemented share table programs.

While the programs were initiated and implemented by district administrators, LESD's CalFresh Healthy Living staff had a significant role in training, monitoring and promoting the share tables.

In the initial stages of implementation, district staff planned, organized and educated school administrators to prepare them for the share table programs. For school districts interested in taking the lead in starting a share table program, the following steps outline how LESD operationalized this process.

Getting Started. In January 2018, LESD's Food Services Director developed and distributed a summary of share table best practices based on recommendations outlined in the California Department of Education Nutrition Services Division Management Bulletin (refer to CNP-03-2018)¹¹ This information was presented to district administrators during the January Leadership Meeting by the Food Services Director to provide clarity and further reinforce allowable/unallowable practices.

Staff Training and Program Implementation.

Between February 2018 and April 2018, school principals were tasked with training staff during their monthly meeting. Additionally, principals were responsible for selecting staff for share table monitoring and further training was provided to these individuals to solidify program structure. Share table monitoring was typically assigned to Student Supervisory Assistants (noon aides) or certified teachers. Their responsibilities included:

- Placing share table bins and insulated bags out in a location convenient to students during meal service
- Monitoring to ensure only allowable foods and beverages were placed on share tables
- Helping to distribute food from share tables during breakfast, lunch, recess and/or dismissal time
- Communicating any issues or concerns to administrative staff



A student uses the share table at an LESD school

Program Promotion. Educating students was one of the most crucial components in ensuring student participation in the share table programs. Promotional efforts varied based on school capacity. At some schools, LESD's CalFresh Healthy Living staff led school assemblies at the request of the principal, while other schools elected to utilize posters, signs and word of mouth campaigns.

The presentations provided at school assemblies were inspired by a parent-led campaign to reduce student waste, which was developed during a CalFresh Healthy Living workshop series using the curriculum, *Project LEAN, Parents in Action: A Guide to Engaging Parents in Local School Wellness Policy*.¹² LESD's CalFresh Healthy Living team and Share Table Monitors created posters and signs to promote the share tables. Signs were displayed near or on designated tables.

Program Monitoring and Technical Assistance.

Beginning in September 2018, the LESD CalFresh Healthy Living staff provided share table monitoring and technical assistance. During the 2018/2019 school year, it became evident that the initial training provided by school administrators was beginning to subside and annual training was necessary to maintain continuity. To assist the district, LESD's CalFresh Healthy Living staff began monitoring each school's share table program to survey share tables for compliance with district guidelines. The information gathered was shared with school administrators. The following areas of assessment were included:

- Whether the share table was being monitored by a designated staff member
- The times during which the share table was accessed by students (breakfast, recess, lunch, and dismissal)
- The types of food and beverage items being placed in and taken from the share tables

Additional technical assistance from LESD's CalFresh Healthy Living staff was also offered to each school. Training was tailored to meet each site's availability and need. For example, a principal at one of the district's elementary schools requested a meeting with the school Share Table Monitor to review the district's guidance, as well as a student share table assembly. Another elementary school requested LESD's CalFresh Healthy Living staff to meet with the Share Table Monitors to train staff and students during lunch service.

Identifying and Involving Community Partners.

LESD's CalFresh Healthy Living staff involved community partners that they have existing relationships with in providing share table training and technical assistance. One example is Grades of Green, which was introduced by a Wellness Liaison (6th grade teacher) at one of the schools. The district partnered with Grades of Green to begin a composting and recycling program. Another example is Republic Services, which is a recycling company that works with the school district. Both organizations provided their own training for staff and students, instructing them on how to reduce food waste from share tables through various recycling options and can provide technical assistance in the future. Partnering with community organizations allows school districts to leverage existing resources in conducting long term planning of the operation and maintenance of share tables.

Addressing Food Insecurity in Families.

In addition to addressing student hunger, LESD's CalFresh Healthy Living staff collaborated with district social workers and wellness liaisons to identify food insecurity among the families of the students. LESD's CalFresh Healthy Living staff recognized that unless families have access to healthier food options outside of the school setting, their own lack of food security could make it difficult to reinforce and maintain student behavior changes acquired in the school setting. By working with social workers and wellness liaisons, LESD has been able to link families with available

resources, such as assistance in applying for CalFresh and connections to food banks/pantries.

