Marketing
Healthy Choices
in the School Cafeteria

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Authored by
Heather Winslow Gibbons

Review Committee
Erika Devore, M.S., RD, LD
Teresa Gerard
Gretchen Kunkel
Diane Smith, RD, LD, M.B.A., SNS
Table of Contents

Using This Guide ................................................................. 7
Why Marketing Healthy Choices is Important .................................. 8
Introduction to Marketing ............................................................... 10
Funding Opportunities ................................................................. 12
Finding the Funds
Keys to Success ................................................................. 13
Examples of Community Involvement
Recipe: Chili
Engaging Students in School Meals Marketing .................................. 18
Examples of Engaging Students
Recipe: Hummus
Knowing Your Customers ................................................................. 21
Examples of Meeting Customers’ Needs
Recipe: Marinated Black Bean Salad
Marketing through Nutrition Education ........................................... 24
Local Agencies Offer Nutrition Education
Books to Share
Examples of Nutrition Education
Taste Testing “New” Foods and Recipes ........................................ 28
Examples of Taste Testing
Price Advantage for Healthy Options ........................................... 30
Creating Successful Promotions ..................................................... 31
Examples of Promotions
Enhancing the Dining Experience .............................................. 34
Layout and Design
Packaging/Presentation
Customer Relations
Examples of Enhancing the Dining Experience
Making Your Menu Talk ............................................................... 37
Advertising ................................................................. 38
Tell Others About Your Marketing Efforts ........................................ 39
Tools You Can Use ................................................................. 40
Sample Customer Survey Questions
Cafeteria Field Trip Flier
The Write Stuff (Student Activity)

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KC Healthy Kids is a charitable foundation with a mission to reduce childhood obesity and improve the health of Greater Kansas City’s children by informing, advocating and mobilizing the resources and talents of our community. Go to www.kchealthykids.org to learn more about how to promote fit and healthy kids.
Using This Guide

For most users, this publication will not be cover-to-cover reading. It is a reference guide exploring unique marketing approaches to increasing participation in your school lunch program while encouraging students to make healthy food choices. Its pages are filled with information, ideas, resources, and examples of marketing efforts in schools in Kansas City and across the country that can serve as working models for you to recreate or build upon.

You'll easily find “your section,” and by referring to the Table of Contents or simply browsing, you will probably come across additional ideas and resources that interest you.

In preparing you to use this manual to its greatest advantage, we also want to express caution. Most of these ideas and programs have not been evaluated for success on a large, or even intermediate, scale. The creative approaches presented are based on widely accepted marketing principles that we define at the beginning of this publication. We have tried to be as informational and inclusive as possible. We also realize that in this first edition we may have omitted some worthy marketing approaches and resources. In addition, we want you to know that our inclusion of a particular approach or resource does not constitute an endorsement.

We hope you will turn to this guide throughout the year when you need inspiration for marketing your program!

Tip:
Go to www.kchealthykids.org to download a copy of this guide, find school lunch recipes, and to share your own ideas about marketing healthy choices in the school cafeteria!
Why Marketing Healthy Choices is Important

There are many good reasons to make fresh fruits and vegetables, beans, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean meats more appealing and more accessible to students participating in school food programs (your customers). The health of our nation’s children is at stake. Diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure, which were once seen only in adults, are now affecting children with alarming frequency. In fact, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports that today’s youth can expect a shorter life than their parents.

Schools must play a significant role in addressing this health crisis. According to Erik Peterson of the School Nutrition Association, America’s schools serve 15 million free lunches, and 3 million reduced price lunches. Some students might eat up to ten meals at school each week, and for many students, school breakfast and lunch are the only meals they eat in a day. Every student should be encouraged to make the healthiest choices possible.

Unhealthy foods and beverages are relentlessly marketed to children through television advertising, websites,
in printed media, and around the community. To help students make better food choices that will positively influence their long-term health, schools can and should ramp up their efforts to market healthy choices using — promotion, packaging, and presentation.

As institutions of learning, schools are a natural place to teach and reinforce healthy habits. Wellness policies have mandated whole-school makeovers, and coordinated school health programs provide support for implementation. Marketing the healthy foods served in the cafeteria makes you and your staff key players in those efforts.

Food service directors face overwhelming constraints, including extremely tight budgets, government-mandated requirements, a school environment that’s sometimes not conducive to healthy eating, competition from other school priorities, lack of time in the school day, lack of basic onsite facilities for preparing fresh foods, competitors to school meals, and students and teachers who are unreceptive to change.

Many of these challenges can be addressed through marketing. For instance, wellness policies mandate the types of foods offered in the cafeteria and marketing those new foods is necessary to help your customers not only adjust to the changes, but to begin to prefer those healthier choices. Marketing efforts that begin in the cafeteria can grow to reach classrooms and families at home, making the entire school community more open to the healthy options offered.

Budgetary limits are a major concern, as food service operations must be self-supporting. Fortunately, marketing does not have to be expensive. With some creative approaches and strategic partnerships, it can be done within a tight budget.

School food service directors everywhere are taking on the challenge of providing healthy foods kids will want to eat. As you know, it is a job that requires constant effort, as even the best programs can find opportunities to improve.

In working toward this goal, it is important to remember what an effective tool marketing can be. With some creative problem solving, strong partnerships, and a positive attitude, you’ll see how marketing efforts can pay off by bringing more customers into the cafeteria.
Introduction to Marketing

“Marketing” is a general term that relates to anything you do to get school meals into the hands (and bodies) of your customers. In the 1960s, Harvard Business School professor E. Jerome McCarthy identified four key elements referred to as the marketing mix: product, pricing, placement, and promotion. For food available at school, it could be applied as follows:

1. **Product**: The specifics of how your product — meals and other food served on school property — meet the needs of your primary (students) and secondary customers (administrators or parents who are able to affect your business or influence your primary customers).

2. **Pricing**: The amount your customers will pay for school meals, including pricing advantages for healthier items.

3. **Placement**: The locations your customers have access to your product and services — in the cafeteria, in the classroom, and at school events, for instance.

4. **Promotion**: The activities associated with promoting your product, including advertising, publicity, and personal selling.

According to marketing experts Mary J. Bitner and Bernard H. Booms, organizations marketing a service need to add three more Ps in what is called an extended marketing mix: people, process, and physical evidence. Since school meals are both a product and a service, it is important to consider these three Ps:

5. **People**: The people employed in your organization will influence the quality of service your customers receive. It is important that the people delivering your product are appropriately trained, motivated by the goal of feeding students healthy foods, and project a positive image of your business.

6. **Process**: The process necessary for delivering school meals is complex, and often invisible to customers. However, if there are problems in the process, it reflects poorly on your business.

