

What You Need to Know About School Nutrition

The Core Programs - Nationally

School Breakfast

More kids are participating in the School Breakfast Program (SBP)¹

- 11.6 million children served daily
- 83,600 schools participate in SBP

School Lunch

More kids are participating in National School Lunch Program (NSLP)¹

- 31 million children served daily
- 96,500 schools participate in NSLP

The Facts about School Meals

School meals have come a long way!

Today, kids are offered healthy, tasty and appealing choices:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains
- No added Trans Fats
- Salad bars
- Pizza with whole wheat crust, low-fat cheese, low-sodium sauce
- Whole grain pastas
- Baked items rather than fried
- Healthful cooking/preparation techniques

School meals are balanced and healthy

NSLP lunches must meet federal nutrition guidelines.

These meals must:

- limit fat and saturated fat,
- provide one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of protein, calcium, iron, and vitamins A and C,
- contain age-appropriate portion sizes,
- Provide the right balance of protein, dairy, grains, fruits and vegetables.

School meals help kids maintain a healthy weight

- Students who eat school meals provided through the NSLP and the SBP are more likely to be at a healthy weight.²
- NSLP participants are more likely than non-participants to consume vegetables, milk and milk products, and meat and other protein-rich foods, both at lunch and over 24 hours; they also consume less soda and/or fruit drinks.¹
- Students are less likely to gain weight during the school year when in school then during the summer when school is out.

School meals help students to do better in school

- Research has shown that students who eat school meals perform their best academically.
- Students who eat school breakfast have greater gains in standardized test scores and show improvements in math, reading and vocabulary scores.³
- Healthy eating correlates with fewer trips to the school nurse and less absenteeism.
- Providing nutritious school breakfast on testing days leads to improved test scores.



¹ Source: USDA

² Source: Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, August 2003

³ Source: Classroom Breakfast Scores High in Maryland, Maryland Meals for Achievement. October 2001

School meals offer a critical service to our communities

The NSLP and SBP help ensure that no child will go hungry during the school day.

- Children from families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free or reduced price meals.
- For some children, a free school meal is the only meal they will have all day.

School meals are safe – kitchens are licensed and inspected by local health authorities

- School nutrition leaders have training in food safety and have implemented a HACCP Plan.
- School kitchens are subject to two health inspections annually conducted by the local health department.
- According to the Food and Drug Administration, school kitchens are among the safest of commercial and institutional foodservice establishments.

How to Get Involved

- Visit the cafeteria during lunch or breakfast.
- Join students for lunch or breakfast.
- Check out the information available about school meal program on the school district web site.
- Make time for school breakfast even if it's in the classroom or on the go.
- Get involved in your wellness policy implementation.
- Encourage the school nutrition team to be well-trained with certification programs from the School Nutrition Association.
- Value nutrition education as highly as the traditional core curricula: combine nutrition education with other subjects like math, science and social studies.
- Create a healthy school environment focused on nutrition education AND physical activity. Ensure there is enough time for recess, for physical education and for lunch!

Teachers and Administrators are role models

- Actions speak louder than words. Administrators and teachers who are active and eat well-balanced meals in school are modeling healthy habits that can influence students.



- A national resource for parents to learn the facts about school meals and share their ideas
- Sign up for quarterly emails to learn the latest news & trends in school meals
- Find out more at www.traytalk.org

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