

Marketing Healthy Foods in Wisconsin K-12 Schools

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The Food Trust



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The Food Trust's mission is to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food and information to make healthy decisions. Working with neighborhoods, schools, grocers, farmers and policymakers, we've developed a comprehensive approach to improved food access that combines nutrition education and greater availability of affordable, healthy food.

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Background: Why marketing healthy foods in school meals matters

Administered and funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), The National School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs (SBP and NSLP, respectively) provide over 34 million meals to school-aged children annually.^{1,2} The meal patterns and nutrition standards for the SBP and NSLP, revised in 2012 and now implemented in schools across the nation, are designed to increase the availability and consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat and fat-free milk, and decrease the consumption of saturated fat and sodium.³ For many low-income children or those living in food-insecure households, school meals provide an important, reliable source for nutrition.⁴ In fact, children with the least access to healthy fruits and vegetables in the home typically consume more fruits and vegetables during school meal times than their counterparts.⁵

Further, the benefits to consuming balanced schools meals can be observed in both student academic performance and in behavioral metrics. Specifically, studies have demonstrated that students experiencing hunger and insufficient nutrition are more likely than their well-nourished peers to experience "...decreased school attendance, or diminished academic achievement."⁶ Complementary research has shown that school meals featuring healthy, fresh foods, whole grains, and lower fat foods may help improve student behavior in the classroom.⁷

While preparing and offering healthy foods is critical to helping children get the nutritional building blocks they need, thoughtful marketing strategies are also essential to increasing consumption of these healthy foods. The marketing strategies that follow outline the basics for building a successful healthy food marketing campaign in the school environment for maximum impact.

¹United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. "School Breakfast Program Fact Sheet," <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SBPFactSheet.pdf> (accessed August 9, 2013).

²United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. "National School Lunch Program Fact Sheet," <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/AboutLunch/NSLPFactSheet.pdf> (accessed August 9, 2013).

³United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. "Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, Final Rule," *Federal Register* 77, no. 77 (2012).

⁴Briefel RR, Wilson A, Gleason PM. "Consumption of low-nutrient, energy-dense foods and beverages at school, home, and other locations among school lunch participants and nonparticipants," *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 109 (2S) (2009), pp S79–S90.

⁵Taber DR, Chriqui JF, Chaloupka FJ. "State laws governing school meals and disparities in fruit/vegetable intake," *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* 44 (4) (2013), pp 365-72.

⁶Michigan State University. "Hungry children at higher risk of poor school performance," http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/hungry_children_at_higher_risk_of_poor_school_performance (accessed September 4, 2013).

⁷Keeley J and Fields M. "Case Study: Appleton Central Alternative Charter High School's Nutrition and Wellness Program," www.thewholeplate.yihs.net/wp.../02/Appleton-school-food-study.pdf (accessed September 5, 2013).



A marketing primer

What is marketing?

Marketing is a strategy to attract and retain customers (students, in the school environment) by creating product value, both real and perceived, through four key areas called the **marketing mix**:

1. **Products:** What does the student customer want? What will he or she accept? What should it look like? What should it be called? How is the product different from others in the marketplace?
2. **Place:** Where do customers look to find the product? How should that place look? Does the product need a sales force behind it or can it stand alone?
3. **Price:** What is the perceived value of the product to customers? What is the lowest price at which the product can be sold and still break even or create a profit? Are there established price points in the market for the product? Is the customer price sensitive?
4. **Promotion:** Where and when are marketing messages best communicated to customers? How are those marketing messages best shared with the customer? Are there better times than others to share those marketing messages?

Marketing's key processes are: opportunity identification, product development, customer attraction, customer retention and loyalty building, and order fulfillment.

In the world of school food service, it is important to identify what opportunities are available for the marketing of healthy school meals. Unlike many companies, schools have a mostly captive audience. All students go through the cafeteria each day, but not all students choose to eat from the cafeteria line. The opportunity to have more children choosing to buy school lunch during each meal period is the goal. Significant time must be spent in school meal development. Every year, recipes are reviewed and purchasing decisions are made based on what students have ordered in the past. Product development includes time spent revising a recipe and the integration of new recipes into the menu cycle. Student customer attraction, retention, and loyalty building should be the key goals of a school food marketing campaign. Students must be able to trust that what is being marketed to them is delivered to them in a consistent manner. Are students feeling satisfied? Do they like their meals? On time, on target, on point order fulfillment is the key to developing customer retention and loyalty. Looking at child nutrition programs through the lens of marketing processes aids in understanding how best to increase participation in healthy school meals and snacks, summer feeding programs, and other food programs designed to serve children in need of healthy foods.

Creating a brand

This section discusses associations that students make with the food sold in their cafeterias, how they perceive it, and what characteristics they think the food shares. In marketing language, that is called a brand. Thus, the term “brand” here does not refer to brand-name food or food company brands.

Branding is how products become distinguished in the marketplace. Unfortunately, school food is not often associated with a brand. This means that even when positive changes have been made to school food, long-held beliefs about school food may persist. The development of a brand can improve students’ perception of school lunch. All too frequently, students describe school lunch as “gross,” “nasty,” “unhealthy,” or “not flavorful,” while school food service staff and school administration describe it as “healthy,” “delicious,” or “well prepared.” Because school food can lack a strong brand that is supported by a strong marketing campaign, students, staff, and parents rely on preconceived notions, myths, and a lack of information about school food products. Cafeterias, serving lines, and kitchens should be evaluated. Questions such as: “What infrastructure is already in place for brand development?” “Are foods clearly identified?” “Do food items look fresh and appealing?” and “Are there posters and other advertisements that call attention to the brand of school food rather than external product brands?” can help a school begin to formalize a branding plan. It is important to note that it is essential not to “oversell” the food and that the marketing accurately reflects what is being sold. For example, putting a sign by a bowl of oranges at a school in the Midwest that reads “Fresh local fruit” is misleading and will engender distrust in students. Likewise, touting a “delicious and fresh salad” that is made from limp romaine lettuce and nothing else may make students doubt other marketing claims or attractive-sounding labels given to school food.

Creating a strong campaign and maximizing marketing impact requires schools to think about the brand of school food. How can the goals of school meal programs be communicated to students? All school lunches programs comprise one of the largest restaurants in the world: the National School Lunch Program. And the school meal brand, just like restaurant brands, should be communicated through messages that pop.

Creating messages that pop

Marketing is about creating messaging that captivates an audience and becomes a part of their memory. Most people can ad hoc recite several popular brand jingles and recognize products by logos alone. These products have marketing messages that pop. How can school food programs replicate these strategies? It is important to note several things about successful messaging:

1. Messages are clear.
2. Messages use vibrant colors and strong images.
3. Messages are age appropriate.
4. Messages are catchy.
5. Messages implore interaction and engagement.

School food programs can integrate these five rules into marketing campaigns in order to develop messaging that will impact students.



What would a contract food service management company do?

For profit companies, called Food Service Management Companies (FSMC), often create highly successful marketing strategies. An analysis of such strategies can inform the decisions of school food programs. Although each FSMC is different, successful tactics and techniques can include:

1. Complete rebranding and redecorating of cafeteria space to resemble a lounge. Some companies even invest in sofas and lounge chairs for a more coffee shop-type ambiance.
2. Rotating weekly promotions and contests to create interest and encourage positive purchasing patterns.
3. Utilizing engaging, vibrant, and on-trend graphics and point of sale (POS) materials.
4. Training employees on comprehensive customer service in the cafeteria, to deliver high quality meals and positive customer experiences.
5. Administering quarterly or biannual customer feedback surveys and product adjustments.
6. Changing and rotating menus for seasonality and to offer new items with old favorites.
7. Creating easily recognizable brand mascots that visit school cafeterias.
8. Implementing nutrition education lessons that can incorporate learning in the cafeteria.
9. Instituting employee uniforms that resemble the formality of chef coats of full-service restaurants or the casualness of quick service restaurants.
10. Designing innovative menu labels on colorful, graphic menus.

How can school food programs harness the marketing strategies of FSMCs in school environments to increase student participation in meal programs and consumption of fruits and vegetables at every meal?

Questions to consider:

1. What is the meal program's brand and how can that brand be communicated?
2. How can food service staff communicate the brand? What is communicated through uniforms and non-verbal messaging?
3. What marketing materials are currently in the cafeteria space? How do those materials align with the brand?
4. Are the menus engaging? Do menu items sound appealing?
5. When food items are prepared, do they look appealing? Do they smell enticing?
6. Are food items clearly identified on the line? Do students recognize what each item is?
7. What are the best strategies for communicating with students?
8. What resources already exist to promote the meal program in the school community?
9. What resources already exist outside of the school community to promote the meal program?
10. Is social media used effectively?

This guide will aid in the identification of opportunities and solutions for limited resource environments to create strong marketing campaigns to increase fruit and vegetable consumption in school meal programs.

Conventional marketing methods

Conventional marketing materials are those generally associated with in-school food marketing. They include items like posters, point-of-sale signs, and food labels. Conventional marketing should not be misread as boring or unimaginative. In order to work well, materials need to be eye-catching with a clearly visible message that pops.

Posters

The most ubiquitous marketing element found in school cafeterias is posters, but they are often the most ignored item in the lunchroom.

Best practices for using posters:

1. Posters should be graphically interesting and brightly colored with images that easily convey messages without using much text.
2. Posters should contain age-appropriate messaging.
3. Over time, posters lose their efficacy. Change posters on a regular basis, ideally every week, but realistically every month.
4. Hang posters at a height that makes them easy to view. Ideally, place the center of the poster at the target audience's eye level. For adults and older students, eye level is 58" off the floor. For younger grades including middle and elementary, that measurement will be much less.
5. Display posters in high-traffic areas where the target audience will have time to view them, even for a brief period of time. Ideal places to hang posters are on doors that must be opened or in places where students wait in line.
6. If possible, laminate posters to protect against the cafeteria environment and to provide a more substantive appearance.