7. **Physical Evidence**: This term refers to the image portrayed by the business through its premises and the appearance of its staff. Taste tests, staff meet-and-greet events, and other face-to-face demonstrations with potential customers give visibility to your product.
Other marketing concepts you can apply to your business include:

- **Marketing Research**: You can conduct market research by systematically collecting and analyzing data regarding your customers, competitors to school meals, economic trends, and other factors that influence your customers’ choices.

- **Customer Perspective**: To effectively market your product and services, it is critical that you clearly understand how your customers view your business. Being able to identify new and emerging customer needs is where innovation takes root.

- **Differentiation**: Based on the seven Ps above, how do your product and services stand out from the competition? Differentiating your business means developing a niche market based on price, value or innovation, and becoming the dominant player in that market.

- **Visibility**: Schools provide meals out of obligation, but just having a cafeteria on campus doesn’t mean your target customers are aware of your business. And even if students and school staff eat school meals, secondary customers like administrators and parents may not be fully aware of your business. Use the ideas in this book to raise awareness of your product and services in each of your many consumer groups.

Understanding your customer is critical to effectively market healthy food.
Funding Opportunities

While this guide offers many low- and no-cost strategies for ramping up your marketing efforts, grant funding can give your budget a boost and help provide for marketing materials, extra staff time, nutrition education projects, and more.

Among other projects, grant money paid for a Team Nutrition “Eat Your Colors” campaign at Nottingham Elementary in Eudora, Kansas. One successful promotion item was a red, white, and blue yogurt parfait made with layers of strawberries and blueberries. Even though making the parfait was very labor intensive, the grant funding made it possible by paying for the extra staff time. The promotion also featured a variety of colorful vegetables with dips.

At Eudora West Elementary, grant funding paid for a Team Nutrition Power Panther Pals program designed for grades three through five. It spanned eight weeks and included a booklet, giveaway items, pedometers, lesson plans, and money to buy fresh fruits and vegetables for snack time.

The following websites can provide information on finding grants related to child nutrition and on the grant writing process.

- Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City: [www.healthcare4kc.org](http://www.healthcare4kc.org)
- KC Healthy Kids: [www.kchealthykids.org](http://www.kchealthykids.org)
- Action for Healthy Kids: [www.actionforhealthykids.org](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org)
- The American Heart Association: [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)
- Center for Health and Health Care in Schools: [www.healthinschools.org](http://www.healthinschools.org)
- Hidden Valley® Salad Dressings: [www.loveyourveggies.com](http://www.loveyourveggies.com)
- National Gardening Association: [www.garden.org/articles/articles.php?q=show&id=2491](http://www.garden.org/articles/articles.php?q=show&id=2491)
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org)
Keys to Success

Your budget is only one indicator of how successful your marketing efforts can be. Your approach, perspective, and positive attitude are also critical. Consider these suggestions as you lay the groundwork for a strong marketing program.

- **Start Small**: Budget restrictions don’t have to mean the end to all your marketing dreams. After all, it is better to start small than to never start at all. Use a gradual approach and look for ways to build up small efforts at every opportunity.

- **Track Your Progress**: Note the factors contributing to your successes and failures. A monthly e-mail to your managers, principals, or other partners can make it easy to record this information and will help you get additional perspectives from others.

- **Get Help**: Marketing is usually last on a long list of priorities for busy school nutrition professionals. Find out who in your community is willing to volunteer some time to your efforts. Their involvement translates into support for your program, and could translate into more revenue for your business.

- **Be Creative**: The ability to innovate is necessary to satisfy a diverse student population and meet government regulations.

- **Don’t Reinvent the Wheel**: Talk to other directors and managers about their marketing efforts, and familiarize yourself with Action for Healthy Kids’ “What’s Working Database,” at [www.actionforhealthykids.org/resources.php](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/resources.php).

- **Walk The Talk**: Provide customers with the most nutritious choices possible and let them know this is your goal.

- **Get Administrators on Board**: Strong support from superintendents and principals is absolutely necessary for success. Meet regularly with these school leaders so they understand your business, your obstacles, and your intent to work within the entire school community to improve children’s health.

- **Embrace Trial and Error**: Remember that every effort, even a failure, provides valuable knowledge that can lead to a success in the future.

- **Follow Through on Your Promises**: Keep your marketing promises by ensuring that customer service and operations are providing an on-time, quality product.
Build a Supportive Network:
Getting buy-in and support from individuals and organizations in your community is critical to success. Building strong relationships can benefit your business and your customers for years to come. Once people are engaged, keep them informed and let them know how they can support you. Here are some ideas:

Parents and Family:
- Use newsletters, websites, menus, and other school communication channels to reach parents in a variety of ways.
- Attend parent organization meetings to discuss nutrition, payment systems, parental controls, accommodations for students requiring special diets, and other topics of interest to parents.
- Invite parents to lunch and show them what choices their children can make in the cafeteria.
- Promote new menu items by providing parents with recipes they can make at home.
- Ask parents to help with marketing efforts and special promotions.
- Download two field reports published by Action for Healthy Kids that outline the benefits of involving parents and students in school health. The reports, “Giving Kids the Voice of Authority: Engaging Students in the Fight Against Child Obesity,” and “Tapping Into the Power: Engaging Parents in the Fight Against Obesity” are available at actionforhealthykids.org/special_exclusive.php.

Teachers:
- Involve teachers and their business, marketing, art, writing, and food and consumer science students in your marketing strategies.
- Work with teachers to connect classroom activities to the lunchroom, such as giving cooking demonstrations or reading books about fruits and vegetables.
- Attend staff meetings to help teachers understand your program and how they can help make it successful.
- Help teachers and administrators see the connection between nutrition and academic performance. Many schools and districts already emphasize the importance of eating breakfast on testing days. Why should regular school days be any different?
- Encourage teachers to participate in a fruit and vegetable challenge by keeping a running tally of the fruits and vegetables their students eat at lunch or for snacks.

Connecting classroom activities to healthy eating makes a strong impression on kids of all ages.
- Provide nutrition facts to encourage anyone taking part in faculty/staff “biggest loser” contests to eat in the cafeteria. Some schools offer a free serving of fruit to dieting staff!

- Promote the cafeteria as a field trip destination and work with teachers in advance to identify specific topics to cover.

- The Texas Department of State Health Services offers ideas for using Lois Ehlert’s book, Eating the Alphabet, with young children. Appropriate for pre-K and early elementary students, it includes handouts and ways to involve parents as well. The lesson guide is available at www.dshs.state.tx.us/kids/lessonplans/chap10_1.htm.

- The National Dairy Council created a flyer to promote cafeteria field trips. It’s in the last section of this guide and at www.nutritionexplorations.org/pdf/sfs/cafeteria_field_trip.pdf.

