

# Data Collection Techniques



## Reducing Food Waste at Estock Elementary School

### Smarter Lunchroom Principals Used

1. Manage portion size
2. Student involvement

#### School Site Profile

**School Name:** Helen Estock Elementary  
**Grade Levels Served:** K-5  
**Enrollment:** 384  
**Percent Free and Reduced:** 87%  
**Foodservice Director:** Teresa Squibb

#### School District Profile

**District Name:** Tustin Unified  
**Grade Levels:** K-12  
**Number of Schools:** 30  
**Enrollment:** 24,059  
**Percent Free and Reduced:** 40%  
**Average Participation:** 9,663

Take what you want... Eat what you take



Select at least 3 of 5 colors.

When choosing your lunch make sure to include a green food or a red food.

A school meal is only nutritious if it gets eaten. As schools successfully increase the offerings of fresh foods and healthy meals, the next challenge is to decrease the amount of food that ends up in the trash.

Teresa Squibb, Nutrition Services Director for Tustin Unified School District, wanted to ensure students were eating the healthy foods they selected at lunch. With the help of Tracy Conkey, Community Nutrition Adviser with Dairy Council of California, and in partnership with Orange County Department of Education's Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Team, a Plate Waste Study was implemented at Estock Elementary School to tackle the challenge of food waste. Using sales records, the initial weight of all lunch offerings was determined by food group. As students finished eating, staff helped them separate leftovers into five designated trash cans—milk, fruits, vegetables, entrees and packaging. Then the weight of leftovers was taken and subtracted from the initial weight to determine waste by category.

The next step was to conduct student and teacher focus groups to better understand why the food was being thrown away and determine how to encourage students to eat the food items selected. The team discovered many students believed they needed to choose "one of everything" in order to "fill their plates."

Utilizing the focus group information, staff from Orange County Department of Education taught teachers about the components of a reimbursable meal. Teachers then provided lessons in class. In addition, signage was created using a color-coded system that aligns with the colors of the MyPlate food groups to help students remember to select at least three components (one being a vegetable or fruit) and to choose foods they would eat.

By implementing a Plate Waste Study, following up with focus groups and providing education and signage to remind students to "take what you want ... eat what you take," Squibb and her staff are on their way to reducing food waste throughout Tustin Unified School District.

**Smarter Lunchrooms TAP:**  
**Name:** Tracy Conkey  
**Agency:** Dairy Council of California

**To learn more about Smarter Lunchrooms Movement trainings and for additional Smarter Lunchrooms resources, visit**  
<http://healthyeating.org/Schools/School-Foodservice/Smarter-Lunchrooms-Movement-of-California.aspx>.