Evaluating Student Hunger and Food Waste.

LESD's CalFresh Healthy Living staff conducted key informant interviews with nurses and teachers about student hunger in elementary schools. Prior to the

to see the nurse because of tummy troubles. While food insecurity screening and formal assessments were not conducted, these types of observations may indicate patterns of reduced student hunger. Assessing student behaviors prior to implementing share tables enables school districts to determine which students



An LESD student uses the share table

implementation of share tables in the school district, teachers and nurses regularly identified students who complained of tummy troubles, or “hungry tummies”, and were believed to live in households that experienced food insecurity. After share table implementation, they noticed fewer students being sent

would benefit most from share table programs. This is particularly important when considering younger students may not understand they are experiencing hunger; thus, documenting other behavioral indicators of hunger, such as difficulty concentrating in class, is



Food collected in share table bins as part of a food waste assessment

also important. To further assess student behaviors, LESD's CalFresh Healthy Living staff created a monitoring form for staff interns to record what foods are donated to the table and what foods are taken. The most common foods placed on the share table bins were whole fruit (pears, apples, bananas, oranges), packaged sliced apples, packaged baby carrots, juice, granola, cereal, sunflower seeds, milk, yogurt, and string cheese. The most common items taken from the share table bins were sliced apples, granola, chocolate milk, and yogurt. Identifying and tracking this information provides insight to student food preferences and can be used to tailor future educational efforts to encourage consumption of healthier foods.

LESD's CalFresh Healthy Living staff also conducted a food waste assessment at one of their elementary schools where share table bins were utilized to account for the quantity of food that could be repurposed. The assessment took place during the lunch period of a single school day. The bins were utilized to separate the following items that students had donated to the share table: milk, granola, cranberries, carrots and

blood oranges. The items in the share table bins were counted and weighed at the end of the lunch period. Among other findings, the assessment revealed that 24 pounds of carrots (90 bags), 27.5 pounds of milk (50 items), and 29.8 pounds of oranges (111 items) were recovered from the bins. All of the food recovered through this process was redistributed to the students. The assessment provided strong evidence for the continued operation of share tables, as the food collected fed many students.

BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPLEMENTING AND MAINTAINING SHARE TABLES IN ANY SCHOOL SETTING

Although NHF and LESD's CalFresh Healthy Living programs were involved with share tables in different ways, there were many similarities in the best practices that emerged from each of their experiences:

- Engage students at the school by involving them in the promotional campaign. This can include rewarding students who donate with stickers or pins that signal participation to other students and

encourage them to join in. Reassure students they shouldn't feel pressured or obligated to donate.

- Educate students who take food from the share tables about making healthy selections and taking appropriate portion sizes. Those who monitor the tables can provide guidance to students and signs can be used to provide tips on taking food from the table.
- Refer to bulletins provided by the California Department of Education regularly for guidance and reminders about what can be donated to share tables, and how the food items should be handled to ensure safety.
- After training and initial guidance have been provided, check in with those who are involved in share table work to assess their need for additional training or assistance; provide annual or biannual refresher trainings to share table staff, if possible.
- During the meal period, ensure that donated food items meet share table standards. Immediately discard any donations that are not allowable per the California Health and Safety Code guidelines.

FOOD DONATION

In some instances, a school district may find they have food items leftover on a share table at the end of the day. Though the purpose of this guide is to demonstrate how share tables address food insecurity and student hunger, it is important for school districts to consider how share table programs may benefit families and the surrounding community. As mentioned previously, collaborating with community organizations and health professionals to ensure families have access to healthy food is one way school districts can contribute to the overall wellbeing of the community.

In Los Angeles County, food rescue organizations play an important role in ensuring leftover food from share tables can be transported to community partners to distribute within the population they work with.

