



# END PLASTICS CAMPAIGN

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## 5 Lessons to End Plastics in the Cafeteria



**CLIMATE  
EDUCATION**



# End Plastics Campaign Lessons:

## Ending Plastics in the Cafeteria By Advocating for Change

AMPLIFYING YOUR VOICE THROUGH CREATING CHANGE

Page 1

### **Background**

Students will be able to understand the local food system and identify how food waste and plastics are connected. Students will advocate for alternate solutions to single use plastics.

Pages 2-3

### **Lesson 1: Persuasive Letter Writing**

Students will be able to use their writing voice in order to persuade their local school board to take alternative steps to reduce and/or eliminate plastics in their districts' schools.

Pages 4-5

### **Lesson 2: Giving a Speech**

Students will be able to develop their oral speaking skills in order to relay a point of view and persuade an audience to create change in front of policy makers.

Pages 6-7

### **Lesson 3: Using Your Digital Voice**

Students will be able to amplify their voice using a digital platform to create a strong network and persuade a diverse audience.

Pages 8-9

### **Lesson 4: Visuals and Creating Posters**

Students will be able to use their persuasive skills and imagery to create a poster. Students will be able to explore traditional and digital forms of art.

Pages 10-11

### **Lesson 5: Video and Visual Presentations**

Students will be able to use persuasive skills to plan out a presentation using a digital platform of their choice. They will learn to communicate with concise words and visuals.

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### **Follow up: How to Sustain Long Term Change?**

What measures need to be taken to ensure that a school can keep the goals of the campaign alive and create lasting change for sustainability.

Question	Answer
<p><b>Where does school food come from?</b></p>	<p>The <u>USDA</u> supplies <b>2 billion pounds</b> of food from American farmers to schools each year.</p>
<p><b>How much waste do public school cafeterias make? How much is packaging waste?</b></p>	<p>Public schools in the U.S. generate about 14,500 tons of municipal solid waste daily. <b>42%</b> of that is food packaging generated by school foodservice, contributing significantly to the global packaging waste crisis." (<u>National Library of Medicine</u>)</p>
<p><b>What are some alternative solutions for plastic and other waste packaging?</b></p>	<p>"Baltimore public schools to use compostable lunch trays instead of Styrofoam." Plastic alternatives such as <u>beeswax sandwich bags</u> that can be reused and decompose more quickly than plastic. <u>Reusable utensils</u> can be brought with you to lunch everyday instead of grabbing plastic utensils each day.</p>
<p><b>Can it be done? How can we transition from wasteful packaging to more sustainable systems in the school cafeterias?</b></p>	<p>Schools in New York have had success with creating change. Cafeteria Culture has established connections with schools to promote student agency in getting rid of plastics in school cafeterias. Student led and supported. <u>Maine and Oregon</u> recently passed historic anti-packaging legislation that now requires packaging producers to contribute to covering the operational costs for their products' disposal.</p>

# Lesson 1

## Writing a Letter

Lesson objectives	Description
Background Knowledge and Vocabulary	<b>ELA:</b> Students will need to know the terms: persuasive, tone <b>Content:</b> Students will identify different types of plastics used in the cafeteria, including straws, utensils, containers, and packages.
Essential Questions	What alternative solutions can we propose to reduce plastic waste in our cafeteria? How can we use words and descriptors to persuade the reader?
Activity	<b>Activity (25-30 minutes):</b> Divide the class into small groups and provide them with a task: <i>come up with a persuasive letter to the school board member proposing one of the alternative solutions they discussed.</i>  Each group should create a letter that includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A clear explanation of the problem (plastic waste).</li><li>• The proposed alternative solution.</li><li>• The benefits of the solution.</li><li>• A call to action.</li><li>• Give students time to collaborate and write their letters.</li></ul>
Conclusion	Students will identify the local policy makers and formulate a letter to persuade a group of changemakers to help eliminate plastics in their school. Students will be able to explain the problem and give solutions. The goal is for students to use persuasion and create an assertive tone where the audience wants to also create change and work with the students.



Dear School Board Representative,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my concern about the excessive use of plastic in our school cafeteria and to **propose a more sustainable and eco-friendly alternative.**

It is evident that plastic waste is having a detrimental impact on the environment. Plastics take hundreds of years to decompose, and they often end up in our oceans, harming marine life and polluting our natural ecosystems. As responsible members of this community, we should take steps to reduce our plastic consumption and minimize our environmental footprint.

**gives alternative solution**

One solution to this problem is to transition from single-use plastic utensils, straws, and containers to more environmentally friendly options. **For instance, we could consider switching to reusable utensils and dishes, biodegradable containers, or encouraging students to bring their own reusable containers from home.** By adopting these alternatives, we can significantly reduce the amount of plastic waste generated in our cafeteria.

