



## Let's Do This !

By going litterless we can drastically reduce the waste that we produce here at St. Dominic Savio. We can bring the Eco challenge into your home as well as here at the school, and together reduce what we send to the landfill.

So many of our families are already doing this and we feel it's time to get on board as an entire school.

You will save money with ongoing food expenses, and by having your children return home with their recycling and/or waste you will be able to monitor what is actually being consumed.

Below is a great article with some viewpoints and tips that may help. Also included, you will find a full month meal plan, to serve as a guide.

Together we can do this... so let's get started.

TORONTO — Two moms who blog about zero-waste living say packing lunches which keep with many schools' "no-litter" policies will not only help the planet, but also lead to money saved and better eating.

"We definitely have a healthier lifestyle now. There's no processed food that we eat," says Tara Smith-Arnsdorf of PAREdown, a website she co-founded with Katelin Leblond that documents their journey of going back to the basics.

"Everything's whole fruits and vegetables and comes out of my kitchen, so I know where it comes from and what goes into it and it's just a lot simpler."

Smith-Arnsdorf, who lives in Victoria, started packing litterless lunches for her daughter, now 14, about three years ago. She wraps sandwiches in cloth napkins, which can be laundered, and uses metal

containers. In the winter she packs soup, chili or other dinner leftovers in a stainless-steel vacuum flask to keep food hot. Her efforts help cut down on how much packaging lands in the trash.



On average, a school-age child with a disposable lunch generates about 30 kilograms (67 pounds) of waste per school year, says the website for North Glenmore Elementary in Kelowna, B.C. That means if there are 25 students in a class, they are producing 737 kg (1,625 lb) of waste each year.

Many school boards across the country have instituted litterless lunches, which are one component of the Ontario EcoSchools initiative, a commitment to better environmental practices.

The Upper Grand District School Board, for one, has adopted the three Rs — reduce, reuse, recycle.

“But really ‘reduce’ is the most important one. We’re trying to encourage students and staff as well just to not even create that garbage in the first place,” Heather Loney, communications and community engagement officer for the board, said from Guelph, Ont.

“The goal of the litterless lunch is to help reduce greenhouse gases that are produced during the manufacturing and transport of all that food packaging,” says Loney.

“It can also help your pocketbook. Some of those packaged foods are not as nutritionally strong as just buying whole foods. Also, they can be more expensive.”

Parents who are unfamiliar with the school’s program are introduced with a series of tips and sample meal plans, which suggest buying applesauce and yogurt in larger quantities to dispense into smaller, reusable containers. Other ideas include buying bisphenol A-free water bottles instead of juice boxes, while students and staff are encouraged to get water from refillable stations.

“We found just by having a reusable water bottle and bringing a sandwich, yogurt and fruit, that’s about \$2.65 on average per day versus over \$4 if you’re to buy a juice box and have a Lunchables and fruit juice or something like that,” says Loney.

Bloggers Smith-Arnsdorf and Leblond prepare ingredients for weekday lunches for their families on the weekend. They also avoid single-use plastics, tote reusable grocery bags and bring jars to the store.

Smith-Arnsdorf says her shopping trips take less time because she's buying from the bulk and produce sections, not visiting inner aisles where the packaged food is.

They use drink lids made by Cuppow, which turn mason jars into to-go cups for smoothies or coffee, and Abeego, a reusable beeswax wrap that can be composted when it's at the end of its useful life.

There are a plethora of other products for litterless lunches, many of which have accessories like cases, ice packs and matching drink containers, and those costs can add up.

Leblond reminds parents to curb their enthusiasm. They only need the basics — a box with compartments and clips to keep the lid in place, for example — and a lightweight stainless-steel water bottle.

It's a one-time expense.

"We spend less than we used to because we don't buy juice any more," says Leblond, who recently moved to Toronto from Victoria.

"We don't buy all the extras — Saran wrap, paper bags to send lunches in — and those are things you have to buy over and over again."

At Cedarvale Community School in Toronto, anything left over from a child's lunch goes back home.

"It's a great opportunity to open the dialogue with parents and kids about nutrition, what they're eating, how much they're wasting," says Esther Grossman, who's on the school's advisory council and an active member of the EcoSchools committee.

"If a kid comes home with half a sandwich, parents realize, 'Well, he's not eating his lunch. Perhaps we should pack something else. Perhaps we should have a discussion.'"

When Cedarvale's litterless project started, many parents found their children were bringing home unfinished parts of their lunch. It turned out the students didn't have enough time to eat and the lunch break was extended by five minutes.

"We have great teachers who really value the environment and they really want the kids to learn," says Grossman. Another bonus: "The caretaker has less work to do. She's a real fan of it."



There is a vast array of cost effective, reusable Lunch Kits at Walmart, Marshals, and even the Dollar Store up at The Boardwalk, in order to get started.

We're excited to make this awesome transition and we hope you are too.