The following images represent examples of **what not to do**:



In the above left photo, elementary school food service staff can be seen hanging brightly colored and age-appropriate posters in the lunchroom, but the posters are being hung too high for their target audience and even for adults.

In above right photo, posters have been hung on the wall behind where the children are focused and are hung too high for the target audience. While these posters may provide visual interest to food service staff, they are not reaching their target audience. In this case, hanging the posters behind the line (in front of the students) or creating smaller posters that can be hung on the line may be a better use of funds.

Here are excellent examples of age-appropriate posters for elementary school students:



And here are some examples for older children:



A good strategy to increase poster efficacy is to ensure that posters interact with students. A great way to encourage interaction is to hold a poster information contest. The Nutrition Education Store⁸ offers the poster seen here at left. This poster engages students with a MyPlate pop quiz and rating challenge for two plates. Contest entries may be rewarded through a raffle for age-appropriate, non-food prizes or for school-wide recognition. Additionally, instead of purchasing posters pre-made, posters may be hand-made and include school-specific trays (see the appendix for suggestions).

Another way to create an interactive experience with posters is to have students design them. A good way to generate a cache of posters is to hold a school- or district-wide poster contest, and utilize the submitted posters to decorate lunchrooms and share fruit and vegetable messaging. Having many student-designed posters on hand will allow for easy and frequent rotation of these marketing tools. Additionally, poster contests and subsequent display allow students a sense ownership over healthy food messaging. Students are more likely to pay attention, seek out their poster, and point those posters out to their peers, which ensures that poster messaging is actually seen and digested.

⁸http://nutritioneducationstore.com/products/MyPlate_Game_Poster-486-106.html



Point of sale materials

Point of sale (POS) materials are visual products used in cafeteria lines to encourage specific purchasing habits. POS materials can include sneeze guard clings, menu labels, shelf talkers, ceiling danglers, banners, promotional stands, and packaging. Students are accustomed viewing POS materials throughout grocery stores, department stores, and convenience stores, and draw attention to specific products in quick-service restaurants. Replicating the way other industries utilize POS materials can help school food service programs sell more fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods.

Best practices for using point of sale materials:

1. POS materials identify the product.
2. POS materials draw attention to a product.
3. POS materials are multi-dimensional.
4. POS materials are positioned at a target audience's eye level.
5. POS materials are brightly colored.
6. POS materials have a common theme and reflect a common message.
7. POS materials change frequently.
8. POS materials actually reflect what is available on the line.

Shelf talkers

Shelf talkers are POS materials that are effective in encouraging fruit and vegetable consumption in school food.

Shelf talkers can be multi-dimensional tabs that attach to product display areas or static clings or stickers that adhere to service lines and call attention to the products on offer.

The photos below are examples of **what not to do**. In both of the below photos, POS shelf talkers are placed out of the visual range of the target audience. The key to using POS materials is to make sure they are appropriately placed for maximum marketing impact.





In order to achieve maximum marketing impact, these POS materials should be placed within eye level of the students. Consider hanging labels off the side of the salad bar or using food-safe stainless steel card holders (example at left) on the cafeteria line to create a visually interesting and informative POS marketing plan utilizing shelf talkers.

Ceiling danglers

One of the keys to creating a strong in-school marketing campaign is to emulate how for-profit companies market their products to their customers. In grocery stores and big box stores, signs hanging from the ceiling are often used. These one-dimensional signs or 3-D mobiles can be a great way to highlight products without using valuable counter space. Additionally, these ceiling danglers can be hung from spaces other than ceilings, including service windows.



When creating ceiling danglers, utilizing bright colors and tying them into similar messages used in other POS materials like shelf talkers can help create a visually interesting marketing suite with maximum marketing impact. The top example on the left⁹ provides ideas for ceiling danglers that may be used to market menu offerings and match shelf talkers.



In the lower example at left, the numbers on the danglers match the colors and numbers of corresponding shelf talkers. Alternatively, the ceiling danglers may be used alone to indicate where the meal components are available. Since POS materials maximize marketing impact when they accurately reflect the items being served, the appendix includes a “how-to” for creating ceiling danglers that can be changed regularly to highlight menu offerings.

However, whether on their own or as part of a marketing suite, ceiling danglers can help increase fruit and vegetable consumption in school food programs.

⁹<http://www.theartworksshop.com/products/build-a-tray/how-it-works>



Nontraditional marketing methods

Traditional marketing materials have a history of efficacy, which is why they have become conventional. However, these traditional methods utilizing posters, POS materials, and free-standing items assume a specific cafeteria layout with wall space and counter space. For many schools, that “conventional” layout is not feasible. Instead, dedicated cafeteria spaces have become cafeteriums, gymnasiums, or other multi-use spaces. Furthermore, many schools operate with outdated cafeterias that no longer provide the space and service requirements needed by today’s school food programs. For sites that have significant layout or space limitations, thinking outside of a traditional school meal-marketing suite may be appropriate. Limited-resource environments dictate a need to maximize marketing impact through surprising and innovative ways. In a society where young people are accustomed to seeing marketing messaging in every form, utilization of marketing methods that surprise this audience can be exceptionally effective.

Unused spaces

Every school food service program has unused spaces. It is important to be aware of where students enter lunch lines and how they move through them. Marketing materials should be placed according to these traffic patterns.

Identifying spaces that are not currently being used in marketing programs, but have potential, is a meaningful first step in maximizing marketing impact. Additionally, if there are spaces in the cafeteria that are not being used, consider a bold idea to draw attention to that area. A costumed character distributing vegetable component samples at the cafeteria entrance can help direct student attention. Likewise, a chef demonstration in an unused corner can create excitement. A space should not be discounted just because it is not ideal. When working in a limited-resource environment where space is at a premium, it is important to consider how all available space can be utilized to achieve maximum marketing impact.

Best practices for unused spaces:

1. Identify how students use their eating space. Use the assessment tool in the appendix to map out that space. Alternatively, have a student group complete the assessment.
2. Think outside of the box.
3. As with conventional marketing materials, messages must be bright, colorful, and pop. Messages must also be relevant to the target audience.
4. Consider what marketing materials already exist in the cafeteria. Many cafeterias contain images like the one shown at right. Conflicting marketing images like these should be counteracted and replaced with ones that promote school food service programs and healthy food choices.



Floors and ceilings

In many school food service operations, cafeteria space resembles the image at right: vast amounts of ceiling and floor space that are empty and frequently under-utilized. In contrast, grocery stores utilize floor space for advertising. For example: removable floor graphics draw attention to certain brands in the freezer aisle, large footprints lead the way to the in-store bakery, and large mobiles draw the eye to end caps or other parts of the store. These marketing techniques can be similarly deployed in school cafeterias. For example, acoustic tiles or ceiling space can be painted with fruit and vegetable positive messaging. Enhancing a space with colors and attractive POS materials will not only advance healthy food messaging and the school food brand, but will generally create a more appealing, pleasant environment, which can, in turn, increase fruit and vegetable consumption.



Best practices for utilizing floor and ceiling spaces:

1. Ceiling hangers must comply with local fire codes.
2. Floor graphics should be removable and waterproof.
3. When situating floor graphics, consider spaces that are high traffic, but where the floor is still visible underfoot.
4. Like any other marketing technique, floor and ceiling marketers should be changed regularly to retain audience interest.

Trays

School cafeteria trays present an excellent opportunity to market fruits and vegetables to students. In a study completed in an elementary school that is part of Richfield Public Schools, in Richfield, Minnesota, students took and ate more fruits and vegetables when images of the items were placed in the cafeteria tray.¹⁰ Additionally, research has shown that children prefer plates that are comprised of a wide variety of foods and colors, as opposed to adults, who tend to prefer plates with just three colors/foods.¹¹

Tray compartments are an easy place to insert fruit and vegetable graphics or to create a color coding system to encourage students to place the matching food item in that compartment. Using trays as a marketing tool can increase student fruit and vegetable consumption. The image at right illustrates an example of tray color-coding for meal components.



¹⁰Reicks M, Redden JP, Mann T, Mykerezi E, Vickers Z. "Photographs in Lunch Tray Compartments and Vegetable Consumption Among Children in Elementary School Cafeterias." *JAMA*. 307(8) (2012) pp 784-785. doi:10.1001/jama.2012.170.

¹¹Zampollo F, Kniffen K, Wansick B, Shimizu M. "Food plating preferences of children: the importance of presentation on desire for diversity" *Acta Paediatrica*, Volume 101 (1) (Jan 2012) pp 61-66.

Consider maximizing marketing impact through the creation of an interactive game or contest. For example, students who check out with a tray that has the correctly coded item in each of the correct tray compartments are entered to win a raffle prize. Additionally, students receive a coupon for a discount on a healthy snack item at the school store.

Best practices for using trays as marketing tools:

1. Use food-safe decals on trays. Utilizing a color-coded system for basic meal components eliminates the need for daily decal/label rotation based on that day's menu.
2. Use an interactive game or contest to keep students interested.
3. If using color-coded compartments, use POS materials match the color codes for items being offered on the line.
4. Consider purchasing colored trays for additional visual interest.
5. Consider using volunteers or student groups to help label trays.

