



HOW TO COMBINE NUTRITION PROGRAMS TO BECOME A HUNGER FREE SCHOOL

Any school can be a hunger-free school by combining federal nutrition programs with strong communications, customer feedback, and inclusive menus. Explore the following programs, strategies, resources, and communications to help you create a year-round meal program that best serves your community.

Federal Nutrition Programs

☐ [School Breakfast](#)

Create a school breakfast program that meets the needs of your students. Look to meal service models that provide students meals in the classroom or after the official start of the school day like [Breakfast in the Classroom](#), [Grab and Go](#), and [Second Chance Breakfast](#).

☐ **School Lunch & Snack**

Increase lunch participation, decrease lines, and reduce food waste by implementing meals in the classroom, grab and go, and conducting a food waste audit. As is possible for our school community and meal service model operating [offer vs serve](#) and creating a [share table](#) can increase student meal autonomy.

☐ **Serve Healthy School Meals to All Students, Free-of-Charge**

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and Provision 2 are two programs that support equitable access to school meals, increase participation, and reduce administrative burden. [Learn more about CEP & P2 here.](#)

☐ [Afterschool Meals](#)

Serve a meal and/or snack on any day during the regular school year as long as enrichment activities are available. Afterschool meal models can be customized to your school's location, timing of activities, and transportation. Learn more about [supper in the classroom](#) and an [umbrella model](#) to serve meals to all afterschool student activities.

☐ [Summer Meals](#)

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) allow sites to serve meals every day during summer vacation, including weekends and holidays, as well as during unanticipated school closures during the school year.

☐ [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program](#)

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) provides fresh fruits and vegetables as a healthy snack option to children in participating elementary schools.

☐ **SNAP/WIC Outreach**

Use your free and reduced-price (FRP) meals application or (alternative income form) to connect interested families with SNAP & WIC. Want to conduct your own SNAP outreach? Our [SNAP outreach toolkit](#) can help.

School Meal Promotion & Communication

There are many ways to communicate your menus, meal service dates/times, and health benefits to your students and families. Utilizing all communication methods outlined below, in all languages spoken in your community, can deepen your community's knowledge of your program and increase participation.

- **Social media presence:** Be sure to advertise your meal programs through all social media networks like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
- **On-site promotion:** Send flyers, newsletters, and menus home with students to share with their families. Posters, menus posted in classrooms, and listing the day's meal options in the morning announcements can also help drive student participation.
- **School website:** Be sure to have menus posted in advance. For out of school time meals, be sure to list clear meal pick up times and any advanced ordering options.
- **School events:** Offer menu sampling at school events like sports games and PTA nights. Host [promotional events](#) that utilize school mascots, sports teams, and influential community members that join mealtime to support and celebrate your program and the importance of eating healthy meals at school.

Find examples of all these communication methods and more in the [Recommendations for Communicating with Parents and Students about School Meals](#). The examples in this toolkit can be applied to all school meal programs.

Additionally, consider expanding your communications to include other nutrition resources for families, such as [SNAP/WIC outreach](#), [recipe/food skills](#), and menu ideas.

Meal Preparation & Planning

- **Food Buying and Procurement:** With uncertainty around every corner in school nutrition, careful menu planning, creativity, and adaptability can help districts navigate meal service. Learn more with our [Tips for Navigating Supply Chain Disruptions](#), [Team Nutrition's Food Buying Guide](#) and [Mosaic Point of Sale](#) are training programs and technologies that can aid schools in menu planning and procurement.
- **Local Foods:** Utilizing local foods in your school meals provides students with high quality, fresh foods and strengthens your local economy. Start small and swap out existing menu items for local foods as available. Overtime, you can incorporate all three goals of farm-to-school to increase local food procurement, build school gardens, and integrate food/ nutrition lessons into school curriculums.



Customer Service and Experience

In school meal programs your customers are the students and their parents. Gathering feedback on your meal service programs from students and families can help you create inclusive menus and increase participation.

- **Customer feedback:** Gather feedback on your meals from students, teachers/staff, and families through surveys, taste tests, and interviews.
 - [Gathering Feedback from Families: Using a Survey to Inform Meal Service](#)
- **Utilizing customer feedback:** To create culturally appropriate/ student accepted meals
 - The meals you serve should reflect your community's culture and students' tastes. Meals that are well liked and recognized by the students will increase meal participation and reduce food waste.
 - [Conversation Starters for Designing More Inclusive School Meals Programs](#)
 - [Let Your Community Shape Your Program](#)
- **Attracting customers:** Just like a restaurant think of ways to make your food look enticing, shorten customer wait times, and provide menus in advance. Using fresh fruits and vegetables bars, smoothie stations, and themed menus can also increase students' participation in mealtimes.

Looking to Dig Deeper?

Explore the [Center for Best Practices website](#) and subscribe to our bi-monthly [What's New Newsletter](#) to stay up to date on the latest recommendations to make your school hunger free!

