

## **A 4D Approach to Food Waste Prevention - The "Healthy Little Eaters" Case Study**

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### **Abstract**

Educators play a crucial role in paving the way for future generations' rational approach to food waste prevention and management. This is clearly stated in the 17 *Sustainable Development Goals Agenda set by the United Nations (Goals 2 + 12)*. *Healthy Little Eaters* ([www.healthylittleeaters.gr](http://www.healthylittleeaters.gr)) is an educational project consisting of 82 language school owners/members, in Greece and Cyprus. It was set in motion in 2014. Members apply multisensory and multidimensional experiential learning and teach students the benefits of healthy eating on both the human body and the environment. *1<sup>st</sup> dimensional approach: Nutritional*: It has been proven scientifically that apart from being beneficial to humans, healthy eating is a lot more filling than junk food. Therefore, *Healthy Little Eaters* are taught that they do not have to buy large quantities of food that they might have to dispose of later, but rather buy good quality food in smaller quantities. They are rewarded for their healthy choices and every school needs only 2 weeks before 80% of all students replace unhealthy snacks with healthy ones. *2<sup>nd</sup> dimensional approach: Educational*. Fruit and vegetables are not sold in packages and homemade food is more carefully prepared and cooked than food sold in restaurants and canteens, consequently it can be preserved longer. The longer a food is preserved, the less need there is to buy or make more. The less food we buy or make, the less food waste we produce. HLEs visit local farms, plant nurseries, food industries, they set up their own greenhouses and seed banks, they go *zero package shopping* (i.e., shop products with no packaging) so as to learn all about the cultivation, the making of and shopping of healthy food as part of their experiential activities. The impact is life changing to all participating students. *3<sup>rd</sup> dimensional approach: Practical*. Healthy food's basic ingredients are fruit and vegetables whose peels are used by the HLEs to make their own compost. A single school of 180 students can produce about 400 litres of compost/year. *4<sup>th</sup> dimensional approach: Academic*. HLEs write their own healthy food recipes in a book that travels all around Greece, they organise and take part in writing and photo contests about healthy eating, they organise events to celebrate *World Food Day* and have created two worksheets collections about fruit and vegetables. Most importantly, they are the greatest Healthy

Food and Food Waste Prevention Ambassadors to the world. The impact of the HLE's project in numbers: 6500 students took part from 82 schools. 80% of these students changed their eating habits for at least 9 months (during the academic year). Around 5200 students produced less food waste including packaging, but only around 6 schools altogether have moved on to producing their own compost minimising food waste. The next step would have been to run a survey on whether these students have managed to change their families' eating habits too which is unfortunately pending due to the closing down of schools because of the COVID- 19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** healthy food, education, experiential learning, SDGs