One such organization in Southern California is Food Finders, whose mission is to link donated food to pantries and shelters in order to bridge the hunger gap in communities throughout southern California. Food Finders serves as a liaison between institutions with a surplus of food and those that can distribute it. For example, if a school or school district is interested in having leftover food picked up from a share table five days a week, they could work with Food Finders to identify available community partners to pick up the food. Some of the partners include non-profits, churches, homeless shelters and homes for seniors. In addition, Food Finders assists in tracking and reporting how much food is donated and provides information about the safety and handling of the donated items.

When planning for the implementation of share tables, school districts should research local food rescue organizations or other community partners that can pick up and transport food to be donated. Establishing these partnerships early on will ensure leftover food can be donated to the community members that will benefit most. Upon forming a partnership, school districts can coordinate with the organization to set up a donation schedule. For example, most of the food that comes from schools must be consumed that day, or no later than the following day. If the school district finds they have leftover food every day, they could set up a donation schedule which accommodates this need. For this reason, identifying and partnering with organizations who have the capacity to distribute leftover food in a timely manner is crucial. In addition, school districts should research the local food banks and pantries where the families of their students are most likely to obtain food. This allows them to partner with specific food distribution sites, ensuring families have access to the food that is leftover from the share tables at their child's school.

Samples of food donation forms and food donation guidelines can be found in the Share Tables and Food Donations in Schools Guide.¹

References:

- 1** Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division, Share Tables and Food Donations in Schools, October 2018. Available from: www.savethefoodla.com
- 2** United States Department of Agriculture, The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs, June 2016. Available from: www.savethefoodla.com
- 3** Feeding America, Child Food Insecurity, 2018. Available from: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/research/map-the-meal-gap/2016/2016-map-the-meal-gap-child-food-insecurity.pdf>
- 4** Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Office of Health Assessment and Epidemiology, Food Insecurity in Los Angeles County, September 2017. Available from: https://www.lafoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL_LA-Health_FoodInsecurity_Sept-2017.pdf
- 5** Rethink Food Waste Through Economics and Data (Re-FED), A Roadmap to Reduce US Food Waste by 20 Percent, 2016. Available from: https://www.refed.com/downloads/ReFED_Report_2016.pdf
- 6** Cohen JF, Richardson S, Austin SB, Economos CD, Rimm EB. School lunch waste among middle school students: nutrients consumed and costs. *Am J Prev Med.* 2013; 44:114–121.
- 7** Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. (2019, February 19). Reducing Both Food Waste and Food Insecurity in Los Angeles County.
- 8** University of California, Berkeley, YPAR Hub. Available from: <http://yparhub.berkeley.edu/learn-about-ypar>
- 9** UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, “California teens who volunteer and engage in civic life are healthier, aim higher in education,” December 2018. , Available from: <http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/newsroom/press-releases/pages/details.aspx?NewsID=310>
- 10** United States Department of Agriculture, Guide to Conducting Student Food Waste Audits: A Resource for Schools, November 2017. Available from: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2017-12/documents/guide_to_conducting_student_food_waste_audit_-_nov_20_2017.pdf
- 11** California Department of Education (CDE) Bulletin CNP-03-2018, The Use of Share Tables, February 2018. Available from: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sn/mbcnp032018.asp>
- 12** Project LEAN, Parents in Action: A Guide to Engaging Parents in Local School Wellness Policy. Available from: http://www.californiaprojectlean.org/docuserfiles/Parents%20in%20Action%20Toolkit_05_20_2014.pdf



DPH would like to thank Chad Monk, MPH, Camille Thorsen, MS, RD, Lissette Rooney, Aletha Wild, MPH, Bernadet Garcia-Silva, MPH, Lana Sklyar, MPH, Jennifer Florez, MPH, and Dipa Shah-Patel, MPH, RD for their contributions to this report.

CalFreshHealthyLiving.org
publichealth.lacounty.gov/nutrition

This material was produced by the Los Angeles Department of Public Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity Program with funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education, known in California as CalFresh Healthy Living. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious food for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit CalFreshHealthyLiving.org.

The USDA prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.