



A schoolwide food drive encourages students to collect healthy food items for a community organization.

Objective

Increase awareness among students about the importance of eating foods from the five food groups, while showing them how to identify healthy, affordable foods in these groups. The event also showcases the vital role food drives and food banks play in providing nutritional assistance to needy families.

The Event

Students and community members collect and donate nonperishable foods from each MyPlate food group to a local food bank. If your school has a thriving school garden/greenhouse, you may also want to include the donation of fresh produce from those sources (depending on the rules and guidelines of your food bank partner). To illustrate progress and areas of need, schools can create a large MyPlate Food Donation poster, to which students can add small squares of colored construction paper corresponding with their donations' food groups.

Collected food items should be organized and separated into MyPlate food groups, with each item placed into the colored box that correlates with its food group. If a donation falls into more than one food group (e.g., beef stew with vegetables), students can use their best judgment to determine where the food should be placed. Students can decorate the outside of the boxes with examples of foods from that group to assist with sorting. Once all of the food has been collected, the school can donate it to a community organization, such as a local area food bank. If you include perishable items in your food drive, plan for a series of drop-off times to ensure that the food stays fresh. To celebrate the students' efforts, hold a student gathering. At the event, a spokesperson from the community organization or the school's wellness committee can thank the students, using the colored-in MyPlate Food Donation poster to show how the students are helping their community stay properly nourished with well-balanced meals.

Planning

Gather a broad team. School administrators, teachers, wellness committee members, parents, and student volunteers can all contribute ideas on which local organization should receive the food donations and on the logistics surrounding the event, including where the food will be securely stored and how it will be transported to the community organization.

Determine a date. You may wish to hold this event in November or December to tie in with the season of giving. Alternately, if you are donating food from your garden, plan your event close to the harvest.

Prepare materials in advance. Decorate giant boxes in the colors that correlate with the five food groups of MyPlate – Fruits (red), Vegetables (green), Grains (orange), Protein Foods (purple), and Dairy (blue). Cut out small squares of construction paper in each color and create a MyPlate Food Donation poster, to be hung in a prominent place in the school. Also, hand out the list of healthy food choices acceptable for donation (see appendix, page 87). Work with students to organize the items into MyPlate food groups. Certain food items on the list can be highlighted, depending on the particular needs or requests of the community organization receiving the donation.

Planning (cont'd)

Promote the event and make it fun. Spread the word about the food drive in the newsletter of your school parent organization (e.g., PTA, PTO) or during meeting announcements. Also use posters, school announcements, and the school newsletter or emails (see page 3 for promotion tips) to raise awareness. To get the community on board, distribute flyers inviting people to support the food drive by bringing donations to the school or giving them to students in their neighborhood to bring to school. To get kids actively engaged, consider making the drive a competition among classrooms or grades, to see who can collect the greatest number of food items.

Hold a finale gathering. Decide how best to recognize the students for their efforts. A gathering can be held to collectively thank the students or, as is common among schools that conduct food drives, a summary can be posted to the school's blog, including the final tally of donated food with pictures of the students in action. If incorporating a competition, the winning class or grade can be announced at this gathering, giving the team an award.

Team Up Success



School

- All classes or grades can participate in the food drive and track daily progress with the MyPlate Food Donation poster.
- If holding a competition, all classes can collect food donations. Celebrate the winner at a schoolwide assembly.



Classroom

- Teachers can introduce the food drive to students using the list of recommended food items (see appendix, page 87), discussing the nutritional benefits of each MyPlate food group. Refer to Team Nutrition's *Serving Up MyPlate: A Yummy Curriculum* (see appendix, page 94) and <http://www.choosemyplate.gov> for lessons and background materials, respectively.
- Students can decorate the donation boxes in art class.
- Students can write about why it is important to ensure that everyone in the community is able to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, using the materials in *Nutrition Voyage* (see appendix, page 95).
- If your school offers a family and consumer sciences or home economics class, teachers can incorporate a lesson on budgeting. In the lesson, students can use a list of MyPlate grocery items with prices to create a grocery shopping list for a week's worth of food for a family of four on a fixed budget. Tailor the degree of difficulty according to grade level.



Cafeteria

- The MyPlate Food Donation poster that tracks the students' progress can hang prominently in the cafeteria and dually serve as a reminder about the MyPlate food groups during mealtimes.



Community

- Local businesses, organizations, and neighbors can be invited to contribute items and promote the food drive.

Team Up for Success (cont'd)



Media

- Post students' journal entries about the food drive and pictures of the MyPlate poster to the school's blog on an ongoing basis to show the progress of the food drive in real time.
- Alert the media about the food drive and explain how the community can contribute food items. Include the date and time when the food donations will be officially transported to the community organization, to encourage potential coverage on that date.

Home



- Students can bring home their MyPlate food drive list of healthy food choices to encourage families to stock the pantry with these foods and donate them to the drive.
- A local chef or dietitian can take part in a school parent organization (e.g., PTA, PTO) meeting to discuss making healthy food choices on a budget. At this meeting, invite local organizations to come and take part in a mini resource fair, where representatives from local food banks or nutrition assistance programs (for example, the National School Lunch Program, Summer Food Service Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs [SNAP], etc.) can pass out relevant information. Give families *The Ten Tips Nutrition Education Series: Smart Shopping for Veggies and Fruits* handout (see appendix, page 97).

Schools **IN** Action

Shippensburg Area Middle School in **Shippensburg, PA**, held a food drive for a local food pantry in December and collected 1,500 nonperishable items for the area's families in need. The event was organized by the student council and run as a friendly competition between students. The food items included canned goods, as well as some fresh food grown by the school's photography and gardening club, including red, white, and sweet potatoes.

Greenville Middle School in **Hortonville, WI**, has held a schoolwide food drive in conjunction with Greenville Elementary School every December for the past 20 years. One recent year's collection brought in 8,255 items and helped feed more than 200 families. A follow-up drive later that school year raised the total number of items collected to 10,000. The schools posted a blog on the school system's Web site after the event to share the success of the students' efforts, and included a picture of the students holding their donations.



[Photo] Greenville Middle School staff celebrate their school's annual food drive.