- The Write Stuff, created by the National Dairy Council, is a writing activity set in the cafeteria. It is appropriate for upper elementary, middle school, and high school students and you’ll find it in the last section of the guide at www.nutritionexplorations.org/pdf/sfs/the_write_stuff.pdf. (Appropriate for upper elementary, middle school, high school.)

Food Services Staff:

- At the beginning of each school year, stage a kickoff to introduce staff, identify potential partners, and highlight new foods and new services for families and staff.

- Motivate your staff around the shared goal of feeding kids healthy food.

- Create business cards for your staff to carry.

Businesses and Corporations:

- Find ways to get representatives from food distribution companies or industry organizations more involved in your promotional efforts. They may be able to donate food or giveaway items, or provide materials for advertising, promotions, or nutrition education programs.

- Find local businesses willing to sponsor schoolyard gardens, cafeteria makeovers, contest prizes, or other promotional materials.

- Ask local professionals — health care workers, chefs, writers, artists, and musicians — to share their expertise in interesting ways during promotions, assemblies, or other events.

- Ask local businesses to sponsor breakfast for athletic teams on the day of a big game.

- Partner with grocery stores to support your nutrition education efforts by co-featuring a food through handing out coupons or organizing special displays.

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Bridget McNabb, director of food services for Piper Unified School District makes sure her food service team has these business cards on hand.
Community:
- Invite chefs and culinary students to prepare sample recipes, demonstrate cooking techniques, or teach hygiene and food safety as related to food preparation. Reward older students by allowing them to shadow a chef for a day.
- Host a “commodity cook-off” with local chefs and culinary students and allow your school’s student population to be the judges.
- Ask an artist to work with students to paint a nutrition or food-themed mural in the cafeteria.
- Invite musicians to health fairs and special promotions to make them more festive, especially when an international theme is featured.
- Contact your city health department to see what resources they offer, and what topics their staff members can present to students.
- Host a dietetic intern student to assist with school nutrition marketing programs.

Area Growers:
- Feature local items, like apples, in promotions. Let students know where the food was grown.
- Invite growers to tell students about growing food and bring samples from their crops.
- Encourage teachers to take field trips to working farms and orchards.

Examples of Community Involvement in School Meals Marketing

Campbell’s Soup is Good for Hickman Mills
Students at Smith-Hale Middle School cannot eat enough soup. “They just love it,” says nutrition education coordinator Grennan Sims. “They seem to enjoy every kind. It’s actually pretty amazing.” The soup service is the result of a partnership with Campbell’s Soup. The company provided the equipment for the serving station, and for one year, the school will serve canned or frozen soup and a few homemade soups. “Eventually we’ll transition to all homemade soups, which is more cost effective,” says Sims.

The soup is available everyday as an entree or as a side paired with a salad or sandwich. Hickman Mills School District also offers chef salads daily at all secondary schools and four days a week at the elementary level. Menus include...
fresh fruits and vegetables four to five days a week, and whole grain breads and cereal. “It’s an increased expense,” says Sims, “but increased participation allows for the added expense.”

**KCDA Program Promotes Healthy A La Carte Choices**

To involve families and the community in helping students make healthier snack choices at home and at school, the Kansas City Dietetics Association (KCDA) is piloting a program called “A La Healthy” in the Blue Valley, Belton, and North Kansas City school districts.

The program allows registered dietitians to reach kids and their families by promoting the healthier a la carte foods served in the cafeteria. Registered dietitians visit the schools once a month during lunch to pass out samples of the featured snack and talk with kids briefly about why it is healthy and what food groups are used. Samples typically feature a whole grain General Mills product paired with a fruit, vegetable, or dairy product.

Coupons for use at Hy-Vee, KCDA’s community partner, are given to students participating in the promotion. Students then take the coupon home and tell their parents that $15 shopping cards are awarded to the first twenty families who go to Hy-Vee and contact the store’s dietitian. This gives the dietitian an opportunity to promote healthy snacking to the families, and cover the same ideas volunteer dietitians presented to students earlier in the day.

The program lasts six months and will be measured according to sales of cafeteria a la carte items during the two weeks following each month’s promotion, the number of families visiting the Hy-Vee dietitian, and a focus group with students.

Additional partners in the program are KC Healthy Kids and Nutra-Net.

**Eudora Staff are Part of the Community**

Eudora public schools’ food service staff take part in school in-service days and visit classrooms to talk about their work and read stories. At Eudora Middle School, food and nutrition services staff help host an annual dinner theater for Eudora’s senior citizens. Food and nutrition services director Cindy Johnson recruits food and consumer science students to decorate tables and serve dinner. Taking every opportunity to educate students, she also visits the classroom in advance to train students on the business of catering, plus hand-washing, food safety, and logistics.

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**Chili**

**Hickman Mills Food and Nutrition Services**

- 14 lbs ground beef, uncooked
- 4 oz dehydrated onion flakes
- 3 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp + 1 tsp black pepper
- 1/3 cup + 2 tsp chili powder
- 2 tsp paprika
- 2 tsp onion powder
- 1/4 cup ground cumin
- 1 #10 can crushed tomatoes
- 1 gal + 2 cups water
- 1/2 #10 can tomato paste
- 1 #10 can kidney beans


Stir in beans. Cover and simmer about 10 minutes or until hot. Pour into serving pans. Portion with 8-oz ladle (1 cup).

SERVING: 1 cup provides 4 ounces of cooked lean meat and 3/4 cup of vegetable.
Engaging Students in School Meals Marketing

One of the most important factors in successful marketing efforts is student involvement. When students are engaged in the planning and implementation of a project, they are more likely to take part in it. They might even encourage their friends to participate. Here are some ideas for involving students in marketing and promotions in the cafeteria.

• Form Student Nutrition Advisory Councils to get feedback, ideas, and student buy-in.

• Survey students on their likes and dislikes. Not only will you gain valuable information, your students will know you want their opinions!

• Invite students to write announcements, design logos, and create posters and labels for new products and promotions. For instance, student art appears on Blue Valley menus, and on the Liberty School District’s water bottle labels.

• In the cafeteria, display student art depicting nutrition concepts.

• Sponsor a recipe creation contest among students. Ask a food and consumer science class or health/nutrition class to create a breakfast or lunch item that will be healthy and popular with students. The students should work with school nutrition professionals to meet cost and nutrition guidelines and create a plan to promote the item to their peers through written announcements, posters, and other creative venues. Winning items can be scheduled into the regular menu as a special item.

• Recruit older students to eat lunch with younger students. Depending on their ages, students can model healthy choices or good manners, or encourage the youngest ones to stay focused on eating their healthy lunch. Find other ways to implement peer mentoring concepts related to healthy eating, such as reading to a classroom or teaching a nutrition lesson.

