TOOLKIT THREE

START YOUR CAMPAIGN

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This kit is part three in your journey to supporting the changes to school lunch. Here you will find tips about how to get more fresh, wholesome, local, and nutritious foods on the lunch tray at your school.

1) GET MORE DETAILS TO INFORM YOUR CAMPAIGN

You have already spent a lot of time learning about your local school and district. However, there are a few additional pieces of information that are worth gathering before you begin your campaign.

Every school in America is different – public schools will need to work through their school district, charter schools may have more flexibility, and private schools can work independently.

Some states and districts have additional nutrition standards (on top of the national standards) for school meals, as well as for other foods sold outside of the school meals program. These items include anything that can be purchased from vending machines, school stores, and cafeteria à la carte lines, and often include items such as sugary drinks, salty and high-fat snacks, pizzas and ice cream. These foods are sometimes called "competitive" foods, because they compete with school meals for students' spending. The current standards for competitive foods are out of date and no longer make sense from the standpoint of nutrition science and current public health concerns around child nutrition and obesity. However, as part of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) will soon update the nutrition standards for these foods.

Before you begin, find out what state or county regulations affect your local school and school district – each state has a child nutrition agency working on school food issues so find out what your State Child Nutrition Program looks like and how they can help you. Use our toolkits and support tools to get a full picture of the food served in schools, from what the wellness policy looks like to what's being served.

2) SET GOALS

Build on your research and conversations with parents, staff and students to determine what your goals are.

Together with your Nutrition Services Staff and school administration, identify a set of goals to work towards in the first year. These goals will vary depending on your particular school or district. Invite the Superintendent, Nutrition Services Director and other key staff to meet with you to commit to a timeline for meeting these goals.

Working towards specific goals is important. Long-term change can be difficult but it is achievable, especially if you measure success incrementally.

Here are some possible goals that will make a real difference for your kids.

1. Replace processed foods with freshly cooked meals. This can actually SAVE money.
2. Eliminate the junk food – start thinking about how you can help your school get ahead of the game in preparation for the new rule by starting to remove the snacks, candy and soda that children might be eating instead of a balanced meal. A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) carried out by the Kids' Safe & Healthful Food (KSHF) Project found that updating national nutrition standards for snack foods and beverages sold in schools could be good for school budgets and actually increase food service revenue.
3. Introduce a salad bar and more fresh produce – fresh fruit and vegetables should be part of every meal and certain amounts are required as part of the new school lunch regulations.
4. Consider asking your school or district to set standards for processed foods, artificial flavors, colors, sweeteners, or other additives that don't add any nutritional value and should not be part of the meal.
5. Get other parents involved in school food planning and encourage them to join the school wellness committee.

3) MAKE A PLAN

You've laid the groundwork for change, now you can get to work. Each school and district is different, but these general tips can help you get on the right track.

- Together with your nutrition services staff and school administration, work out what can be accomplished in each semester over the coming year.
- Go back to your group of parents and set out a year-long wish list.
- Break down each goal into actionable steps such as switching "tater tots" for roasted potatoes, offering unbreaded items, removing flavored milk or adding a salad bar.
- Include your goals in the school wellness policy so that they become a formalized set of values for the food in your school.
- Take your list and action plans to the school food team and school administration and talk them through with the PTA.
- Set regular meetings with each group to discuss progress.
- Ask the nutrition services staff if they need help from professional chefs and consultants to accomplish the wish list for change.

4) MAKE NOISE

Keep people motivated to make change by raising the issue of school food whenever you can. Even if only a core group is actively working on school food issues, it is important to make the local community aware of what you are doing so they can support your efforts. Below are some ways to get people's attention:

- Start a letter writing campaign to the people in charge.
- Survey the kids and start a petition for change.
- Write on the school blog, or start your own.
- Post your goals and plans on the school website.
- Send emails to parents and the people in charge after every meeting. Tell them what has been agreed, keep them informed of your progress and discuss any problems that you are encountering. Most importantly, keep asking for their support.
- Call to remind key people of any important meetings just before they happen to build the number of attendants and ensure votes in support of your plans.
- Host a town hall meeting for parents in the school district and invite guest speakers such as your expert advisors.
- Talk to the media – give them pictures of your school's food and invite them to try it. Keep them informed about what you're asking for and how your campaign is going and invite them to do press events at school.

5) STRATEGY IDEAS FOR SUCCESS

Work with your school district and school to implement strategies that will help the school and its students adjust to changes and increase participation.

