



School Meals

Families trust their school and its teachers, administration and staff for quality, reliable information. This document includes tips and messages for talking to parents, students and others in your community about school and summer meal programs to encourage participation and provide useful information on how to access these programs.

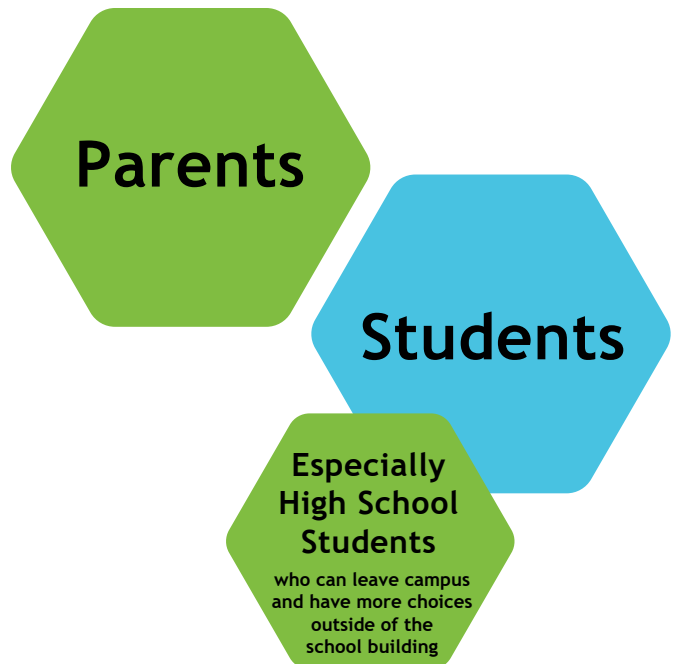
Your Messages Matter

These messages articulate the purpose and impact of child nutrition programs and illustrate why they matter to parents and students. They help you communicate effectively and speak directly to preconceptions or barriers to participating.



Who are they for?

There are two key audiences for our messages:



The following messages or talking points discuss how to tailor conversations for each group.

For Parents

These five talking points are designed to reintroduce parents and guardians to what school and summer meals are like today -- they are more likely to be fresh, nutritious, nicely presented and tasty. They're helpful for kids' learning and enhance the school community by bringing students together. Summer meals are available at no cost to students, and school meals are free for students who qualify.



1

“Fresh, accessible school meal options offered to every student throughout the day fuel their success and grow healthy habits that drive lifelong learning and achievement.”

2

“Eating school meals helps elevate everyone by supporting students, their families and their schools.”

3

“For increasingly busy families, school and summer meals provide filling and healthy choices and free up more time for you to focus on what’s important — learning, playing and parenting.”

4

“School and summer meals have evolved since you were a kid and now provide more healthy options for diverse tastes and backgrounds.”

5

“Schools increasingly use fresh, natural ingredients and provide kitchen staff the training to make healthy meals. When schools are able to use local ingredients, they also support regional farmers and economies while helping sustain the environment.”

Be prepared for follow-ups

Changing minds about school meal programs will take time. These questions can help you move the conversation forward and help families to participate or find out more.

Do you need more information?

Include direction to other toolkit flyers

Do you have feedback you'd like to share?

Direct parent to comment and make sure they get a response

Do you have questions or concerns you'd like us to address?

Direct parent to comment and make sure they get a response

For Students

Students might share the same opinions as their parents regarding school and summer meals, but their priorities and reasoning might be different. They might believe that school lunches aren't tasty or sufficiently filling. Older students who have the option to eat off campus might be more concerned about being with friends wherever they go. Messages should focus on school and summer meals as an option that gives them a variety of tasty, filling choices without having to spend their own money off campus.

A “Take another look at school and summer meals. You’ll find delicious, affordable options that fit your schedule.”

B “These options are made from whole ingredients that offer balanced nutrition to fuel your success in and outside of school.”

C “Because they’re convenient, you can save money and time while hanging out with your friends.”

D “Easy access to healthy, tasty choices allows you to focus on all the other things that are important to you.”

Three steps to make school meals the norm in your school

1. **Survey students** on what menu items they like or dislike and even invite them to offer suggestions on food preparation or presentation. When possible, demonstrate how this feedback has led to specific changes.
2. Place menus in **highly visible locations** and the classrooms. Highlight appealing items.
3. **Teachers, administrators and staff** can also help change the norm by eating school meals themselves.



Tips For Delivering Messages



Because many people have experience with school and summer meals from some point in their lives — whether they were in a school lunchroom last year or decades ago — they might think they already know what to expect from school meals. These tips can help change minds and encourage families to give school and summer meals another try.

Be Concise

Be direct and to the point.

Use Supporting Information

Be sure to add proof points, either with one of the supporting messages, any of the other marketing flyers or with details about your school's own meal program and menu.

Address Concerns

People have different opinions, concerns and barriers to accessing school meals. One parent might not think they are nutritious while another might not even know they are eligible to participate in a meal program. If you have the opportunity to tailor the message, make sure to ask whether someone already participates in a meal program and, if not, why.

Using these words can help you communicate positively about school meals:



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