• The Texas Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Division offers more ideas for getting students excited about nutrition and school meals at [www.squaremeals.org/fn/render/channel/items/0,1249,2348_3504_0_0,00.html](http://www.squaremeals.org/fn/render/channel/items/0,1249,2348_3504_0_0,00.html).
Examples of Engaging Students in School Meals Marketing

Hummus Meets a Need in North Kansas City

A group of eighth-grade girls at Eastgate Middle School worked with their cafeteria manager, Carol Slauson, and the district’s nutrition education coordinator, Keli Hurst, to create menus that included more vegetarian options. Hummus dip made with chickpeas is now offered on a regular basis.

Sturdy Snack Cart Made by Students

Academie Lafayette, a French immersion charter school in Kansas City, Missouri, serves fresh fruit snacks from a cart built by students. Throughout the day, students can select a snack of fresh bananas, grapes, strawberries, and other fruits that might be less familiar, such as kiwi or avocado. By the end of the day, the cart is usually empty.

Student Involvement Eases Transition

Concerned about losing customers after moving to a new school building, Eudora, Kansas, public schools food and nutrition services director, Cindy Johnson, formed a student committee to help create the look and feel of the new cafeteria. Students helped to design the serving area and signage, and named the stations and the cafeteria. “Involving the students gave them some ownership over what foods were offered, how the cafeteria looked,” says Johnson, who felt the committee helped ease the transition to the new school.

Football and Peer Mentoring Make a Power Play

For the past eight years, Waynesville, Missouri, high school football players have visited elementary school lunchrooms to promote healthy food and fitness to the young children on the Friday before the Super Bowl. The event is promoted the entire week through fliers, classroom decorations, statistics lessons, and football training courses in PE classes.

When lunchtime arrives on the big day, a PE teacher typically introduces the upper class students and talks about how the players eat and exercise for maximum performance on the field. Then the players walk around the cafeteria

Hummus and Pita

North Kansas City Food and Nutrition Services

Served with milk, this recipe makes one reimbursable, grab-and-go meal.

1 Romaine lettuce leaf
1 #16 scoop hummus (Kronos Brand)
1 pita, six inches in diameter cut in 4 triangles
4 carrot sticks
4 cucumber slices
4 celery sticks
4 grape tomatoes
1 small bunch red grapes (about 15)
1/4 tsp Spanish paprika

Prepare sliced cucumbers, celery sticks, and medium carrot sticks in advance. Thaw pita in cooler a day ahead then cut into quarters.

Lay one Romaine lettuce leaf in container. Scoop out #16 disher of hummus onto lettuce leaf. Put pita triangles on the side and add four carrot sticks, four cucumber slices, four celery sticks, and four grape tomatoes. Garnish with small bunch of grapes (about 15) and sprinkle 1/4 teaspoon paprika over hummus.
shaking hands, signing autographs, and answering questions. Participation is high on the day of the event, and for a few days following it, when the event is still in the younger student’s recent memory. For more resources, go to www.nflrush.com.

Fourth Graders Have a Say in School Meals

Nixa, Missouri, school nutrition director Cindy Kubowitz finds out what her Century Elementary customers think by convening eight fourth-graders once a month. “I find out what they like, what they don’t like that we’ve served over the month,” says Kubowitz, who also asks about what healthy foods the students eat outside of school.

The district also sent a survey to a random sample of families and found parents were still unhappy with some of the food choices offered. They also found out that grapes were a popular healthy snack, and began serving them more in school.
It’s important to know your customers — their needs and wants, their beliefs and perceptions. It is also important to get a clear picture of the competition. Who or what factors are keeping students from coming to the school cafeteria? Take a critical look at these factors and you may discover some surprising ways to market your school lunch. Trends are another part of the big picture — what food and diet trends are featured in the media? What economic trends are shaping spending behaviors? What foods and marketing trends are popular at restaurants?

Answers to these questions will help you communicate better with your customers what delicious, healthy foods they’ll find in your lunchroom.

Besides your primary customers — the ones that eat school meals — parents, administrators, and school board members are your secondary customers. Depending on their perceptions, they can be a source of strong support or they can negatively affect your business. The best way to find out what they think is to ask them!

Customer surveys can help you identify ways to increase participation. A survey can take many forms depending on which customer you are targeting. A staff person or volunteer can simply ask one or two questions and record answers as students go through the lunch line or when they checkout. For parents and staff, an online survey might be the best way to get the most responses.

A list of sample survey questions is provided in the last section of this guide.
“Kids have to learn why healthy foods are important before marketing becomes valuable to them. That’s where nutrition education comes into play.”

Grennan Sims, Registered Dietitian and nutrition education coordinator, Hickman Mills School District, Kansas City, Missouri

One Example of Knowing Your Customer

Survey Shows Students Relate to Certain Staff Members

In North Kansas City’s Ravenwood Elementary School, manager Erin Stevens believed many things were right but felt participation could be higher. She distributed a survey to parents to find out which meals children ate at school, what menu items they liked best and least, and why, specifically, they did or did not eat a school lunch. The survey also gave parents a chance to share what foods they would like to see on the menu, their ideas for making lunch exciting for the kids, and even their thoughts on the decorations in the cafeteria.

In response to the survey, more fresh fruits and vegetables are being offered, and a few other small changes were made, such as ensuring the availability of dry trays, an issue for some children.

The surveys also revealed that kids notice when they are treated with care and respect. “We try harder to be even more present with the kids since we now know they notice,” says Stevens.
Meeting Customers’ Needs

Obviously, your customers’ primary need at lunchtime is to find food. As you know, there are many places they can find food outside of the cafeteria, so it is important to identify what other needs you can meet. Here are examples of ways to meet specific student needs in a healthy way.

- **Quick Convenience**: Especially at higher grade levels, students might be looking for a take away meal they can eat during other activities. Healthy foods can be packaged and sold from a “Grab-and-Go” station.

- **Favorite Foods**: Healthy sub sandwiches and “smart” pizza, made with a whole grain crust and low-fat commodity cheese, allow students to enjoy their favorite foods in the cafeteria, where your marketing efforts can help encourage them to pick up an extra side of fruit!

- **Variety of Choices**: Many schools offer a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables so students can select which foods they prefer. Demonstration cooking, where food is made to order as each student goes through the line, allows cafeterias to provide exactly what each student wants. This serving style, which easily accommodates students with special diets, is working in Eudora, Kansas schools.

- **Pleasant Eating Experience**: The lunch period should be a time for students to relax and socialize, and a pleasant, attractive dining room can draw in customers.

One Example of Meeting Customers’ Needs

**Healthy and Convenient**

To help busy students make good choices when their schedule doesn’t allow for a sit-down lunch, find out what healthy foods can also be conveniently packaged. In the Liberty, Missouri, School District, it’s marinated black bean salad or a yogurt parfait. In North Kansas City, it’s hummus with pita and vegetables or a deli sandwich on a whole wheat bun.

