



## Parent Association Green Guidelines - For All Family Members

The Catherine Cook Parent Association, together with the Director of Facilities and the 7th-8th Grade Global Issues Network (GIN) Plastics Team, has prepared these Green Guidelines for review by Catherine Cook families and caregivers.

**Goal:** To reduce the overall amount of plastic Catherine Cook families and caregivers bring into the school, because once plastic is produced, it will forever be on our planet. “We Choose to Reuse” at Catherine Cook School. Recycling is a secondary goal. This guideline provides helpful recommendations about how to reduce plastics entering the school.

**Important Note:** We know that it is hard to give up the convenience of plastic, so please take these recommendations as a starting point in modeling more mindful use of resources and do your best. We understand if you can’t meet every single recommendation every single time. If you can only incorporate one or two changes, we ask you to focus the **Top Priority** suggestions. On behalf of the Parent Association, the Director of Facilities, the GIN Plastics Team, and all of us who share the planet, we thank you in advance for your efforts.

### 1. Lunch/Snack

- a. **Top Priority** - Pack food in reusable containers/bags. Disposable Ziploc bags are discouraged.
- b. **Top Priority** - Purchase snacks in bulk bags (i.e. pretzels), rather than multi-pack bags as these bags are lined in plastic. Portion the bulk snacks into the reusable containers/bags.
- c. Similarly, buy items like yogurt, applesauce and pudding in bulk and portion them into reusable containers for school. Try to reduce sending yogurt tubes and Go Go Squeeze to school.
- d. Buy large blocks of cheese, cut-up and serve in reusable containers. Try to reduce serving cheese sticks (i.e. string cheese) in plastic wrappers.
- e. Consider fresh fruit instead of single-serve fruit cups.
- f. Pack reusable water bottles. Plastic water bottles are discouraged.

- g. Snacks (all grades) - Pack reusable utensils in your child's snack box/bag. Plastic utensils are discouraged.
- h. PS/JK Lunch (eaten in the classroom) - Child sized stainless steel utensils are provided to students who buy hot lunch through HandCut Foods, however they are not provided to students who bring a lunch from home. If needed, please pack a reusable utensil for lunches brought in from home.
- i. SK-8th Grade Lunch (eaten in the cafeteria) - Stainless steel utensils are provided to students who buy hot lunch through HandCut Foods and also to students who bring a lunch from home. They are easily accessible in a container in the center of each lunch table.

## **2. Birthday Parties in the Classroom**

- a. We encourage students to wash their hands first and then eat finger foods served on napkins for birthday treats. If plates are needed, please bring paper plates, as they break down more easily in landfills. If utensils are needed, consider borrowing stainless steel utensils from the cafeteria. Ask a HandCut Foods (our hot lunch provider) staff member in the cafeteria where to find the stainless steel utensils. Please return them promptly to the cafeteria for washing. Plastic plates/bowls and utensils are discouraged.
- b. We encourage children to drink water from the reusable containers they bring from home. No need to bring in juice boxes/pouches or milk cartons/bottles for the birthday celebration.
- c. If buying cupcakes, we encourage you ask the bakeries to place cupcakes in a reusable cupcake container you bring from home. Alternatively, ask for a cardboard box rather than a plastic container in which to place your cupcakes. If you bring plastic cupcake containers to school, please recycle empty containers in one of the blue recycling bins located throughout the school.

## **3. Single Grade Special Occasion Parties - Students Only**

- a. The school does own enough stainless steel utensils for an entire grade to use for special parties such as the SK 100th Day of School party. Please borrow the stainless steel utensils from the cafeteria and return them promptly for washing. Borrowing these stainless steel utensils will not take away from the utensils needed for the daily lunch service. Paper plates/bowls are encouraged. Please do not bring in plastic plates/bowls and utensils.

## **4. Single Grade Special Occasion Parties - Students and Families**

- a. The school does not own enough stainless steel utensils for use on occasions when both students and families are invited to a single grade party, such as the JK African Banquet. Therefore, we encourage finger foods, paper plates and cups. Plastic utensils, plates/bowls and cups are discouraged.

## **5. Multi-Grade Special Occasion Parties**

- a. The school does not own enough stainless steel utensils for use on occasions when multiple grades are throwing parties at the same time, such as Halloween, Valentine's Day, etc. Therefore, we encourage finger foods, paper plates and cups. Plastic utensils, plates/bowls and cups are discouraged.

## **6. Parent Association Meetings**

- a. Parents/guardians are encouraged to enjoy a cup of coffee, provided in the cafeteria, during the monthly Parent Association meetings. Parents/guardians are encouraged to bring their reusable coffee travel mugs from home rather than use the disposable paper cups (with plastic lining) provided at the coffee station.

**Compostable vs. Paper:** Often times, paper plates/bowls/cups have a plastic coating, and therefore it is preferable to buy items that are labeled "compostable," "biodegradable," or "eco-friendly." The Chinet brand Classic White plates and bowls are compostable. If compostable items are not available where you are shopping, then paper plates/bowls/cups with a plastic coating is preferred over items that are 100% plastic.

**Responsibility for sharing this document:** Room Parents are encouraged to email these Green Guidelines to all classroom parents/guardians at the beginning of each year. This will ensure that new parents/guardians receive this information. Please ask parents/guardians to forward this information to family caregivers and review with their children.

\* In October and November of 2015, the 7th-8th Grade GIN Plastics Team counted on six different occasions all the plastics being thrown away in the school lunchroom. They found that the largest source (34%) of all plastics being thrown away was Ziploc bags. The second largest source (20%) was multi-pack chip/snack bags. If parents/students can eliminate just these two sources of plastics, we will reduce plastics in our school by 54%!