ACTIVITY: FOOD SYSTEM ACTION PROJECTS

Food System Issues Menu

Ten starter challenges to spark your action project. Pick one, or write your own at the bottom of the page.

1 Food waste in our cafeteria

Lots of food gets thrown away at lunch: packaging, uneaten food, half-eaten meals. Could a share table, composting, or different portion sizes help?

2 Healthy food access in our neighborhood

Some neighborhoods have lots of grocery stores; others have mostly fast food. Could a community garden, farmers market, or food bank partnership bring more healthy options nearby?

3 School lunch quality

What's actually served at our school each week? How could the menu be healthier, more local, or more culturally diverse?

4 Plastic and single-use packaging

How much single-use plastic goes through our cafeteria each day? Could reusable trays, utensils, or containers reduce waste?

5 School garden or growing project

Does our school have a garden? Could we start one, or expand the one we have, to grow food, learn, and build community?

6 Local farms in our region

Most of our food travels far. Could our school cafeteria source more food from local farms? How would we even start that conversation?

7 Food and culture

Are the foods served at our school welcoming for all the cultures represented? Could we host a community cooking event, recipe exchange, or cultural food celebration?

8 Food insecurity at our school

Some students arrive at school hungry. Are there students who don't have enough food at home or on weekends? How could our school community help: backpack programs, weekend food, lunch sharing?

9 Awareness and storytelling

Most people don't know much about where their food comes from. Could we create posters, videos, social media, or a podcast to share what we've learned?

10 Composting and food cycle

Where does food waste go after lunch? Could we set up classroom composting, partner with a local composter, or build a worm bin?

Or write your own

If something else bothers or excites you about food in your school or community, name it here:

_____

_____

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Food System Action Project

Across four days, you'll discover an issue, define a problem, design a solution, and deliver a pitch. Use these pages to guide your team.

NAME _____ DATE _____

Part 1: Issue Web

DAY 1

Pick ONE issue from the Issues Menu (or write your own). Map your issue: causes, who's affected, what's already being tried, related issues.

MY ISSUE _____

CAUSES
What's behind this issue?

WHO'S AFFECTED
Students, families, neighbors, workers, animals…

WHAT'S ALREADY BEING TRIED
Programs, policies, people, organizations…

RELATED ISSUES
Other issues this connects to…

My issue matters because:

Part 2: How Might We…

DAY 2

Work with your team. Combine your individual Issue Webs into one team picture, then draft 2–3 How Might We statements to narrow your problem.

TEAM MEMBERS _____

OUR SHARED ISSUE _____

The HMW formula

How might we _____ (action) _____ (specific outcome) for _____ (specific people) so that _____ (specific change)?

> **Example.** Weak: "How might we end food waste?" Strong: "How might we set up a share table in our cafeteria for students who don't want their lunch so that less food gets thrown away?"

Draft 2–3 HMW statements

Make each specific: who exactly, what action, what change.

1. How might we…

_____

_____

2. How might we…

_____

_____

3. How might we…

_____

_____

Underline the strongest one; this becomes your team's problem statement.

Part 3: Brainstorm + Feasibility Filter

DAY 3

Generate many solution ideas, then narrow them using the Feasibility Filter. Pick ONE project your team will design.

Solution Brainstorm

Aim for QUANTITY. Write at least 10 ideas. Wild ideas welcome. No critique yet.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Feasibility Filter

Pick your top 4–5 ideas. Score each on the four dimensions (1 = low, 5 = high). Highest total wins.

IDEA	IMPACT	DOABLE	TIME	STUDENT-LED	TOTAL

Our chosen project

Circle the row with the highest score. Then write it below; this is the project your team will design and pitch.

_____

_____

Part 4: Action Project Plan

DAY 3 → DAY 4

Make your project real. Be specific on each section; vague plans don't get done.

Goal

What specifically will you accomplish? (One sentence.)

Steps

4–6 concrete steps, in order.

1

2

3

4

5

6

Materials we'll need

People we need to involve

Cafeteria manager? Principal? Other classes? Parents? A local farmer or business?

How we'll measure success

What evidence will show your project worked? Be specific (numbers, photos, surveys).

Timeline

When does each step happen? Aim for 4–6 weeks max.

Our ONE concrete first action this week

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Peer Rubric

For Day 4 pitches. Use this to give specific, constructive feedback to each team as they present. One per pitch: fill it out during the pitch, and hand it to the team after.

TEAM YOU'RE REVIEWING _____ YOUR NAME (OPTIONAL) _____

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR	CIRCLE ONE LEVEL (1 = BUILDING, 4 = STRONG)
Problem Did the team name a specific problem, with specific stakeholders?	(1) I'm not sure who the problem affects. (2) The problem is named but broad. (3) Specific problem, specific people affected. (4) Sharply specific: I can picture exactly who and where.
Solution Is the solution clear, doable, and connected to the problem?	(1) Fuzzy or unrelated to the problem. (2) A solution, but hard to picture doing it. (3) Clear and doable in 4–6 weeks. (4) Specific, doable, and thoughtful about how.
Why it matters Did they make the case that this is worth doing?	(1) Not clear why this matters. (2) Some reason given, but general. (3) Real impact for real people, clearly named. (4) Compelling: I want to help make this happen.
The plan Steps, materials, people, timeline, success metric: do they have a real plan?	(1) Missing multiple parts of the plan. (2) Some parts named but sketchy. (3) All parts present, mostly specific. (4) Every part specific and realistic. Ready to execute.

One thing this team is doing especially well

One question or suggestion for the team

> **Tip:** Specific feedback helps the most. "I loved the Share Table idea; how would you get lunch staff to help?" is more useful than "good job."