



Going Green in School Food Service

Going green at Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) means much more than adding tasty fresh produce to school lunches. The Colorado district is also intent on adopting sustainability practices related to the lifecycle of materials, including procurement, food, and zero waste.

Many of its schools and kitchens have comprehensive composting programs in place, and all BVSD schools recycle. In recent years, the district swapped disposable trays, silverware, and cups for reusables ones. For the 2014-2015 school year, the district started reducing waste in the delivery process, too. The district replaced corrugated cardboard for reusable containers for the delivery of fresh apples and beef patties. In addition to supporting its environmental goals, they also saved \$4,581 in packaging costs and eliminated the labor for breaking down and recycling cardboard boxes.

“Customer satisfaction with this program is high. All the partners involved in the program are really pleased with the reusables program,” said Ann Cooper, BVSD Food Services Director.

MEASURABLE IMPROVEMENTS:

- Saving \$4,581 in packaging costs annually
- Eliminating 4,587 pounds of cardboard from waste stream annually
- Reduce labor for breaking down and recycling cardboard boxes



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Food Services Director



BVSD chose apples and hamburger patties for this pilot reusables program. The district’s food service supplier delivers reusable plastic containers (RPCs) to a regional orchard where apples are packed directly into the vented RPCs. The full containers are then delivered to each of the 51 schools. The empty containers are picked up from the schools the following week when a new shipment is delivered.

Hamburger patties are delivered to the district’s three regional kitchens in reusable containers. The containers are organized, labeled for delivery, packed out in insulated transportation totes and delivered to the satellite kitchens within hours of receipt. Because the containers go directly to the satellite sites without repacking, the process requires very little handling, therefore ensuring a high standard of food safety. The used containers are run through dishwashing machines at each school, then picked up by the district’s food service drivers and returned to the production kitchens.

The meat supplier picks up the empty containers from the regional kitchens on their next delivery run and returns them to their facility, where

they are cleaned again before repacking. The tubs stack easily for transport and storage. The program has reduced the need for suppliers and the district to break down boxes for recycling.

The district’s reusables program got its start with a grant from StopWaste.org. With the successful pilot under its belt, the district is now looking to expand the use of reusable packaging to other food deliveries.

“This innovative program helps BVSD advance our sustainability goals and will hopefully inspire other school districts to explore reusable packaging options for their operations,” said Cooper.

Indeed, the district’s innovative pilot is already gaining attention. The district was a featured speaker in a USDA Farm to School national webinar.

BVSD won the RPA’s 2015 Excellence in Reusable Packaging Award for organizations with revenues less than \$25 million.



About the RPA Excellence in Reusable Packaging Award

The Reusable Packaging Association annual Excellence in Reusable Packaging Award recognizes companies that have developed, supported, or implemented measurable and innovative reusable solutions in a business-to-business supply chain. Non-members and members of the RPA are encouraged to enter.

Companies are judged on the quantifiable environmental and economic benefits of their reusable packaging solutions and services. Submissions are reviewed by an independent committee of judges who are not members of the RPA. The award is supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Reusable Packaging Machinery Institute, and StopWaste.Org. Applications for the award are accepted in the spring each year. Visit www.reusables.org to learn more.



About Boulder Valley School District

Boulder Valley School District is the eighth-largest PK-12 public education district in Colorado, with 56 schools serving more than 30,000 students in 12 urban, suburban and rural communities across a 500-square mile area in the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. Now in its seventh year following re-organization, BVSD's Food Services Department is an efficient, professional organization, employing nearly 200 staff. BVSD was a 2014 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon District Sustainability Awardee and a 2013 USDA Farm to School Grant awardee which supported the development and implementation of Farm-to-School educational programming and curriculum integration in schools and marketing and promotion of local, nutritious food. Learn more about BVSD's green initiatives and the BVSD Sustainability Management System at www.bvsd.org/green.