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**Marinated Black Bean Salad**

**Liberty School District Food and Nutrition Services**

Serves 50

- 5 lb canned black beans, drained
- 3 lb 8 oz or 4 lb 2 oz canned corn drained
- 12 oz fresh green peppers, minced
- 12 oz fresh red peppers, minced
- 4 oz fresh onions, minced
- 1 cup lemon juice
- 2 tbsp dried parsley
- 1 tbsp ground cumin
- 2 tsp granulated garlic
- 1 lb 12 oz canned salsa
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 lb reduced fat Monterey Jack cheese, shredded (optional)

Combine black beans, corn, green peppers, red peppers, and onions in a large bowl. For dressing, combine lemon juice, parsley, cumin, granulated garlic, salsa and oil. Pour dressing over salad and toss lightly to combine. Spread 5 lb 15 oz (approximately 3 qt - cup) into each shallow pan (12” x 20” x 2”) to produce a product depth of 2” or less. For 50 servings, use 2 pans. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Portion with #8 scoop (1/2 cup). Sprinkle Monterey Jack cheese (optional) on top before serving. Alternatively, package 1 cup servings for the grab-and-go line.
Marketing through Nutrition Education

A school’s food service isn’t just about serving food, and nutrition education doesn’t have to be tied to a classroom curriculum — the two can come together in a combined effort that helps position the school nutrition staff as district resources on nutrition.

Some districts are fortunate to have on staff a registered dietitian who coordinates nutrition education. Even if this isn’t the case in your district, you still have options.

The following advice was presented at a meeting of the Heart of America School Nutrition Directors by Sarah Chellberg of Blue Valley School District, Keli Hurst of North Kansas City School District, and Grennan Sims of Hickman Mills School District, all registered dietitians working within their districts’ food and nutrition services departments.

- Develop good working relationships. Being able to communicate with many different people is necessary when trying to sway public opinion.
- “Knock on teachers’ doors” to promote nutrition education the food service department can offer.
- Create a health fair booth kit and let parent organizations and school staff know it’s available to borrow.
- Read books about food to kindergarteners and first graders who are just starting to eat school meals.
- Start a cooking club during after school programs.
- Recruit local dietetic students from nearby universities and colleges or secondary level food and consumer science students to talk to younger students about nutrition.
- Create a “Lunch Buddy” peer mentoring program in which sixth graders are matched with kindergarteners and first graders during the lunch period.
- Contact Kansas City Community Gardens about their low-cost Schoolyard Gardens program. For information, go to [www.kccg.org](http://www.kccg.org).
- Invite Master Food Volunteers to teach about nutrition and cooking techniques. In Missouri, contact the University of Missouri Extension, 816.482.5850. Kansas program information is available at [www.oznet.ksu.edu/mfv/DesktopDefault.aspx](http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/mfv/DesktopDefault.aspx).

Student art is a token of appreciation for nutrition lessons.
• Offer the cafeteria as a learning lab. Attend faculty meetings and
  brainstorm ways to tie the cafeteria into classroom projects.
• Provide nutrition information where customers make food choices
  and through the school newsletter and website.
• If you don’t have a registered dietitian on staff, borrow materials,
  information, and newsletters from districts that do

Local Agencies Offer Nutrition Education

The following Kansas City-based organizations offer a variety of
nutrition education resources and services.

**Food is Elementary© in Kansas City**: A local branch of the Food
Studies Institute helps schools implement the Food Is Elementary©
curriculum by providing teacher training and connecting schools
to trained food educators and funding opportunities. The Food Is
Elementary© curriculum is a hands-on, sensory-based curriculum
that helps children learn to enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and
beans with recipes that use healthy commodity foods. In Kansas City, contact
Emily Libla, alifeconnected@gmail.com.

**Kansas City Community Gardens**: Schoolyard gardens are a natural place
to teach students about food and nutrition. In the Kansas City area, schools are
fortunate to have a wonderful resource in Kansas City Community Gardens’
Schoolyard Gardens program. A $2.00 membership entitles schools to reduced
price seeds, plants, fertilizer, insect controls and low cost tilling, technical
assistance consultation for starting the garden and keeping it growing, loaner
tools for use throughout the season, help with finding volunteer support, and
teacher training. Kansas City Community Gardens partnered with the Missouri
University Extension to create a garden-based curriculum titled “Eating From the
Garden.”

**Master Food Volunteers**: Master Food Volunteers from state extension offices
can teach about nutrition and cooking in schools. In Missouri, contact the
University of Missouri Extension, 816.482.5850. Kansas program information is

“A garden is really a library. No school should be without one.”

Jane Smillie Hirschi, founding director of CitySprouts school garden program
for Cambridge, Massachusetts Public Schools
Nutra-Net: Nutra-Net is a nonprofit organization that promotes healthy living by teaching nutrition and basic food preparation in schools. A pictorial cookbook makes it easy for students to recreate the recipes at home. Schools typically pay for lessons through grant funding, and Nutra-Net staff can train members of the school community to teach the lessons. In some cases, high school-aged students are trained to teach younger students, creating a wonderful opportunity for peer mentoring. The lessons are also given in after-school programs and community centers. For more information, go to www.nutra-net.org.

Examples of Nutrition Education

Nutrition Education Library Serves the District
The Blue Valley Food and Nutrition Services department offers an entire library of resources devoted to nutrition topics. The collection is made available to schools throughout the district and includes test tubes, fat modules, curriculum kits, literature, posters, and more.

Peer Mentoring Creates a Positive Experience for Hickman Mills
Hickman Mills Teen Health Mentor program gives secondary students the opportunity to share what they’ve learned with younger students. Mentors give ten- to fifteen-minute nutrition lessons to younger students and help them make their own healthy snacks.

Kids Eat the Rainbow at Century Elementary
The school nutrition director and the Nixa, Missouri, school board president brought a professional sous chef from Branson to prepare a fruit salad and mango sorbet for kids to sample. The fourth-grade Student Advisory Council wore chef’s hats and aprons as they served their schoolmates the samples. Students sang songs about eating five fruits and vegetables a day and the gymnasium was decorated with balloons in rainbow colors.

Prior to the event, a local consultant with training as a chef and nutritionist provided ideas for easy ways to tell kids about important nutrition concepts, and as a result, nutrition students from the nearby College of the Ozarks walked through the line with students and told them about foods they may not be familiar with, and why it’s important to eat for color.

Principal Kevin Kopp brought out a trash can and demonstrated the “garbage in/garbage out” theory. “What you put into your body is what you get out of it,” he tells his students. “If you don’t eat good food, your body won’t have good energy to run on.”
Dietitians Go Back to School

The Healthy Schools Partnership, a collaboration among the American Dietetic Association Foundation, the American Council for Fitness and Nutrition Foundation, and PE4life, puts registered dietitians in schools as nutrition coaches to layer nutrition education and messaging to students in physical education class and in other areas of the school environment.