Creating promotions

Static marketing messages are extremely useful for drawing one's eyes to specific food items or food service areas, or for highlighting specific messaging. In order to fully engage students, schools should consider additional promotional activities. Contests or utilizing characters to share messaging and branding can be particularly effective at encouraging children of all ages to choose a healthful school meal and to consume more fruits and vegetables.

Contests

When purchase- or consumption-based contests are employed, meal participation and item acceptance rates increase in schools, particularly when the prize or prizes are highly valued items.¹² One contract food service management company in Pennsylvania routinely uses tray- and purchase-based contests to increase their participation rates. For younger grades, weekly prizes can be as simple as coloring books or marker and sticker sets and for older grades, quarterly prizes can even be a new e-book reader or music player (could be donated by a local electronics company or purchased via funds raised by the PTA, for example). Other schools have used annual competition prizes like bicycles or other individual outdoor equipment to entice students to purchase or consume specific items. Prizes need not be elaborate; however they should be items that have real or perceived value to students.

Tray-based competitions

Tray-based competitions may be designed in a variety of ways. The simplest method for this type of competition is to affix a single or several stickers to the bottom of specific individual serving

¹²Brown N, Hutchinson J, Gilmore S. "Increasing participation by high school students in the school lunch program" *Insight: National Food Service Management Institute* Volume 11 (1998).

containers of the specific food item students are being encouraged to take and eat. The student or students who find the sticker on their container win a prize. Another variation would be to have cashiers offer raffle tickets to students who purchase specific items like salad or the vegetable soup of the day. At the end of the school day or lunch period, the winning raffle ticket or tickets could be drawn and announced.

Tray-based competitions work well on a daily basis and work particularly well when they take place frequently. Students become accustomed to looking for the sticker or receiving a raffle ticket for making the right choice. Again, daily or regular prizes do not need to be elaborate or expensive. They may include coupons for healthy snack items, school supplies, or trendy items.

Branding contests

Students are exposed to a wide variety of brand-based marketing outside the school environment and are conditioned to observe branded advertising strategies. Creating a contest for students to submit their own branding strategies for school meals is not only a way to engage them in the school meal environment, it also removes part of the burden of branding design from school food service professionals. Schools may also consider involving business, computer, or marketing classes and clubs at the high school level as an exciting opportunity for hands-on branding experience. A branding contest led by students allows them a real-world skills application designed to benefit the school meal program with well-thought out, student-designed marketing campaign.

Consider these branding contest ideas:

- LED/TV screen advertisements for school meal components
- Poster contests
- POS materials
- Menu boards
- Menus

Student work can be incorporated into all aspects of a school meal program marketing campaign. Working with other departments may require some initial outreach, and can drastically decrease the amount of time and resources required of school food service divisions.

Recipe and cooking competitions

Get students excited about eating school meals and increase participation rates with student recipe and cooking competitions. Best suited to middle and high school students, recipe contests involve youth directly in the process of understanding what it takes to put a healthy, USDA-compliant meal component on a cafeteria tray.

Recipe and cooking contests can be as simple or as complex as a school sees fit. For example, a simple student recipe contest may solicit students to submit a recipe (or recipe idea) utilizing one or two seasonal, healthy, fresh fruits or vegetables. These recipes may be taste tested and judged by students—the winning recipe may then appear in the school's menu cycle.



Alternatively, a number of excellent recipe and cooking contest examples exist whereby students create their own National School Lunch Program-ready recipes, cook them, test them with their peers, and celebrate their competition publicly. Examples include:

- **Whipping Up Wellness, Wisconsin Student Chef Competition:** This wellness-focused student cooking competition takes place each year in Wisconsin, and is sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Team Nutrition. Details including event structure and recipes can be found at: http://ne.dpi.wi.gov/ne_whip
- **Vernon County Harvest Challenge:** This student cooking competition aims to highlight the need for increased local food in school meals. Participating teams serve their healthy lunch to a panel of judges, their peers and the public during the Annual Harvest Challenge Tasting Event. <http://www.farmtoschoolvc.org/#harvest-challenge>
- **Junior Iron Chef VT:** Recipe and cooking challenge in the style of “Iron Chef” for middle and high school students in the state of Vermont with a focus on the use of locally grown ingredients. Details including event structure and recipes can be found at: www.jrironchefvt.org
- **Cooking Up Change:** A program of the Healthy Schools Campaign, this nationwide competition culminates in a Washington, DC final cooking challenge. Winners and finalists are also given the opportunity to attend a legislative briefing to express their support for healthy school meals. Details: <http://healthyschoolscampaign.org/programs/cooking-up-change/>
- **Let’s Move! Recipes for Healthy Kids Challenge:** Open to schools across the nation, this contest collected thousands of recipes from teams consisting of school food service professionals, students, and chefs. Recipes categories promoted healthy foods by falling into one of three categories: “whole grains,” “dark green and orange vegetables,” or “dry beans and peas.” For more information and recipes visit: <http://recipesforkids.challengepost.com/>

Using the menu as a marketing tool

One of the most powerful marketing tools of any restaurant is its menu. The Culinary Institute of America offers a course on how to create a menu, and most food establishments, particularly chain restaurants, spend a significant amount of time and money to create menus with gustatory appeal: menus must look good and the items on the menus must sound good, too.

For too long, school food programs have ignored the fact, or have not fully understood, that they are one of the largest “restaurants” in the world. Districts across the country use confusing menu names or do not put much thought into the appeal of a menu name. For example, one district only used formal product ordering names on their school lunch menu so green beans were identified as “112678 Beans, Green” and apples were “134690 Apples, Red Delicious.” Before students even stepped into the cafeteria, the district dampened their students’ appetite. For many, deciding whether to even purchase a school meal or not begins and ends by reading the day’s menu.

What's in a name?

Foods and dishes with appealing names and labels are more likely to be chosen by consumers, and a lack of descriptive naming can deter consumers. In the school food arena, the value of attractive naming is often overlooked, which decreases the success of school food programs. Dr. Brian Wansink, director of the Food and Brand Lab at Cornell University, determined that descriptive naming can increase menu sales by 27 percent.¹³ In a subsequent study conducted by Wansink, creatively naming vegetables in schools increased vegetable purchasing by 99 percent.¹⁴ Carefully examining and adjusting school food menu language can therefore be critical to increasing fruit and vegetable purchasing and consumption.

Wansink has identified four distinct areas for descriptive menu labeling: geographic descriptors, nostalgia descriptors, sensory descriptors, and brand names. Additionally, in his work with school meals, Wansink has experimented with fun descriptors for younger grades in order to address the fact that not every menu label will work with every age group. The next section explores common fruit and vegetable offerings and suggested descriptive menu labels for children in grades K-5 and 6-12 (refer to page 31).

As demonstrated in the menu descriptor chart, it is easy to see that children in grades K-5 need interesting, fun food names while students in grades 6-12 are more open to restaurant-style naming techniques. In fact, roasting and sautéing are two cooking method descriptors that make any food item more appealing in both name and taste. Meanwhile, descriptors like “steamed” or “boiled” imply a lack of flavor. Popular ethnic food choices can also inform menu labeling. Moroccan carrots (carrots prepared with Ras al Hanout, a spice mixture of cinnamon, ginger, cumin, pepper, cayenne, and nutmeg) are becoming more popular across the country as students are exposed to flavors from India and the Middle East. Southwest and Mexican flavors have been popular for many years, and deriving menu labels from these cultures is advisable. Traditional recipes that add herbs and spices to fruit and vegetable preparations can also inform menu labeling and recipe development decisions. Dilled green beans or peas have always been popular as have green beans Almandine, a preparation that includes sliced almonds.

Truth in menuing laws apply to school food programs just as they do to restaurants. Corn should not be called “buttery corn on the cob” unless it has an aspect of butteriness to it. It is a common complaint from food service staff that school regulations will not allow the addition of butter and salt to recipes. However, there are ways to add some “butteriness” to recipes without breaking the calorie or fat bank: small amounts of butter or butter-substitutes can go a long way to providing the look, smell and taste of butter in recipes. Additionally, for roasted items, spray oils like Pam or Vegelene have butter-flavored products, and herbs and spices can greatly enhance vegetable flavors and aromas. A little cinnamon, cumin, rosemary, or thyme can turn a dish from lackluster to delicious. If menus

¹³Wansink B, van Ittersum K, and Painter JE. “How Descriptive Food Names Bias Sensory Perceptions in Restaurants,” *Food Quality and Preference*, 16(5) (2005) pp 393-400.

¹⁴Wansink B, Just D, and Smith L. “What is in a Name? Giving Descriptive Names to Vegetables Increases Lunchroom Sales,” *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, Volume 43 (4S1) (2011) p S1.



over-promise and under-deliver, students will cease to choose and consume the items offered as part of school meal programs, regardless of how appealing the naming appears.

How to deliver on promises

Unless the taste of dishes accurately reflect the way they are described, time spent crafting menu language will be wasted. Ensuring that the fruits and vegetables that are offered are properly prepared and displayed in an enticing way is vital to fruit and vegetable acceptance and consumption by students. Below are basic strategies to ensure schools are delivering on their promised menu items:

- 1. Batch cooking:** The best way to prepare food items so that they taste fresh, hot, and delicious is to cook them to order. However, this method is frequently not practical for the institutional food service environment. Because large numbers of people are being served quickly in school cafeterias, large volumes of food must be prepared and hot-held until service. Batch cooking is one way to help minimize the amount of time food is hot-held before service. Batch cooking is a technique school kitchens can employ by preparing and holding only enough food needed to get through one service (lunch period) at a time. As more food is needed, additional food is cooked, creating a service cycle of freshly prepared food items.
- 2. Avoiding overcooking:** Many institutional kitchens utilize frozen fruits and especially vegetables in their operations instead of fresh vegetables because frozen products save time and generally cost less. There is nothing wrong with frozen fruits and vegetables and, in fact, serving frozen fruits and vegetables are one of the best ways to get delicious produce out of season. That said, it is important for food service professionals to understand how vegetables are prepared for commercial freezing. After harvest, the vegetables are cleaned, washed, blanched or par-boiled, and are then individually quick frozen. The blanching process helps the produce retain its color, but it also more than partially cooks the food item. Most frozen vegetables only require defrosting and then heating to the health department's hot serving temperature which in most jurisdictions is 135°F. As opposed to boiling, 135°F is not very hot, thus boiling frozen vegetables for long periods is not necessary and often leads to overcooking.

