

Walpole PS: Late Lunch to Reduce Waste



HIGHLY COMMENDED INFINITY AWARDS 2017



Walpole PS received Highly Commended for demonstrating innovation and commitment to reducing waste and increasing re-use and recycling. The photo is of Douglas Cook (no relation to the Principal Chris Cook), Acting Director, Teaching and Learning Services, Department of Education accepting your Infinity Awards Highly Commended certificate.

Background, Motivation and Implementation of the Project

In 2016, Walpole PS joined Waste Wise even though they felt they were doing a number of things to promote best practice in reducing waste such as worm farms, chickens and composting. Completing the Waste Audit was a shock; we had over 15kg of waste including nearly 2kg of food waste.

The committee put a number of plans into place. To reduce waste going to landfill, the students made bee wax lunch wraps, purchased different bins for the classrooms, had guest speakers talk about micro-plastics and got involved in measuring the amount of waste generated at school. Although there was a decrease in other waste, the food waste total actually increased at the next audit including whole sandwiches, uneaten fruit and unwrapped muesli bars.



2016 Waste Audit

The staff discussed the waste problem in an effort to resolve it. A couple of teachers mentioned that they had been in schools where the eating time was changed to the end of the playtime and that seemed to reduce the amount of food waste. There were lots of questions asked and some problems inherent in change. We also brainstormed why the students would throw whole lunches out. We felt that, generally, the students were keen to go out and play and some threw their food in the bin rather than miss out or be late. Talking to them about this issue had had very little impact in changing behaviour.

Achievement and Results

We announced the coming trail of changing lunch times last term and instituted it this term. The students play from 12:25 to 12:55 and eat from 12:55 to 1:05. The impact was immediate. The chook bucket had only fruit peel in it and there was a handful of lunch wrapping in the bin. We conducted another audit and there were no whole fruit or food scraps.



June 2017 Waste Audit

We asked students, parents and staff what they thought of the changes. Initially, the students weren't happy as they wanted to eat at the normal designated time though they have adjusted now. The parents said although their children complained of being 'starving' at lunch time, they ate all of their food and didn't bring any home. The staff was pleased with the improved behaviour of the students as they ate, as the students were more concerned with eating than going out to play. The gardener was upset as there was very little food scraps in the chook bin to feed the chickens or worms (though I think his complaint was tongue-in-cheek).

Scale and Broader Impact

This strategy meant an easy change has made a huge impact on the amount of food waste being generated by the students.

We didn't change overall break times or how rubbish was collected.

Partnerships Formed and Stakeholders Engaged

It was easy to gain 'buy in' from others. The staff were looking for ways to make lunch duty more pleasurable, students were happy to go out to play straight away and the parents wanted their children to eat the food they had packed. Once we persevered past 'hungry' students, everyone was happy with the new arrangement.

We have also engaged the Walpole Mens' Shed to build a couple of table and chairs to enhance the school facilities for eating in a calm and dignified manner. The Walpole PS P&C have supported this project by financing the materials required.



New picnic table made by the Walpole Mens' Shed.