Americans waste about a pound of food per person each day, with people who have healthier diets rich in fruit and vegetables the most wasteful... About 150,000 tons of food is tossed out in US households each day, equivalent to about a third of the daily calories that each American consumes. Fruit and vegetables were the most likely to be thrown out, followed by dairy and then meat.

Milman, Oliver, “Americans Waste 150,000 Tons of Food Each Day – Equal to a Pound per Person.” The Guardian, 18 Apr. 2018

In the school cafeteria, though most students seem to be enjoying their meals provided by SchoolFood, there is also a great deal of perfectly good food being left on tables or thrown away in the trash, daily, and in high volumes.

Some students might be treating what they get at school lunch as a cheap commodity. It costs so little, it is certainly expendable, it can be thrown away like a wrapper or cellophane. Food that is hidden in wrappers, like small bags of sliced apples or baby carrots or small tubs of hummus are
especially easy to discard but plenty of whole apples are also routinely tossed.

Leading a team of student recyclers, we rescued unbiten apples and sealed bags and containers of fruit and vegetable products from one of four lunch periods during the 2017/2018 school year. After all, their wrapping protected them and the food was still good. As students came to know we were collecting unbiten apples (and sliced apples in bags) and sealed containers, they would hand them off to us or leave them set aside on their tables. It felt like we were harvesting apples from the school cafeteria all winter to spring and into June. We made over 20 quarts of applesauce and spun all kinds of dishes from savory pies to carrot cake. These applesauce muffins are made from the apples recovered from our school cafeteria and have already been shared with volunteers, students, neighbors, families and friends.

Help us develop ways for young people to relate to their food better and exercise choice and mindfulness, even and perhaps especially when they choose not to eat or not eat everything.

To learn more or get involved with the project:
visit jamesbaldwinoutdoorlearningcenter.org or contact Founder and Director Ray Pultinas at ray@jamesbaldwinoutdoorlearningcenter.org