Just like their fresh counterparts, frozen vegetables should be cooked until their color just turns bright. The time to achieve bright, crisp vegetables will vary depending on the power of cooking appliance being used. If the vegetables are to be sautéed, roasted or added to another dish, they should be defrosted first, drained and then placed in a hot pan (or tilt skillet) or hot oven.

If vegetables will be steamed, the best method is to place the vegetables in a perforated pan over another steam table pan that is filled with boiling water. The pans should be covered

with aluminum foil and placed into a hot oven (around 400°F) for about ten minutes depending on the quantity of vegetables being steamed and the heat of the oven.

If steaming the vegetables in a commercial steamer, it will take less time than the package indicates in order to defrost the product and bring it up to 135°F.

3. **Keep the line looking fresh:** When vegetables are held on a hot steam table, they continue to cook. After fifteen minutes, properly cooked broccoli may turn brown and fall apart. Carrots will inevitably lose their bright orange color and become mushy and unpalatable and, as viewed on a recent school visit, products may even look scorched at the bottom of the pan.

First, if batch cooking, food service staff should find it relatively easy to constantly keep new, fresh product on the line. Second, if scorched pans are a problem, the steam table may be too hot. Adjust it so that it keeps food at the proper temperature, but does not burn the items in the pans. Finally, keep the pans on the line looking full and brightly colored. Mostly empty pans are not appealing to students.

4. **Keep line placement in mind:** Students are more likely to take items that are at the beginning of the lunch line. If the line allows it, fruits and vegetables should be moved to the beginning of the line. It is important to ensure that fruit and vegetables are clearly identified on the line and are easily seen by students of all heights. Vegetables that are offered at the end of the line and are hidden from sight will not be purchased. Additionally, fresh fruits and vegetables should be offered in attractive containers like bowls or baskets and not in steam table pans or Lexan containers.

5. **Create positive communications between food service professionals to students:** Good customer service is critical to creating a pleasant dining experience for students. Strategies to create friendly student relations may include but are not limited to:

- a. Adoption of modern, casual school food service uniforms projecting a team-like approach to dining through use of baseball caps, polo shirts, and name tags.
- b. Staff training to ensure staff persons know the menu and can answer questions about preparation, ingredients, taste and texture of meal offerings.
- c. Communication with students about the offerings for the day that are positive in tone and leave room for feedback. For example:
 - i. “We cooked this just for you today and hope you like it!”
 - ii. “This broccoli is from a nearby farm and is delicious!”
 - iii. “This recipe is new—let us know what you think.”
 - iv. “There are lots of great fresh and healthy options for you today—what would you like?”



Capitalizing on social media

There is no doubt that students today use social media to connect in ways that were unimaginable even 10 years ago. Social media is an effective marketing method school food service programs can use to reach out to students, parents, and whole communities. Navigating social media is a learned skill that requires careful thought and practice. It is not uncommon for school food service divisions to make occasional social media mistakes. Social media is a valuable tool that should be utilized by school food service divisions, if possible. Below are tips for effectively using Facebook and Twitter.

A general note about the use of websites and social media and privacy: Before any photos of any minors are posted to any website, schools should obtain signed photo consent forms from parents/guardians of school children, detailing all of the possible ways in which the student's image may be utilized by the school.

School district websites

Websites maintained by school districts should feature pages dedicated to food service offered throughout the school day. A robust food service webpage gives students, parents, and community members the opportunity to learn about how food service operates, its guiding nutritional principles, pricing structures, daily, weekly, and monthly menus.

The food service webpage can also highlight cafeteria-based events, highlight new menu items, promote taste-tests, farm to school program highlights and locally grown foods. Links to food service social media pages like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, can also be featured. Finally, an embedded feedback form for student comments, including positive praise, is a great way to connect with student customers, hear more about their preferences, ideas for meals, or other food environment or dining concerns or suggestions.

Facebook

Facebook has become one of the most important methods of communication for youth and adults alike. It is a platform for sharing photos, menus, and developing a loyal following of students and community members. Suggestions for Facebook use:

1. **Pages not people:** Profiles for school food service divisions should be pages—not group or personal profiles. This ensures Facebook users will easily be able to “like” or follow programs and mitigates the cumbersome and time consuming process of becoming “friends” with Facebook users.
2. **First impressions:** Cover photos and profile pictures should be clear, vibrant, and promote the school food program. Appealing photos and images will create a lasting favorable impression.

3. **Make posts count:** Posts with pictures are more likely to be viewed than posts without images. Posts should include attractive images when possible. Most smartphones have free photo editing applications that are easy to use. Overexposed, dark or visually unattractive photos are detrimental in attracting “likes.” Students or photography classes, who are likely very well versed in Facebook, could become involved with this project.
4. **Engage and interact:** Using polls/questions as posts and engaging with Facebook users by providing comments is critical. Even simply saying “thanks!” after the reception of a positive comment makes a favorable impact. Facebook pages can also be used to launch contests. Additionally, “liking” and engaging with others who promote school food on Facebook is important. “School Meals That Rock” is one page that consistently highlights school food service programs across the country.
5. **Post regularly:** Approximately once every day or two, posts should be created on the food service Facebook page. This ensures that posts will show up in followers’ feeds and keep the page relevant. Images of lunch or the day’s menu are great ways for school food service programs to use Facebook.

Twitter

Twitter has quickly become a vastly popular social media outlet. Twitter is a faster platform than Facebook and has its own sets of tips and tricks:

1. **Limit tweets:** Even though 140 characters can be used, experts in social media suggest limiting posts to less than 100 characters. This leaves room for re-tweets (signified by “RT”) and makes it easier and faster to use.
2. **Post often:** Posting at least every day or two will aid in keeping Twitter accounts relevant.
3. **Use links and pictures:** Like Facebook, tweets with pictures are more likely to be seen and links can help keep audiences curious. For long URLs, using bit.ly will shorten the link.
4. **Follow others:** One of the best ways to grow followers is to follow others and engage with them. When tweets are re-tweeted by followers, their followers also see them. Growing social media following is an easy way to market programs to the wider community.
5. **Use hashtags:** Create conversations around school food service brands. #greatschoollunch, #farmtoschool, #foodinschools or other #YOURSCHOOLlunch are great hashtags, and they create a way for Twitter to have conversations about your program.

Using school media may feel cumbersome and time consuming, but it is a great way to stay relevant to today’s generation of students, and over time becomes easier to integrate into other tasks. Using a social media aggregator can help save time by allowing posting to Facebook and Twitter at the same.

If this is simply too much, involving a dietetic or intern, or even students, is a good idea. The student body is a great resource for social media strategies and technical assistance.



Instagram

Instagram is a growing social media platform for sharing photographs and related images (e.g., memes, jokes, quotes), and is popular with both junior high and high school students. With Instagram, the content is a photograph and a short descriptor that often contains hashtags.

1. **Post “fun” photos:** Photographs posted on Instagram tend to be more “fun” and less formal. Candid photos (e.g., of a favorite cafeteria staffer giving a thumbs-up) and appetizing pictures of food will get more likes than more staid messages.
2. **Follow others:** One of the best ways to grow followers is to follow others and engage with them. Growing social media following is an easy way to market programs to the wider community.
3. **Use hashtags:** Create conversations around school food service brands. #greatschoolslunch, #farmtoschool, #foodinschools or other #YOURSCHOOLlunch are great hashtags, and create a way for Instagram to have conversations about your program.

Farm to school marketing strategies

Farm to school programs offer yet another way in which students can be engaged and excited about the healthy foods being offered to them in the cafeteria. If fruits and vegetables grown by local farmers or right on school grounds are being featured in the cafeteria, the opportunity to promote these foods and educate students about healthy local foods is valuable. Farm to school promotion and education takes a similar shape to the marketing and promotional strategies detailed thus far. Posters featuring locally grown foods, like fruits and vegetables, may be hung during their harvest season to inform students about seasonality. State or regional agricultural marketing brands (e.g., “Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin,” or “Jersey Fresh”) often offer free or low-cost marketing materials like posters and stickers to businesses, including schools, serving locally or regionally produced agricultural products.



Harvest of the Month

Harvest of the Month programs are an excellent means to promote farm to school efforts and local food in school communities. School cafeterias may feature one or several locally grown or produced foods each month throughout the school year to educate students, staff, and the school community about local foods, seasonality and regionality, and the nutritional value of those foods. “Harvest of the Month” items may be featured as a taste-test, appear as a meal component, or may also serve as a way to celebrate local food more broadly via parent newsletters, website announcements, posters and other marketing tools in the school, as well as with events like farmer visits or chef demos. These types of programs have the opportunity to extend beyond the school walls to the business community, as grocers, restaurants and other food businesses can collaborate to cross-promote the same locally grown foods in multiple venues each month.