The pilot program promotes the healthiest foods from each of the MyPyramid food groups as “Power Picks.” These healthy foods are promoted weekly through brief classroom presentations, games played in PE class, one-on-one nutrition coaching with individual students, cafeteria promotions, posters in the hallways, daily healthy nutrition announcements, and newsletter articles that are sent home to families.

Here are some ways Power Pick foods are promoted through the Healthy Schools Partnership:

- Power Pick foods in the cafeteria are designated by a Power Pick logo.
- The Power Pick logo appears on a large banner in the lunchroom, and photographs of students who choose Power Pick foods are posted on the banner. Once a week, a cafeteria manager, school principal, or other staff member will randomly choose three photos from the banner and offer prizes to those students. Even the prizes help communicate the importance of healthy eating.
- Power Pick t-shirts are given to cafeteria staff to encourage their support of the program. Mylar fruit and vegetable balloons, nutrition posters, and banners help make the cafeteria a festive, fun place to be.
- Students take part in a poster contest to depict nutrition concepts they learned. The posters are hung in the cafeteria and judged by the art teacher and other staff. Prizes and certificates are awarded.
- Fruit and vegetable tastings are offered to expose students to fresh fruits and vegetables that may be unfamiliar. “Kids really enjoy tasting,” says Katie Brown, a program director with Nutra-Net and registered dietitian working in the schools. “As we’re talking to them about the value of the food, they’re a lot more excited about trying it.”
- Power Pick articles are placed in school newsletters and daily announcements to help keep everyone excited about the program.
- Family Fun Night events are organized at some schools. At Pitcher Elementary School in Kansas City, Missouri, registered dietitians were stationed at booths representing the food groups on the USDA Food Guide Pyramid. Families moved from table to table, sampling food, picking up handouts, and learning from the dietitians how to incorporate key nutrients into their diets at home. A physical education teacher incorporated dancing and games in the context of an “energy in/energy out” lesson.

Books to Share

The following books are recommended by Kansas City area school nutrition professionals. Your own school librarian should be able suggest many more food-related books that will appeal to students.

- *I Will Never Not Ever Eat A Tomato*, by Lauren Child (Pre-K, Elementary)
- *Vegetable Friends*, by Tony Lawlor (Pre-K, Elementary)
- *One Cool Watermelon*, by Hannah Tofts (Pre-K, Elementary)
- *The Science Chef*, by Joan D’Amico and Karen Eich Drummond (Elementary)
- *The Cafeteria Lady from the Black Lagoon*, by Mike Thaler (Elementary)
- *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*, by Judi Barrett (Pre-K, Elementary)
- *Stone Soup*, a folk tale reinterpreted by many authors (Pre-K, Elementary)
- *No More Cookies*, by Paeony Lewis (Pre-K, Elementary)
- *If You Give a Moose a Muffin*, by Laura Joffe Numeroff (Pre-K, Elementary)
Many fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and beans are unfamiliar to children and adults, so they need to be given opportunities to sample the foods. Taste-testings and cooking demonstrations in the classroom, at school assemblies, or even in the lunch line can be a fun marketing approach to introducing students to healthy foods that may be unfamiliar to them. Connecting taste testings to produce harvested from a schoolyard garden can be a powerful way to persuade students to try fresh fruits and vegetables. “CitySprouts Cafeteria Tastings” describes garden-centered taste tests in Cambridge, Massachusetts schools: [www.citysprouts.org/Cafeteria%20Event08.pdf](http://www.citysprouts.org/Cafeteria%20Event08.pdf).

Examples of Taste Testing

**Fear Factor is Fun at Century Elementary**

Fear is not a factor for most students when it comes to trying cauliflower, snap peas, turnips, and other vegetables at Century Elementary School in Nixa, Missouri. On the third Friday of every month, a big event in the cafeteria helps kids see that fruits and vegetables can be very fun.

Here’s how it works: As they enter the cafeteria, children see a big butcher-paper banner with a drawing and the name of the vegetable sample they will find on their plates. Throughout the rolling lunch periods, students who taste the new food — even if only a small bite — get to sign their name on the poster. Each class signs with a different color of marker, and everyone stays in the cafeteria until the results are tallied. Principal Kevin Kopp, who seems to own the term “Fun Factor,” plays emcee and reporter, using his microphone to interview the kids who tried the food.
During the lunch, Kopp and helpers track the number of kids who didn’t eat their new food and calculates the ratio, by classroom, of how many kids did try it (this is where the color-coded markers come in). Then, class-by-class, the students who tried the food cheer their score and shout “Fear was not a factor for me!”

Name That Veggie

South End Elementary School in Southington, Connecticut, promotes vegetable consumption by using a guessing game. The food service director purchases different vegetables at a local farm. A vegetable is displayed in the cafeteria, and students guess its identity. The vegetable is cooked and samples are served to students and staff. The food service director reports that they have stumped many adults and children and that students are more apt to try something new like kale, because it is presented in a fun way.
Price Advantages for Healthy Options

Students may be more likely to choose healthy options when those items are less expensive than unhealthy foods. This strategy is sometimes referred to as “price advantage” or “behavioral economics,” and its success may depend on other factors, including the age of the student.

According to Eudora, Kansas, director Cindy Johnson, the pricing structure works very well with middle school students, but not as well with high school students who have more disposable income. Parental controls are also more likely to affect middle school student purchases. If a parent limits their child’s daily dollar amount for a la carte to 65 cents or less, the student has access only to the healthier options that are priced at 65 cents or under. For Johnson, the pricing structure is best used as part of a greater effort to promote healthy choices, by using nutrition labeling and allowing parental controls.

North Kansas City managers have observed similar purchasing behaviors by high school students -- students are not making their food choices based on price. Currently in North Kansas City schools, bottled water is less expensive than some of the other beverages, and fries and a la carte items are more expensive than a school meal. Hummus, salads, and sandwich combos with fruit and baked chips are offered as reimbursable meals, rather than a la carte.
Creating Successful Promotions

Successful cafeteria promotions can generate excitement and interest in healthy foods and increase traffic into the lunchroom. A 2006 Action for Healthy Kids study in 12 Chicago-area schools evaluated the effectiveness of month-long cafeteria promotions that included taste tests, decorations and music, point-of-choice nutrition information, a variety of communication vehicles, and materials created specifically for food service professionals, students, teachers, and parents. [www.actionforhealthykids.org/pdf/Final%20Report%20-%20Color.pdf](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/pdf/Final%20Report%20-%20Color.pdf).