**Here are some benefits of implementing this change:**

1. Environmental Impact: Switching to eco-friendly alternatives will help decrease the amount of plastic waste that ends up in landfills and oceans.
2. Cost Savings: Over time, transitioning to reusable or biodegradable options can lead to cost savings as it reduces the need to purchase disposable plastics continually.
3. Education: This change will also serve as an educational opportunity, teaching students about the importance of sustainability and responsible consumption.

**gives reasons why to back up statement**

I urge you to consider implementing these changes in our school cafeteria. This small but meaningful step can have a positive and lasting impact on our environment.

I would be more than willing to discuss this proposal further or assist in any way I can. Let's work together to create a greener, more sustainable school community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Grade/Class]



# Lesson 2

## Giving a Speech

Lesson objectives	Description
Background Knowledge and Vocabulary	<b>ELA:</b> Students will understand the terms: audience, tone, persuasion <b>Research:</b> Students will need to know the audience (district school board) and topic of discussion
Essential Questions	How can we use tone and language to create a powerful message?
Activity	<b>Background Research (15- 20 minutes):</b> Students will take notes on important statistics, facts, and expert opinions that support their argument.  <b>Writing the Speech (20-25 minutes):</b> Provide a basic outline that students can use as a starting point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Hook to grab the audience's attention</li><li>◦ Clear thesis statement</li><li>◦ Preview of main points</li></ul></li><li>• Body<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Main points with supporting evidence and examples</li><li>◦ Address counterarguments and refute them</li><li>◦ Use persuasive techniques such as ethos, pathos, and logos</li></ul></li><li>• Conclusion<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Summarize main points</li><li>◦ Restate the thesis</li><li>◦ End with a strong, memorable closing statement</li></ul></li></ul>
Conclusion	Students will use concise information and facts to persuade an audience. Students will understand how tone and language can be a tool for change to a group of listeners.

Dear Members of the School Board,

stance is  
clear and  
concise

My name is [Your Name], and I stand before you today not just as a student of this school but as a concerned citizen of this planet. Our generation has grown up learning about the devastating consequences of plastic pollution. **It's time that we, as responsible members of this school community, take a stand against the continued use of plastics in our cafeterias.**

First, I want to emphasize that we are not alone in this endeavor. Schools across the nation have made the commitment to reduce or eliminate single-use plastics from their cafeterias. This is a collective effort, and it's time for us to join this vital movement.

The impact of plastics on our environment is undeniable. You've seen the images of marine life entangled in plastic waste and the vast islands of plastic debris in our oceans. We cannot continue to ignore the fact that plastics have invaded every corner of our planet, even our food chain. By eliminating plastics from our cafeterias, we take a significant step towards protecting our environment and setting an example for future generations.

fact

It's not just about environmental responsibility; it's also about our health. Research has shown that **42% of that is food packaging generated by school foodservice, contributing significantly to the global packaging waste crisis**

climate  
optimism

I understand that change can be challenging, and there may be concerns about the cost and feasibility of implementing alternatives to plastics. **However, there are sustainable, cost-effective solutions available.** We can opt for reusable and biodegradable materials that are not only eco-friendly but also economical in the long run. By making this change, we not only reduce waste but also teach our students the value of responsible consumption.

In conclusion, this is not just about ending plastic usage in our cafeterias; it's about making a statement. Together, we can make a change, one tray, one cup, and one meal at a time. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]  
[School Name]



# Lesson 3





## Using Your Digital Voice on Social Media

Lesson objectives	Description
Background Knowledge and Vocabulary	<p><b>ELA:</b> Understanding the terms: audience, tone</p> <p><b>Digital Literacy:</b> students will identify social media platforms that amplify and bring awareness to an issue</p>
Essential Questions	<p>What social media platform is most engaging for my audience?</p> <p>How can I use social media to amplify my call to action?</p>
Activity	<p><b>Introduction (10 minutes):</b> Begin by discussing the power of social media as a tool for advocacy. Emphasize the impact of plastic pollution in school cafeterias and the role students can play in raising awareness and driving change.</p> <p><b>Understanding the Issue (5-8 minutes):</b> Briefly review plastics, plastic alternatives, and solutions that can be offered to mitigate plastic waste coming from the cafeteria</p> <p><b>Choosing the Platform (10 minutes):</b> Explore platforms like Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and/or Facebook, emphasizing their target audiences and features. Discuss which platform may be the most effective for this particular issue.</p> <p><b>Crafting Your Message, Creating Content, and Engaging the Audience (10-15 minutes):</b> Create content that grabs attention, provides information and allows audience to interact. Measure Impact: Using statistics on the platforms, look at what gets views, likes, and comments.</p>
Conclusion	<p>Social media is a powerful tool to advocate for ending plastics in the cafeteria. Encourage students to continue creating content related to the topic to engage others in a safe, respectful, and beneficial way.</p>



## Lesson 3

# Popular Social Media Platforms

	 Facebook	 Youtube	 Twitter	 Instagram
Description of platform	share photos, comments and videos	video sharing site for public and private viewing	share comments but is limited	social and video
Audience	diverse users	diverse users	diverse users	diverse users but is geared to teenagers and young adults
How to best engage audience	photos and comment	video content	concise comments	Can videos and visual content that people can view easily and quickly