Several Wisconsin counties feature Harvest of the Month programs and have excellent shared resources available online:

Vernon County: <http://www.farmtoschoolvc.org/>

Wood County: <http://getactive.co.wood.wi.us/GetActiveYouth/FarmtoSchool.aspx>

La Crosse County: <http://www.getactivelacrosse.org/eat-healthy/harvest-of-the-month/>

Farm and farmer profiles



Farmer profile posters (example at top left) or letter-sized flyers put a face to local food by featuring photos of the growers and producers whose locally grown foods are featured on the cafeteria line. A clear, high resolution photo, with a simple quote from the farmer, as well as the name and location of the farm personalizes the experience of the food offered to students. Similarly, images of local farms whose products are featured on the line are another excellent option for farm to school marketing purposes, casting a place and image and connection to the foods being served. Some schools even create Farmer Trading Card campaigns which highlight local farmers and products in the style of baseball cards (example at middle left).



Farm to school point of sale branding

Point of sale marketing materials are a quick and easy way to note what's fresh and local on the cafeteria line, in the salad bar, or being sampled on any given day. Schools may devise their own program brand and logo, may utilize those associated with the National Farm to School Network, USDA Farm to School, or any other state, regional or local farm to school campaign. Point of sale materials may simply note a local item through a readily identifiable image or phrase (e.g., "Locally grown!" and see below), or, space permitting, may include the farm name and location.



Locally grown lunch trays and menus

Decals and stickers on lunch trays can also help promote the healthy, farm fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy, proteins and grains being offered to students in the cafeteria. Consistent branding with logos or slogans will help students recognize the farm to school program in place at the school. Similarly, noting locally grown or produced foods on the menu gives students and their parents a visual cue about how and when farm to school products appear on the menu. A simple icon or color coding system can easily highlight those menu offerings procured from local farms.





Farm to school promotional events

Farmer visits to cafeterias to meet and greet students or to give a short talk is an especially effective means of promoting locally grown foods in the cafeteria. If possible, arrange for a farmer to visit the meal program to speak over several lunch periods, or to visit several classrooms in anticipation of meal times. Schools should consider providing a stipend to cover time and travel incurred by the grower or producer.

Local food taste tests and sampling

Building excitement for new and locally grown or produced foods on the menu can be easily enhanced by taste testing events and regular sampling on the line. Items with short growing seasons, like asparagus, may be unfamiliar to many students. These products benefit from special promotions, sampling of small portions, and other marketing endeavors to excite and entice students to try the item. Similarly, products more familiar to students, but now locally sourced and featured in a new recipe (e.g., beans and/or beef for chili) may also be promoted and taste tested to gauge student acceptance for future menuing opportunities.

Farm to school staff training

Training food service professionals about the benefits of farm to school, local and regional agriculture and produce seasonality help staff transfer knowledge and excitement to students about locally grown foods on the cafeteria line. Training staff to engage students with simple questions and statements such as, “Did you go local today?” or, “It’s a farm to school lunch day!” add to a school’s promotional campaign and farm to school brand, and open up the opportunity for students to learn more about local farming, local food, and the health benefits of consuming local foods on offer. The National Food Service Management Institute offers trainings like, “Focus on the Customer,” designed to inform and prepare food service workers to engage, educate, and listen to their student customers.¹⁵

Finding partners

Creating a strong marketing campaign for school food service can appear to be a daunting and excessive task. School food service professionals are very busy and work in a limited-resource environment. It is not uncommon for these busy professionals to feel overwhelmed. However, when partners are engaged, creating a strong marketing campaign becomes a more realistic and manageable goal.

Initially, simply reaching out to others can be time consuming. It does take some time to cultivate strong, valuable relationships, but the return on the initial investment is exceedingly significant. This portion of the guide discusses some of the best ways to engage in community outreach and find partners to help in developing a strong marketing campaign.

¹⁵<http://www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=67>

Working with staff, administration, and students

Finding natural allies

There are many potential partners in the school system, parent community and community at large, including local school boards. Health educators, coaches, and physical education teachers are all individuals who have some stake in how well their students are eating and what choices their students are making in the cafeteria. Approaching these teachers and asking for meetings during their planning periods is a good way to begin a conversation. During these meetings, healthy school food advocates should clearly articulate their goals, and explain why teachers would be a great asset in the work.

Food Service Directors (FSD) are important, if not essential, partners in engaging school communities around healthy foods, healthy school meals, and an overall healthy school environment. With a focus on feeding children and a passion for doing so, FSD will provide access to the lunchroom, the kitchen, and to information about operations, ongoing marketing efforts, student preferences, and other school meal details. Food service professionals, when supported by their administration and community are frequently the greatest champions of healthy changes to school meals.

Below are potential ideas for teacher/coach involvement in a healthy school food plan:

- Health teachers bring students on a “field trip” to the school cafeteria and discuss how to create a healthy school meal.
- Teachers assign students a project to research the relative healthiness of the food offerings in the cafeteria.
- Coaches help encourage students to eat fruits and vegetables at every meal to help them fuel their bodies during sports and physical activity.
- School food service staff present on healthy meal offerings during classes.

This type of passive marketing is exceptionally important and can help influence student decision making while in line. Teachers and staff are likely to be enthusiastic about helping students make healthy choices. The input of such partners can increase fruit and vegetable consumption by students.

As previously discussed, creating a marketing campaign from the ground up can seem both time-consuming and costly. Working with marketing/business instructors or culinary instructors can help them engage their students in real world skill development and help create a low-cost, effective, and youth-relevant campaign. Instead of having marketing students create a milkshake business during school meal periods, perhaps those students could instead work in teams to pitch a marketing campaign to staff and their peers. Students in computer design or art classes could design logos, posters or other art work for school food programs. Culinary students could help demo new recipes or help stage product photographs for website and informational handouts. Students are often enthusiastic about such experiential projects, as are teachers. Working collaboratively with these departments is an effective strategy to enhance marketing campaigns.

Students themselves are often natural allies. Key Club, honor societies, and other student clubs are required to do community service as part of their participation in the club. Student government,



health clubs, and culinary clubs also typically seek projects for their members. Sharing department needs with student leaders and their advisors can lead to win-win situations for everyone involved.

Administration can provide support by allowing you space on the morning announcements or actively encouraging student purchasing of fruits and vegetables during meals. Most school administrators wish to see children making good decisions and understand that as administrators, they act as role models for their students. Engaging administrators to help hand out taste tests items in the cafeteria or actively promote school meals in a variety of ways can be instrumental to marketing your programs.

Working with the community

Community is a word that can be defined very specifically or very generally, but no matter which definition you use, engaging the community in marketing school meal programs is incredibly important.

Parent community

Parents are often catalysts for healthy changes in school food programs. Working closely with parent communities can help alleviate negative tensions and create positive motion towards healthier school food. There are two main ways to engage with parent communities: Back to School Night and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA)/Home and School Associations (HSA).

Back to school nights: These nights offer a one-off chance to engage with nearly every parent in a school community. Back to School night could include a presentation on school food or even kitchen tours and tasting samples. When parents feel like their school offers quality food, they are more likely to encourage their students to purchase school meals.

PTAs/HSAs: Parent-teacher and home and school associations are incredible advocacy groups in their communities. These groups have the ability to help fundraise for and market school food programs. Presenting about school meals and doing a tasting of school meal items is a great way for a PTA/HSA to fill its programming needs and for school food service to do targeted parent outreach.

Local government

Government partners have an opportunity to further school food programs in terms of both policy and publicity. Inviting school board, mayor, city council, and state and federal representatives to visit schools and eat lunch is a great way to begin their involvement. Invitations can be sent to such individuals for a school event or for a tour of the cafeteria and kitchen. The more local government officials understand and engage in school food programs, the more likely they will be to consult food service staff when decisions are made at the local, state, and federal level. This could also lead to high profile visits to schools, which is very positive publicity. It is important to reach out to representatives and government officials, as they can be very important allies.

Media

TV stations, newspapers, and magazines are important media outlets that should be invited to report on school lunch. Media outlets are likely to have the capacity run a short piece on a great school food program. Receiving positive publicity in newspapers or on a local news station can be very effective for marketing. Media outreach requires persistent effort, but the return on investment is incredibly high.

Non-profits and local businesses

Local food access or food systems organizations, chefs and restaurateurs, graphic designers and other interested professionals are all stakeholders who can help in the creation of strong marketing campaigns. Connecting with local public health departments is an advisable first step. Public health officials are likely to be very knowledgeable in directing schools to potential allies, and are adept at creating language and campaigns around healthy behaviors. Local chefs can help create solid demonstrations and may know graphic design firms who could help in creating a vibrant, exciting campaign. The key is to find strong partners who can help relieve some of the marketing burden. Collaboration is the key to success.

Bringing potential partners together

Once partners have been identified and engaged, bringing this group of healthy school food stakeholders together can take place in a variety of ways:

1. **In-person stakeholder meetings:** Assembling a committee, coalition, or working group can be a great first step towards identifying priorities, goals, and creating a plan for moving forward. Groups may be organized as:
 - a. Steering or advisory committees
 - b. Working groups
 - c. Coalitions or collaboratives
 - d. Other structures deemed appropriate by partners and stakeholders

2. **Online organizing:** Between “Google Groups,” and other free software available for organizing groups of individuals for meetings, document review, and discussion, this may be a good option for larger groups or groups unable to meet due to geographic or time constraints. For example, partners can communicate to larger audiences through:
 - a. Newsletters—print or electronic
 - b. Webinars
 - c. Surveys

Regardless of the mix of partners that come together to work to promote, support, and educate around healthy food in schools, finding common ground, common goals and a common language will greatly assist in bringing the group together for action. This type of background work may be



accomplished through needs assessment, asset mapping, community surveys, or other exploratory mechanisms.