The study found the following to be true:

- Promoting nutrition and healthful food items is necessary for increasing student consumption of foods they don’t typically eat.
- Promotions cannot replace the need for nutrition and health education, but should supplement classroom learning to encourage healthy choices.
- Students from fifth to twelfth grade did respond to simple promotions.
- More intensive promotions lasting longer than one month would have greater effect.
- Although not complicated, this approach takes time and resources to implement so a collaborative approach is necessary. Participation from many stakeholders is needed for successful promotions and lasting behavior change.

Careful evaluation of your programs is also important to determine what worked and what didn’t. The following questions were used to assess the effectiveness of promotions during a 2006 Action For Healthy Kids study. The results of the study were published in a report titled Helping Students Make Better Food Choices in School, available at [www.actionforhealthykids.org/pdf/Final%20Report%20-%20Color.pdf](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/pdf/Final%20Report%20-%20Color.pdf).

- What aspects of the promotion did students notice or like the most?
- Did students make better food choices during the promotion?
- Are students likely to continue choosing food groups highlighted?
- Did students report a willingness to select the food group outside of school?
- Did food service professionals note differences in product utilization/selection?
- Would food service be willing to conduct promotions in the future?

Tip:

Examples of Promotions

Promotions are Part of the Job

Bridgett McNabb, school nutrition director of Piper Unified School District in Kansas, uses a process that helps managers plan, communicate, implement, evaluate, and report their monthly promotions. The goal is to answer the questions, “What did we do?” and “Did our effort pay off?”

Each month, Piper cafeteria managers submit a promotional planning form for the next month, and a follow-up form from the previous month. The forms help managers think through the theme, timeframe, messages, order of events, supplies needed, input, and contacts needed for the events.

Local Apples for Everyone

For an apple promotion last fall, Ball’s Price Chopper donated apples grown in Waverly, Missouri. Free apples were given to everyone who came through the lunch line, even to students who brought their lunch. Teachers also received apples.

Cruciferous Critters

To promote fresh fruits and vegetables at the elementary level, Hickman Mills school nutrition staff invited students to make people or animals from fresh produce. The characters were displayed prominently in the school, and food service staff voted on their favorites. Prizes were awarded, and staff kept costs down by obtaining free giveaway items from food councils, vendors, and manufacturers.
Community Celebrates Health and Wellness

In 2007, Health and Wellness Week at Blue Valley’s Lakewood Middle School in Overland Park, Kansas, was a joint effort among parents, food and nutrition services staff, administration, and the physical education teacher. Sixty area businesses also contributed to the success of the event, which reached the entire student body of 680 students, plus their families. The week’s activities included movie night featuring Super Size Me, morning wellness announcements, and daily trivia questions that were answered in the lunchroom.

Cafeteria staff posted nutrition facts about items served, and special lunch events included taste testings and fresh fruit and vegetable samples. Food and nutrition staff provided fruit smoothies to every student during lunch.
Make sure your customers get a great payoff when responding to your marketing efforts — not just fresh, healthy food that tastes good, but also a nice place to enjoy it.

According to Team Nutrition’s “Changing the Scene” guide entitled, *Improving the School Nutrition Environment*, “Children will enjoy their food more and may try more healthy options if they can relax, eat, and socialize without feeling rushed.” Other aspects of a pleasant dining experience may include the serving system, cafeteria decor and layout, packaging, and staff appearance. For the complete Team Nutrition guide, go to [www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/guide.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/guide.pdf).

Here are some tips from the guide and examples of how schools are creating a more pleasant eating experiences for their students:

**Layout and Design**

- Multiple serving areas and checkout registers keep students from waiting in long lines.
- Dining areas are attractive, have room for all students, and have chairs and table that are the right size for the students.
- In North Kansas City, weekly bars featuring baked potatoes, pasta, Tex-Mex, and Asian rice and noodles mimic the options available in food courts and cafes.
- Seating arrangements are not institutional rows but smaller round or rectangular tables with detached chairs.
Packaging/Presentation

- Liberty School District director uses packaging students prefer: black bowls instead of white and domed lids for yogurt parfait cups.
- Many schools have switched from paper cartons to plastic bottles for milk, since sales figures show an overwhelming preference for the bottled milk. If using plastic, be prepared to address customer concerns about recycling.
- Healthy options are placed at eye level so they are more visible and more accessible.

Customer Relations

- More casual, up-to-date, team-like uniforms in some school districts consist of polo shirts and ball caps or visors. Smiles are encouraged as a part of the uniform.
- Knowledgeable, friendly staff encourages students to eat healthy foods, answers questions, and follows up on requests or comments.
Examples of Enhancing the Dining Experience

Smith-Hale Middle School Gets Ultimate Restyle

The cafeteria at Smith-Hale Middle School within the Hickman Mills School District in Kansas City, Missouri, has become a cool place to hang out. In 2006, Smith-Hale participated in the Midwest Dairy Council’s “Ultimate School Restyle,” a makeover project that made the cafeteria feel more like a café, with brightly-painted walls and new booths and tables. The school nutrition department saw an opportunity to maximize the project, changing their dated line-to-window set-up to a scramble system that allowed more freedom of choice from different stations. “The kids just love it,” nutrition education coordinator Grennan Sims says.

Rice/Noodle Bar Wins Over Students

The rice/noodle bar in North Kansas City secondary schools is a winner with students. Students pick up a black bowl and add white rice or whole wheat spaghetti, teriyaki sauce or low-fat Alfredo sauce, chicken, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, and pineapple or mandarin oranges. North Kansas City adopted the recipe from the Liberty School District in Missouri.

Blue Valley Updates Signs and Menu Boards

To make his district’s cafeterias more like cafés, Kansas’ Blue Valley food and nutrition services director Charles Rathbun brought in fresh new menu holders and signs. “The signage in the high school was dated and didn’t lend itself to change,” says Rathbun. His solution was to have signs designed to appeal to specific age groups and to provide flexibility. The signs use a wall-mounted format that allow staff to create paper inserts whenever the menu needs updating. Magnetized ovals are identifiers that can be replaced as necessary. The result is a restaurant look that welcomes students.
Making Your Menu Talk

Your menu can be an excellent tool for letting customers know about the healthy foods they’ll find in the cafeteria. Whether you outsource your menu design or “do it yourself” to keep costs down, consider adding information or tips on healthy eating, school events, special promotions, and holidays to make your menu talk. Working with classroom students not only helps save money, but also gives students a chance to take an active role in your school lunch program and learn valuable skills.

Kansas City’s Hickman Mills School District uses Menu Magic, a fully customizable menu clipart service designed specifically for child nutrition professionals working in school food service. While a fee is required for this service, the time it saves busy managers and directors makes it worth the expense.

“Hour-for-hour it’s less expensive,” says food service director Leah Schmidt, explaining that menu marketing takes time from planning your messages to writing, designing, and printing.

