

Let's Take a Healthy Bite Out of Climate Change

The foods kids choose make can make a difference – climate *and* health-wise!

Locally grown, organic, whole foods eaten in season – and packed in reusable lunch containers – create far fewer greenhouse gases than the energy-gobbling alternative: non-organic, highly-processed, packaged foods that are shipped to Ontario from hundreds - even thousands - of kilometres away!

Modifying the high fat, sugar-loaded foods that many students eat will not only reduce their carbon footprints, it will help them to be healthier too.

We hope the ideas presented in this classroom series will convince your students that they *can* influence how food is grown, produced and consumed locally. And that they *can* take a healthy bite out of climate change!

Your Classroom Food Celebration

To see how easy and delicious this shift can be, we're offering some simple recipes and suggestions for preparing food right in the classroom – no kitchen needed in many cases! With your help, these snacks could become staples in your students' lunchboxes.

In our experience, students, teachers and classroom volunteers really enjoy the process of preparing food together – and then, of course, eating it!

Here are a few tips for a creating a classroom food celebration that applies the knowledge your students have just learned.

1. **Do what you can.** If planning and preparing a full meal doesn't work for you and your class, make a snack the first time around, or add something extra to Pizza Day, such as a mixed green salad with dressing.
2. **Local, Seasonal, Organic.** Menu planning needs to revolve around these three elements. Believe it or not, this will simplify things in the long run. Start by reading food labels where you would normally shop. You might be surprised at what you are missing. Expand to farmers' markets and direct farm purchasing by using local organic food directories found online. Bulk food and natural food stores carry a good supply of flour, grains and other dry goods that are in season all the time. Look for local sources of these items and ask for them if you can't find them.
3. **Timing is important.** Try *not* to start preparing food when the kids are really hungry – they may get restless, or worse!
4. **Emphasize hand washing** and go over the importance of cleanliness when handling food. Ensure they wash their hands again after going to the toilet, or if they cough or sneeze into their hands.
5. **Make sure to include time for set-up and clean up** in your plan. Divide the duties with all the kids, and – if you're using the staff kitchen – make sure it's left without a trace!
6. **Create a little atmosphere.** Real dishes and cloth napkins can create a sense of occasion. Setting up a buffet table, or having students serve the food, are also nice touches. (Ask your parent council for funds to buy a simple set of plates, bowls, cups and cutlery that can be used by all the teachers and classes. Schools that have done this find they get good use out of them).

7. **Try people power.** Using electrical appliances adds to the carbon footprint of food. It's often quite easy to replace fossil fuels – using a whisk to whip cream, for example - with kid power.

8. **Concoct a 'signature' version of a recipe.** What makes local food unique is – YOU and your students!

9. **Share your favourite recipes** from our collection, or use some of your own.

10. **Invite the principal** - or have your class create posters to promote this special food celebration. Let the rest of the school know what you are up to, even if you can't invite them all. This is your opportunity to share some important information about why food choices are important.

11. **Above all, enjoy!**