The opportunity to partner with stakeholder groups within Wisconsin to create effective and sustained healthy food marketing tactics is great. Transform Wisconsin's collaborative approach to supporting good health through healthy, vibrant school food environments involves many partners across the state, including, but not limited, to local health departments, universities, non-profit organizations, schools, and hospitals.¹⁶ Schools and their food service departments can take advantage of the wealth of knowledge and resources already created and available by these health and wellness stakeholders, to help inform any healthy school food marketing campaign, to support farm to school programs, and build a healthier school food environment in general.

Effective healthy school marketing campaigns begin with assessing the current marketing effort underway in cafeterias and within school walls. Taking stock of use of posters, menu boards, communications with student customers, and devising exciting new ways to entice students to choose a healthy school meal will take the investment of time and the lasting commitment of administrators, teachers, food service professionals and other partners to continually reinforce the message that healthy food is the way to a healthy life. A healthy food marketing assessment tool is included in the appendix of this toolkit as a jumping off point for schools interested in enhancing their marketing efforts, increasing meal participation, and increasing the consumption of healthy fruits and vegetables among K-12 students.

¹⁶www.transformwi.com

Appendix

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Vendors

Posters

The **Nutrition Education Store** has many products that employ Poster Best Practices to maximize marketing impact including pre-created versions of the MyPlate game.

<http://nutritioneducationstore.com>

Learning Zone Express sells posters for a variety of age groups. Find excellent posters for middle school and senior high school students on their site at <http://www.learningzonexpress.com>

USDA Team Nutrition provides a variety of age appropriate posters and materials for free.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resource-library>

The **School Nutrition Association** has a multitude of posters that target younger age groups extremely well. They also have bulletin board kits. <http://emporium.schoolnutrition.org/>

Idaho's SMART Meals Campaign offers a variety of marketing materials.

<https://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/cnp/smart/>

Produce for Better Health offers free posters, POS materials, and other promotional items.

http://pbhfoundation.org/pub_sec/edu/nut_cat/

POS materials

ArtWorks Café Design has POS Materials and marketing suites available for purchase. Packages include shelf talkers, ceiling danglers and posters. Items are available in packages or à la carte. ArtWorks Café Design also provides customized design help.

<http://www.theartworksshop.com/products/build-a-tray/how-it-works>

Signazon is an online printing company that produces a variety of custom signs including static clings and other signs that you could use to market fruits and vegetables.

<http://www.signazon.com>

The **Web Restaurant Store** offers a variety of sign holders and other display materials that can help provide signage for your limited space line.

<http://www.webstaurantstore.com/american-metalcraft-ch10-10-stainless-steel-menu-card-holder/124CH10.html>



Floor clings

FastSigns, a leading national retailer of a variety of signage, can provide floor graphics for school food programs. <http://www.fastsigns.com/pop-floor-graphics>

DDI Signs provides a variety of graphics for floors. <http://www.ddisigns.com/product-category/digitally-printed-signs/floor-graphic-decals/>

Graphics Solutions, Inc., is another online printer providing vinyl floor decals. <http://godecals.net/custom-vinyl-decals-stickers.html>



Trays

Sticker Giant can print custom vinyl stickers for trays. <http://www.stickergiant.com/>

Millennium Printing offers waterproof vinyl stickers. <http://www.millenniumresults.com/printing-rochester-ny/stickers-labels/>

Graphic design companies

Eggert Creative www.eggertcreative.com

Greenleaf Media www.greenleafmedia.com

iCandy Graphics www.icandy-graphics.com

Monarch Media Design www.monarchworld.com

Willems Marketing, Inc. www.willemsmarketing.com

Checklist for choosing visual marketing vendors

Whether choosing graphic design companies for visual marketing products, working with food vendors to create signage through their brand, or identifying an appropriate vendor for signs, posters, and POS materials, the following points should be reviewed with potential vendors and designers:

1. Does the vendor/designer have experience providing age-appropriate food marketing tools?
2. Does the vendor/designer have experience designing marketing products for K-12 school cafeterias? Do they have basic knowledge of both lunch line design and common lunchroom design elements?
3. Is the vendor willing to co-brand with the school (if vendor is food supplier)?
4. Will the vendor/designer visit the cafeteria for an assessment of signage needs as part of their design or product package?
5. Can the vendor/designer adhere to the recommended signage specifications as described in above (e.g., fireproof, slip-proof)?



How to create your own hanging POS signage

Equipment needed:

Fishing line

Fishing line weights

Index cards

Sharpie

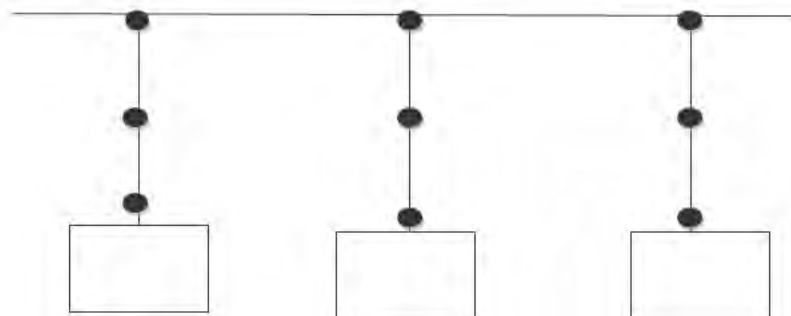
Twist ties

Strong tape (e.g., duct tape)

Hole puncher

Method

1. Take fishing line and string across open window area. Adhere behind window using duct tape or equally strong weatherproof tape.
2. Take a 1' long piece of fishing line and tie one twist tie to the end. Attach a fishing line weight just above the twist tie.
3. Tie the line with the twist tie to the line strung horizontally across the window. Attach another fishing line weight to the place where the line is tied.
4. Write menu item on index card or heavy card stock card. Punch hole in top center of card.
5. Attach index card to twist tie.
6. Add more fishing line weights as necessary to stabilize line.



Fruit and vegetable menu descriptors

Food Item	Grades K-5	Grades 6-12
Carrots	X-Ray Carrots, Carrot Coins, Carrot Fries, Bunny Sticks, Super Sticks	Seasoned, Oven-Roasted, Sauteed, Fresh, Herbed, Honey-glazed, Brown Sugar Glazed, Crisped
Corn	Corn on the Cob, Corn off the Cob, Captivating Corn, Tasty Kernels	Seasoned, Fresh, Sweet, Roasted, Homestyle, Buttered
Peas	Power-Packed Peas, Pizazzy Peas, Marvelous Peas, Premium Peas	Seasoned, Fresh, Sauteed, Buttered, Shelled, Savory, Premium
Green beans	Silly Dilly Green Beans, Get Up and Go Green Beans, Super String Beans, Groovy Green Beans	Seasoned, Sautéed, Savory, Dilled, Almandine, Glazed
Tossed salad	Crunch Bar, Super Salad, Make-Your-Own, Dressed-Up Greens, Sensational Salad	Spring, Caesar, Wedge, Tender, Create-Your-Own, Greek
Beans	Big-League [Baked] Beans, Bountiful [Black] Beans, , Tasty Taco Beans, Fiesta Beans	Grandma's Baked Beans, Maple Baked Beans, Mexican [Black] Beans, Savory [Red] Beans
Pineapple	Supreme Pineapple	Juicy, Hawaiian, Sweet
Apples	Action Hero Apples, Absolutely Awesome Apples, Keep the Doc Away Slices	Local, Ripe, Sweet, Orchard Fresh
Peaches	Peachy Keen Peaches	Juicy, Ripe, Orchard Fresh
Mixed vegetables	Moxie Mixed Veggies, Muscle-Building Mixed Vegetables, Mixed-Up Mixed Vegetables	California Blend, Jade Blend, Homestyle Blend, Buttered
Broccoli	Power Punch Broccoli, Tiny Tasty Tree Tops, Tiny Trees, Mini Trees,	Sauteed, Roasted, Sesame, Savory, Buttered,
Greens	Scrumptious, Clever, Growing-Tall Greens	Aunt June's Homestyle, Braised
Mashed potatoes	Smashed Potatoes, Mashed Potatoes, Thrashed Potatoes	Smashed Potatoes, Homestyle Mashed, Grandma's Best Mashed
Sweet potatoes	Mashed, Smashed, Super Spy Sweet Potatoes, Yummy Scrummy Sweet Potatoes	Smashed, Homestyle Mashed, Roasted, Sauteed, Herbed, Buttered, Savory
Pears	Dandy Pears, Divine Pears	Juicy, Ripe, Orchard Fresh
Oranges	O Say Can You "C" Oranges	Sweet, Florida's Fresh
Red sauce (marinara, pizza)	Radical Red Sauce, Scrumptious Spaghetti Sauce, Tasty Tomato Sauce, Tubular Tomato Sauce	Uncle Sal's Marinara, Grandma's Tomato Sauce, Homestyle Red Sauce
Cauliflower	Kicked-Up Cauliflower, Oh My Golly Cauliflower	Roasted, Sauteed, Buttered, Savory, Spicy