“It makes us look good, too,” says Schmidt, “because the menus are very professional looking.” For details go to schoolmealsmarketing.com/2008_Menu_Magic_Fact_Sheet.html.

How foods are described on your menu can also help bring in customers. North Kansas City School director, Kim Werning, lists specific produce varieties, such as “Fuji apples,” or adds an appealing descriptor, as in the case of “chilled pears.”

Some districts add symbols to their menu to indicate items that contain pork, common allergens, or are vegetarian. These can be especially helpful in diverse populations where language may be a barrier.
Advertising

Big bucks are not necessary to run a successful advertising campaign in schools. You just need to give your customers good reasons to come to the cafeteria. Advertising can take many forms and is another great opportunity to encourage student involvement.

Here are some tips for using advertising effectively:
- Good cafeteria signage can make a cafeteria feel more like a café. Make sure it’s visible and easy to read.
- Fast facts and nutritional information posted where customers will see it as they go through the line might encourage them to make a healthier choice.
- Coupons offered to new students or for special events may bring customers to your lunchroom.
- Newsletters and school websites are natural places to raise awareness of nutrition topics, to announce promotions, or to advertise services like parental controls.
- Morning announcements are the original advertising method for schools — get students’ attention by announcing contests, special promotions, and services like catering, if appropriate.
- TV monitors are increasingly common in schools. Use them for promoting your school lunch.
- Remember there are many other things competing for your customers’ attention in a school setting. Repeating the message, or using different forms of communication, helps you reach your audience.
Tell Others About Your Marketing Efforts

We hope you have found this guide to be not just helpful, but inspirational, and that you have identified at least a few new ideas you want to try.

As you begin to build your marketing program, remember to take lots of photos and document your efforts. Try to make time to report your successes to your superintendent and principals, to KC Healthy Kids (www.kchealthykids.org), and to the Center for Disease Control’s site, “Making it Happen” (apps.nccd.cdc.gov/MIH/MainPage.aspx). Share your good ideas with colleagues in other districts. When you spread the word, students everywhere can benefit from your positive experiences.
Sample Customer Survey Questions
The following sample questions were written and compiled by Lorne Maier and Darcie Roberts for use at J.R. Robson High School, in Vermilion, Alberta, Canada. You can adapt these questions and create a survey specific to your own needs.

How often do you buy food at the cafeteria?
☐ Every day
☐ Two to three times a week
☐ Once or twice a week
☐ I don’t eat at the cafeteria
☐ Less than once per month

If you do eat at the cafeteria, what days do you usually eat there?
☐ No particular day
☐ I go on certain days only (ex: only Fridays)

Why do you choose to eat at the cafeteria? (more than one answer is okay)
☐ Forgot lunch at home
☐ Easier to buy lunch at school than off campus
☐ I like the cafeteria food
☐ I need something quick for the short lunch break
☐ Other:

Of the following healthy food choices, which would you like to see sold in the cafeteria?
☐ Fruit in a bag
☐ Muffins
☐ Uncooked veggies in a bag

What do you like about the cafeteria? (more than one answer is okay)
☐ Easier than going off campus
☐ Good food
☐ Healthy food choices
☐ Don’t have to bring a lunch from home
☐ Meals are reasonably priced
How often do you bring a lunch from home to eat at school?
☐ Every day
☐ Sometimes
☐ Hardly or never

What improvements would you like to see for cafeteria service? *(more than one answer is okay)*
☐ Open earlier at lunch
☐ Open longer at lunch
☐ Open after school for snacks

What improvements would you like to see for cafeteria meals?
☐ Bigger portions
☐ More selection of meals
☐ Healthier meal choices
☐ More variety

Which do you purchase at the cafeteria more frequently? *(more than one answer is okay)*
☐ Main course meals
☐ Salads
☐ Chips/candy
☐ Milk/ juice

How important to you is the cafeteria for supporting school sports and clubs?
☐ Very important
☐ Somewhat important
☐ Not very important

Why do you choose to go off campus for lunch instead of the cafeteria? *(more than one answer is okay)*
☐ Socializing with friends
☐ More food choices off campus
☐ Cheaper meals
☐ Better quality meals
☐ More variety of snacks
☐ Other:

Where do you eat when eating lunch outside the school during lunch break?
____________________________________________________

Any further suggestions for meals or improvements to the cafeteria?
☐ Food Suggestions:
☐ Food Service:
☐ Service Suggestions:
☐ Other:
THE CAFETERIA FIELD TRIP

Forget scheduling the buses, packing the lunches, and putting up with the travel times. We’re happy to offer an educational field trip right here at school!

You may have never thought of the cafeteria as an educational opportunity, but it can be. Ever wonder about what goes on “Behind the Scenes” to get school meals ready? We’d like to show you!

Or, we can offer cross-curriculum learning.
Just take a look at a few ideas:

Science - cold and heat, safety

Math - measuring liquids, calculating volume, reading recipes

Art - we have the space and tables to help you with food related art projects

Nutrition - of course, this is our expertise. We have many professionals on our staff that can help you plan hands-on food and nutrition activities

Contact the Foodservice Department to plan and schedule an activity, ask questions or exchange ideas. We will work with you to develop a meaningful educational experience your class will enjoy.

January 2004
**The Write Stuff**

**A Healthy School Environment**

**Classroom-Cafeteria Connection**

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**Materials and Advance Prep:**

- Contact teachers and school newsletter editors for input and buy-in on your plans.
- Chalk board or poster board.
- Optional: nutrition education materials

**What to Do:**

- Invite five classes to the cafeteria. Explain that the school newsletter will be featuring a series of articles on healthy eating and healthy choices in school. Assign each class a Food Group and invite kids in each class to write an article about that Food Group. Each teacher will choose one for the school newsletter.

  - For example, the Milk Food Group article will need to tell kids why milk and dairy foods are important and list ways students can make sure they get the three servings they need everyday, especially in the cafeteria.

  Run through MyPyramid, the Food Guidance System available on www.MyPyramid.gov. Stress the reason we need each Food Group and how many servings kids need each day.

  Draw a simple outline of the cafeteria on a chalk board or poster board. Identify the different areas where kids can get food. These may include the a la carte line, pasta bar, deli-bar, milk station, regular hot lunch line, salad bar, etc. Label these on the drawing. Briefly discuss each of these and the Food Group choices kids can make in these different areas.

  If time allows, draw the entire school and repeat the discussion focusing on school-wide choices.

  Then direct kids to write the articles and have fun. Refer them to the Kids’ section of www.NutritionExplorations.org for more information on healthy eating.

**Variations**

You could do this in conjunction with the after-school care program at your school as well.

**Going further**

You could also work with those (or other) classes on taking a student poll on Five Food Group choices, developing “advertising” materials for Five Food Group choices, etc.

**Thank you!**