\*Note that social media platforms have a large user base. When having students explore social media preface with using it *responsibly, respectfully, and with care* when engaging others on topics that might have strong view points.\*

# Lesson 4

## Visuals and Creating Posters

Lesson objectives	Description
Background Knowledge and Vocabulary	<p><b>ELA:</b> Students will need to know the terms: persuasive, tone</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Alternatives to plastics such as straws, utensils, and containers, and packaging.</p>
Essential Questions	<p>What are the elements that make a poster campaign successful?</p>
Activity	<p><b>Research (15 minutes):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign students to research the different types of plastic that can be found in the cafeteria.</li> <li>• Have students further investigate the impact of plastic waste on the environment.</li> <li>• Have students find alternatives to plastics.</li> </ul> <p><b>Poster Design (20-25 minutes):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the rules of the poster competition as well as the guidelines. For example:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Must include a title</li> <li>◦ Must include what the problem is</li> <li>◦ Must include information from their research</li> <li>◦ Must include a call for action</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Have students work individually or in pairs.</li> <li>• Encourage them to use scraps or other materials that would have otherwise been thrown away in making a poster by hand.</li> <li>• Display Posters               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Have a strategy in place on where posters will get the most views and impact from audience</li> <li>◦ Display the posters in prominent places around the school</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Conclusion	<p>Students will be able to identify the important elements of a visual aid: Title, Problem, Call to Action, and hopeful messaging.</p>

Title is  
in **BOLD**

Call to Action  
is clear and  
concise

Image is eye  
catching

**BREAK FREE FROM PLASTICS  
IN THE CAFETERIA**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE U.S. GENERATE  
ABOUT 14, 500 TONS OF WASTE OF  
MUNICIPAL WASTE DAILY

42% of that waste is from food packaging in food service,  
contributing immensely to the global waste problem.

ELIMINATE PLASTIC WASTE REIMAGINE YOUR PLATE

**PLASTIC  
BAG**

SUSTAINABLE  
SWAPS ARE  
THE WAY TO  
GO!

# Lesson 5

## Video and Visual Presentations

Lesson objectives	Description
Background Knowledge and Vocabulary	<p><b>ELA:</b> Students will need to know the terms: persuasive, tone</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Identify different types of plastics used in the cafeteria including straws, utensils, containers, and packaging.</p>
Essential Questions	<p>How can we use persuasive language and visuals to create a <i>Call to Action</i> to a specific audience?</p>
Activity	<p><b>Planning An Effective Presentation (15 minutes):</b>            Explain what makes an effective presentation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Having an introduction, body, and conclusion</li> <li>◦ Providing visual aids</li> <li>◦ Keeping the information on the visual aid short</li> <li>◦ Readable and big enough font size</li> <li>◦ Using reliable sources</li> </ul> <p>Discuss how to create a clear message</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Using straightforward language</li> <li>◦ Using technical terms sparingly</li> </ul> <p><b>Creating the Presentation (50 minutes)</b>            Have the students create a presentation using Google Slides, Canva, PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.</p>
Conclusion	<p>Students will be able to identify elements of an effective Call to Action: title, problem, detailed facts, and visual imagery while developing critical thinking and persuasive techniques.</p>

## Lesson 5

# Elements of a Successful Presentation



**Call to Action** - clear message that calls the audience to the main message or cause



**Visual Progression** - using visuals to identify the problem and move towards solutions to the problem



**Storytelling** - telling a story that is either relatable or evokes emotion that connects the audience to the storyteller



**Inspirational Tone** - language and tone are crucial for invoking hope and optimism

Canva Presentation  
Exemplar  
**HERE**



What Is Needed	Description
<b>Partnerships</b>	Partnerships like local businesses, government agencies, and other organizations, bring expertise and resources to create real long term change on a larger scale. Partnerships can be formed during the research phase or campaign phase. You should actively work to continue to engage partnerships and create new ones.
<b>Parent &amp; Community Involvement</b>	Having support outside the school building is essential for many reasons. The support the community gives by helping students whether with resource or social-emotional support, allow for students to strive toward a larger goal.
<b>Monitoring &amp; Measuring</b>	These measures can be put into place during the campaign phase. Students need to think about how their solutions can be monitored and measured. Putting a governing body within the school via a club or group of students who monitor the waste and perform audits, will allow for accountability and ability to show positive metrics.
<b>Green Events</b>	<i>Green Muscle Memory</i> , or sustainable mind shift changes can be fostered through continued practices. This could look like a community garden or “walk to school” day. The goal is to integrate small consistent changing for lasting sustainability.



Thank you for using this resource. We encourage you to check out our other resources under our End Plastics Initiative and Climate Education Initiative to support further discussions on these important topics.

Sincerely,

Education Team at Earthday.org