Frozen vegetable steaming time and seasoning chart

Vegetable	Steam time (minutes)	How to season
Beans, green	10-15	Season with garlic
Beans, lima	12-15	Season with garlic
Broccoli, florets	5-7	Season with olive oil, pumpkin seed oil, lemon juice, lime juice, or balsamic vinegar
Broccoli, cuts	10-15	
Brussels sprouts	5-10	Season with fresh thyme
Carrots	3-5	Season with honey combined with cinnamon or ginger, also with thyme.
Cauliflower	4-5	Lemon or lime juice, cayenne pepper, and paprika
Corn	5-7	Thyme, rosemary or chives
Parsnips	7-10	Season with fresh herbs such as oregano or parsley
Peas, green	2-4	Season with fresh herbs (such as mint) or lemon juice
Peas, sugar snap	3-5	Season with fresh herbs (such as mint) or lemon juice
Potatoes, wedged or cut	8-12	Toss with fresh parsley, rosemary or dill
Spinach	5-10	Season with olive oil and garlic, or sesame seeds
Squash, butternut	7-15	Season with honey, lemon juice, and rosemary
Sweet potatoes	8-12	Season with honey and lemon juice
Vegetables, mixed	10-15	Thyme, rosemary, chives or other herbs
Zucchini	5-8	Season with olive oil, lemon/lime juice, and fresh herbs (such as thyme or rosemary)

NSLP recipe examples from student contests

Lentils of the Southwest

Nutrition facts

Serving size: 1/4 cup

Calories	64.39
From fat	11.3%
From saturated fat	1.5%
From sugar	8.5%
Sodium	172mg

Ingredients

Ingredient	6 servings	50 servings
Lentils, brown or green	1/2 cup	4 1/4 cups/1.75 lbs
Water	2 cups	9 cups
Olive oil	3/4 tsp	2 tbsp
Onions, chopped	2 tbsp	1 cup
Garlic, minced	3/4 tsp	2 tbsp
Ground cumin	1/2 tsp	1 tbsp
Ground mild red chile, optional	3/4 tsp	2 tbsp
Chili powder	1/2 tsp	1 tbsp
Diced tomatoes, canned or fresh	1/3 cup	3 cups
Salt	1/2 tsp	1 tbsp
Fresh cilantro, chopped	2 tbsp	1 cup

Preparation for 6 servings

Combine the lentils and water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium and cook the lentils until tender, about an hour. If needed, add more water.

Sauté the onion and garlic in the olive oil for 2 to 3 minutes, until softened. Stir in the ground cumin, ground red chile, if using, and chili powder. Add this mixture to the cooked lentils. Stir in the tomatoes and salt. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low and simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Just before serving, stir in the chopped cilantro, or use it as a garnish for the lentils.

Preparation for 50 Servings

In a large stockpot, combine the lentils and water. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium and cook the lentils until tender, about an hour. If needed, add more water.

Sauté the onion and garlic in the olive oil for 3 to 5 minutes, until the onions have softened. Stir in the ground cumin, ground red chile, if using, and chili powder. Add this mixture to the cooked lentils. Stir in the tomatoes and salt. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low and simmer, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Just before serving, stir in the chopped cilantro, or use it as a garnish for the lentils.



Linguine and root vegetable sauté¹⁷

Ingredients:

Beets	4
Carrots	3
Onions	1
Parsnips	3
Rutabaga	6 ounces
Winter squash	1

Other Ingredients:

Shallots	4
Olive oil	1/2 cup
Fresh basil	3 tsp
cloves garlic	4
Minced flat leaf parsley	4Tbsp
Linguine	1 1/2 lb
Grated parmesan cheese	4Tbsp
Dried parsley	1Tbsp
Salt	
Freshly ground pepper	

Recipe preparation instructions:

Mix Parmesan cheese and the dried parsley together. Put aside for later.

Peel vegetables and shred in food processor. Cut onion and shallots into thin strips, smash and mince garlic.

Coat the bottom of a large skillet with olive oil and sauté over medium heat: Onion, shallot, and garlic until soft. Remove from pan. Recoat the bottom of the pan with oil and sauté vegetables in groups until soft, sauté beets last.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil, and cook the linguine, stirring occasionally until it is al dente, about 8 minutes. When pasta is cooked, drain the water.

On medium heat, return all the veggies, onions, garlic and shallots to the sauté pan, add the minced parsley, then add the drained pasta and the basil, mix thoroughly. Add salt and pepper to taste, plate and top with parmesan and fresh dried parsley mixture.

¹⁷ <http://www.jrironchefvt.org/finalRecipesPrint.php?id=50>

How to write a press release

Successes in the cafeteria may be shared with the school's community, town, or region through local or regional media. A key for successfully engaging the media is a well-crafted press release. The following are general guidelines for writing a press release¹⁸:

1. Review press release basics: Who is the release going to and does it match that journalist's "beat?" Is the news compelling or was a similar story recently covered? What makes the story being pitched innovative, interesting, and fresh?
2. Format appropriately: Include the written press release in the body of the email; attached again if desired. Send copy to journalists as plain text. PDFs are appropriate for a broader audience, however, journalists benefit from the simplest text format possible.
3. Craft a smart headline: The headline should be short, interesting, devoid of puns, and should include the value of the press release to the reader.
4. Use plain language: Avoid too many technical terms, superlatives, and trendy turns of phrase. Write the press release using lay terminology to explain why the audience should care.
5. Think like a journalist: Be sure to answer the "who, what, where, when and why," of the story being pitched. Do not bury the main point or finding of the story—put it front and center.
6. Keep it short: If possible, limit press releases to one page or about 250 words.
7. Choose quotes wisely: Only quote individuals who will be available for a full interview. Only use actual quotes, not paraphrased sentiments.
8. Be judicious with images: If images are essential to the press release, only include those that are clear enough to be printed or used online. Include images in the actual press release; do not redirect the reader to a website or other location where images may be located.

Provide good contact information: Include the phone number of the person who sent the press release, not just the email. Be sure that individual, or another, is available to take calls to respond to media inquiries in an efficient manner. The following are examples of well-written press releases by Wisconsin agencies and collaboratives:

Transform Wisconsin Press Release, July 24, 2012:

<http://www.transformwi.com/downloads/Statewide-Press-Release.pdf>

Health First Wisconsin Infographic State-wide Press Release, September 2013:

<http://www.healthfirstwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Food-System-Obesity-Sheet.pdf>

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, June 2013:

<http://datcp.wi.gov/news/?Id=1106>

¹⁸Oliver L. "How to: write the perfect press release for journalists," *Journalism.co.uk*, <http://www.journalism.co.uk/skills/how-to-write-the-perfect-press-release-for-journalists/s7/a535287/> (accessed September 6, 2013).



Healthy food and farm to school marketing self assessment

The purpose of this assessment is provide K-12 school food professionals with a tool to measure how much healthy food marketing is currently in place in the school cafeteria setting, assess features of ongoing marketing, and to identify future opportunities for healthy food marketing to students. This assessment may be completed by a food service director, school administrator, or in collaboration with community coalition members, Wellness Committee members, students, teachers, and others working to improve the school food environment and consumption of healthy school meals. This assessment may be completed through observation and through discussion with other healthy school food stakeholders.

Date: _____

School name and district: _____

Grades served: _____

Student enrollment: _____

School address: _____

Choose one that best describes your school:

Public

Charter

Private/Independent

Other

Name of individual leading assessment: _____

Title: _____

Names and titles of others completing assessment:

Section 1: Conventional marketing

Conventional marketing refers to traditional cafeteria posters, flyers, and point of sale materials.

Posters and other large signs

1. Total number of posters:
 0 1-3 4-8 10 or more
Number of posters in the dining space (indicate number): _____
Number of posters in the serving line (indicate number): _____
2. Posters are graphically interesting and brightly colored with minimal text:
 Yes
 No
 Not sure
3. Posters are age appropriate with respect to graphics and reading/comprehension level:
 Yes
 No
 Not sure
4. Posters are visible and readable from all points in the dining and serving spaces of the cafeteria/in high-traffic areas:
 Yes
 No
5. Posters are hung at heights appropriate for audiences (about 58” for high school students/ adults; about 48” for younger students):
 Yes
 No
6. Posters display healthy fruits and vegetables (and other healthy foods) with images:
 Yes
 No
7. Posters reflect the culture of the school and student body:
 Yes
 No
 Not sure
8. Student input or student groups are considered with respect to posters/artwork:
 Yes
 No
9. Menu boards are clearly visible, legible, and promote healthy meal items of the day:
 Yes
 No
 Not currently using menu board



10. Menu boards feature information about the next day's healthy meal offerings:
 Yes
 No
 Not currently using menu board
11. Posters are rotated in the dining and service areas throughout the school year:
 Yes
If yes, how often?
 Once per year
 Every quarter
 More than 4 times per school year
 No
12. Posters featuring Wisconsin farmers, locally grown foods, or other farm to school themes are used in the cafeteria and dining area:
 Yes
If yes, how often?
 Once per year
 Every quarter
 More than 4 times per school year
 No

Point of sale (POS) materials

1. POS materials identify the healthy food items clearly:
 Yes
 No
2. POS materials are positioned at eye-level for students
 Yes
 No
3. POS materials are colorful:
 Yes
 No
4. POS materials are age-appropriate:
 Yes
 No
 Not sure
5. POS materials rotate daily/weekly as needed to accurately reflect healthy food options available:
 Yes
 No

6. Total POS materials in use (indicate number here and for each, below): _____
- Number of POS materials dedicated to promoting fruits and vegetables: _____
- Number of POS materials dedicated to promoting whole grains: _____
- Number of POS materials dedicated to promoting low-fat or non-fat dairy: _____
- Number of POS materials dedicated to promoting the school meal (entrees, sides, milk or water): _____
- Number of POS materials dedicated to promoting a la carte items (entrees, sides, beverages, snacks): _____
- Number of POS materials dedicated to promoting farm to school, harvest of the month or locally sourced food items: _____

Tally your score

of "Yes" responses: _____

of "No" responses: _____

Interpret your score: Conventional marketing methods are often the easiest methods to deploy, as posters, signs, and point-of-sale materials may be donated by vendors, nutrition associations or councils, are available through USDA and other health agencies and organization.