- Introduce big changes at the beginning of the year, or at the beginning of the semester.
- Get teachers and administrators involved. Encourage them to speak positively about school meals and ask them to occasionally eat lunch with their students. If the school staff don't eat the food served at school, find out why, and see if they will help support the changes.
- Try new recipes, but don't go crazy. Make gradual changes and keep the children involved at every step to get them excited. Wherever possible, switch processed foods for fresh options.
- When thinking about new recipes and meal items, consider both the nutritional quality of the meal as well as whether the children will like them. If possible, pilot new recipes at school, carry out taste tests, and hold focus groups for students, parents and teachers. Feedback is vital for success so don't jump in without testing first.
- When considering new meals, work with your committee and nutrition services to analyse the cost per serving and the nutritional profile to ensure it is affordable (you may even save money), and whether it meets or exceeds USDA requirements. Don't forget to consider how it is going to be made and whether it can be produced on a large scale in the school kitchen or central kitchen.
- Test the new menu/food items at least three times to see what the feedback is and whether the participation numbers show that it is well received by students.
- Engage partners who can provide valuable input and assistance with education and marketing, materials and strategies, connections to best practices, and recommendations for overcoming barriers.
- Send information home with parents so that they are kept aware of what's happening and provide tips for how they can reinforce healthy eating at home too. Invite parents to eat lunch at school and also to taste test new menu items.
- Consider implementing a policy that recess is held before lunch. Students are more likely to finish their meals and are more ready to learn when they return to the classroom if recess is held before lunch.

6) RAISE MONEY

Find out more about your school's food service budget. What are the limitations? How much is needed to support the changes?

Schools will get an additional 6-cent reimbursement per school meal for implementing the new school meals standards, so make sure that your school knows how to get certified for this reimbursement. If your school requires more money, have a think about doing some additional fundraising.

Work closely with the school administration to make sure they are on board with fundraising efforts – a few hundred dollars can make a big difference. Small, one-time investments can help your school nutrition service make the changes while keeping the meal service on budget.

- Make sure the fundraising goal works with the plan you have presented to the administration.
- Check that the administration is on board with how you hope to use the money before you make an ask of the community.
- Write a fundraising letter and send it out via your school e-tree or class email lists.
- Send a printed copy with a stamped envelope to community members, including small businesses. Get a list from the local chamber of commerce.
- Say what you'll use the money for and be specific. It could be big or little:
  - Purchase equipment for the school kitchen – it could be anything, from a new food processor to a new oven.
  - Replace plastic trays with proper plates and cutlery.
  - Purchase pitchers for drinking water.
  - Install a salad bar.
  - Develop a training program for school cooks.
  - Hire a professional chef/school lunch consultant to audit your school and advise on how to overhaul your meal service.
  - Or go all-out and propose a full kitchen remodel!

7) MONITOR & TRACK CHANGE

Tracking change is really important so that you can see what works and what doesn't. Asking for feedback is also vital in ensuring that your changes are successful.

- Post your stories and pictures on your school website or Facebook page and ask for feedback.
- Blog about changes that are taking place.
- Ask teachers to create school projects that document how the students feel about their new food and options.

ASSOCIATED SUPPORT TOOLS:

SCHOOL FOOD: THE BASICS
SCHOOL FOOD CHARTER

Thanks to CSPI and ChangeLab Solutions for their contributions and providing resources for these toolkits.

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Join others advocating better school food on our Food Revolution Community Facebook page, and share your stories, tips and photos of school food: www.facebook.com/foodrevolutioncommunity

Any questions? Email us at FoodRevolution@jamieoliver.com to connect with the team.

Check out our photo wall to see what's on lunch trays across the world and add your own school lunch photos to help us build a powerful showcase.

RESOURCES

Additional links and resources are available at www.jamiesfoodrevolution.com. New toolkits and support tools will go online over time so please check regularly for more information.

Center for Ecoliteracy

http://www.ecoliteracy.org/

Rethinking School Lunch: http://www.ecoliteracy.org/downloads/rethinking-school-lunch-guide

CSPI

School Wellness Model Policy: http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/WellnessPolicies.html

Nutrition Policy: http://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/index.html

Healthy School Meals, Snacks and Beverages: State & Policy Options: http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/b2s-policy-options.pdf

The School Day Just Got Healthier: http://cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/back2school.html

Healthy Schools Campaign

http://www.healthyschoolscampaign.org/

Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity

http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/

ChangeLab Solutions

Childhood obesity: http://changelabsolutions.org/childhood-obesity

District Policy Restricting Food and Beverage Advertising on School Grounds: http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/district-policy-restricting-food-and-beverage-advertising-school-grounds

Fact Sheet: Restricting Food and Beverage Advertising in Schools: http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/fact-sheet-restricting-food-and-beverage-advertising-schools

Healthy Vending Policies and fact sheet: http://changelabsolutions.org/childhood-obesity/healthy-vending-machines

Kids Safe & Healthful Foods

http://www.healthyschoolfoodsnow.org/

Health Impact Assessment: National Nutrition Standards for Snack and à la carte Foods and Beverages Sold in Schools: http://www.healthimpactproject.org/news/project/school-budgets-student-health-to-benefit-from-higher-nutrition-standards-hia-finds

For a good example of a working Wellness Policy – www.seacliffpca.org

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