- If your food service operation does not currently utilize posters, POS materials, or menu boards, decision makers are encouraged to display at least 3 posters, 1 up-to-date menu board, and POS materials for the school meal components, at a minimum.
- If total "Yes" responses was tallied at 5 or below, consider how the school might take more advantage of materials, space, student input/school culture, and create an action plan to secure additional marketing tools, a calendar for rotation of materials, and methods for collecting customer response.
- If the school is not currently featuring any farm to school posters or POS signs, partnering with a local organization, agency, farmers, suppliers, or with students to secure or create signage may be a next step.

Section 2: Nontraditional marketing

1. Floors—cafeteria currently using floor decal(s) in the dining area:
 _____ Yes If yes, how many _____
 _____ No
2. Ceilings and windows—cafeteria currently using ceiling or window "danglers" to market menu items and match POS signs:
 _____ Yes If yes, how many _____
 _____ No



3. Trays—cafeteria currently using “tray talkers” (decals on trays) to market healthy menu items:
____ Yes If yes, how often _____
____ No
4. Monitor/school television—cafeteria currently uses a television screen or LCD monitor to display healthy menu items and/or healthy food messaging:
____ Yes If yes, how often does the message(s) change? _____
 If yes, are youth involved in the messaging? _____
____ No

Tally your score

of “Yes” responses: _____

of “No” responses: _____

Interpret your score:

- If the food service operation is currently not utilizing any non-traditional marketing strategies, begin by determining which of the examples provided may be most feasible to implement.
- Explore options to include students in the design of any monitor/television marketing tools like ads, graphics, or short public service announcements.
- Test new methods for longevity of products, acceptance by students, and to be certain new strategies fit in with the overall brand of the meal program.

Section 3: The cafeteria line

Line layout

1. Healthy fruits and vegetables are highlighted at the start of the serving line:
____ Always
____ Sometimes
____ Never
____ Not sure
2. Vegetable and fruit names clearly highlighted on all items on the serving line:
____ Always
____ Sometimes
____ Never
3. Fruits and vegetables (cut and whole) are presented in attractive bowls or other displays:
____ Always
____ Sometimes
____ Never

4. White milk is positioned in front of sweetened milk(s) on the serving line:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
5. Salad bars are highly accessible in a high traffic area:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
6. Salad bar utensils are the appropriate size for a given age group:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
7. Food service professionals serving on the line gently prompt students through offers of healthy fruits and vegetables:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
8. Creative, age-appropriate meal component names are used to describe healthy foods on the serving line:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
9. The serving line has adequate lighting to highlight healthy foods:
 Always
 Never
10. Healthy “Grab and Go” meals are clearly highlighted for ease of choice on the serving line:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
11. Farm to school, harvest of the month or locally sourced food items are clearly identified with signs on the serving line:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never

Tally your score

of “Always” responses: _____

of “Sometimes” responses: _____

of “Never” responses: _____



Interpret your score:

- Clearly identifying foods on the cafeteria line should be a priority for any food service operation seeking to increase consumption of school meals, and especially healthy fruits and vegetables. Making the healthy choice the easy choice should be the goal of school food service operations.
- Try new methods for arrangements of healthy choices, troubleshoot any cooked foods that do not appear fresh, and work with facilities on lighting or other infrastructure challenges.
- Scores ranging from 4-7 “Always” responses should aim to include one to two more strategies, beginning with a review of the easiest changes to make to the service area.
- Scores ranging from 1-3 “Always” responses should aim to increase their “Always” responses to at least 5, beginning with the easiest methods to alter the cafeteria line to highlight the healthiest options of the day.
- Scores ranging from 4-7 “Sometimes” responses should aim to increase 2 of these strategies to “Always.”

Presentation of food

1. Food service professionals utilize batch cooking techniques to offer freshly cooked vegetables at each meal service (Definition: Batch cooking, sometimes called cooking to the line or just-in-time preparation, means preparing food in small batches as needed throughout the serving period in order to preserve food quality and prevent waste due to leftovers):
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
2. Hot and cold serving vessels containing fruits and vegetables on the serving line are kept looking full:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
3. Cooked vegetables and fruits maintain bright, crisp appearance and fresh, inviting aromas on the serving line:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never

Tally your score

of “Always” responses: _____

of “Sometimes” responses: _____

of “Never” responses: _____

Interpret your score:

- If zero “Always” responses were recorded, food service staff may start by maintaining fuller-looking bowls of fresh fruit, for example, or trays of steamed broccoli. New serving vessels may be a good investment (e.g., an attractive fruit bowl vs. a stainless steel prep bowl).
- Training for food service staff with respect to batch cooking is a worthwhile investment that can result in increased food acceptance, meal participation and consumption of healthy fruits and vegetables. For batch cooking training resources, visit: www.nfsmi.org
- For any “Sometimes” responses, work to make these practices “Always.”

Section 4: Other promotions

Contests

Does the cafeteria engage in any contests related to the promotion of healthy school meal components?

Yes

If yes, describe: _____

No

Events

1. Does the cafeteria coordinate taste tests of new, healthy menu items?

Yes

If yes, how often? _____

If yes, which meal components are usually featured (fruits, vegetables, dairy, grains, proteins)? _____

If yes, are students surveyed on their like/dislike of the taste-test item or receive an ‘award’ for completing the taste test (awards may be stickers, pencils, or other small tokens of appreciation for participating).

Yes

No

No

2. Does the cafeteria have any special events (e.g., bring a parent to lunch day/staff and student day/farm to school day):

Yes

No



Promotions/incentives

Discount coupons are offered on healthy new food items (low-fat dairy, fruits, vegetables, whole grain items, etc.):

___ Yes

___ No

Tally your score

of “Yes” responses: ___

of “No” responses: ___

Interpret your score:

- Designing, organizing, and running promotions will require time and commitment from school food service staff and other school teachers or administrators. However, these promotions may result in increased meal participation and/or increased consumption of healthy fruits and vegetables, and contribute to the meal program’s brand.
- If the score included any “Yes” responses, evaluate the successes and challenges associated with the given promotion or incentive to determine if repeating the effort will result in success.
- If the score did not include any “Yes” responses, begin by learning about strategies for developing incentives and promotions at the USDA’s website featuring promotional strategies: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/marketing-ideas>

Section 5: Customer service

1. Students and other customers are greeted with a smile upon entering the cafeteria:
___ Always
___ Sometimes
___ Never
2. Students and other customers are greeted with a smile while waiting in the service line:
___ Always
___ Sometimes
___ Never
3. Cafeteria staff positively engage students, (e.g., “This recipe is a favorite! You may really like it!” or “That basketball game last night was great—you did so well.”):
___ Always
___ Sometimes
___ Never

4. Cafeteria staff can readily identify ingredients in all meal offerings:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
5. Cafeteria staff are informed about which products on the lunch line are locally sourced:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
6. Cafeteria staff log food complaints and other criticism and review quality standards and operations:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
7. Cafeteria staff log praise or compliments on certain food offerings:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
8. Cafeteria staff thank students upon payment:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never

Tally your score

of "Always" responses: _____

of "Sometimes" responses: _____

of "Never" responses: _____

Interpret your score:

- Scores of 5 or more "Always" may consider additional training or re-trainings to reinforce customer service principles. Schools may also consider direct student feedback on their interactions with cafeteria staff to identify areas for improvement via survey or focus group.
- Scores of 5 "Always" or below may consider training cafeteria staff internally, or through the use of tools from the National Food Service Management Institute:
<http://www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=67>
- Scores of 1-5 "Sometimes" may consider moving the best of these practices into the "Always" category.



Section 6: Farm to school considerations

This section is intended for schools engaged in local food purchasing as part of a farm to school program.

1. Local farm name and locations are featured on POS materials:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
2. Farmer profiles are featured in signage on the serving line:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
3. Farm to school posters comprise some of the marketing tools being used:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never

4. Taste testing features locally grown or produced foods:
 Yes If yes, how often? _____

If yes, which meal components are usually featured (fruits, vegetables, dairy, grains, proteins)? _____

If yes, are students surveyed on their like/dislike of the taste-test item or do they receive an 'award' for completing the taste test (awards may be stickers, pencils, or other small tokens of appreciation for participating):

- Yes
 No
- No

5. Food service professionals engage students on the serving line about which foods on offer were grown or produced locally:
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never
6. Farm to school items are highlighted on the menu.
 Always
 Sometimes
 Never

7. Farm to school items are highlighted in the school newsletter/family information packets/district website.

___ Always

___ Sometimes

___ Never

Tally your score

of “Always/Yes” responses: ___

of “Sometimes” responses: ___

of “Never/No” responses: ___

Interpret your score:

- Farm to school cafeteria marketing is an essential component to any farm to school program. Connecting students to farmer faces and farm places helps build a farm to school program brand, teaches students about the origins of their meal components, and reinforces other educational farm to school efforts underway in the school (agriculture and nutrition education, gardening programs, etc.).
- If “Always/Yes” responses were fewer than three, but food service already scores highly with respect to conventional marketing tactics, incorporate farm to school themes into existing marketing tools—this may be a simple “farm to school” or “I’m local!” sticker on POS cards, or may include posters from department of agriculture featuring farms, farm products or farmers.
- For “Sometimes” responses, consider moving these practices into the “Always” category.

Additional overall comments and observations:

