



...WHAT'S FOR LUNCH?

NSLP and FORMS - Working together to "Feed More Kids"

Since 1946, the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) has been hard at work ensuring that each student has the opportunity to eat a warm, nutritious lunch or breakfast regardless of their family's financial status. The program benefits all of those involved- children, parents and schools.

Benefits to Children

For children, the National School Lunch Program provides a nutritious meal that contains one-third of the recommended dietary allowance of necessary nutrients.

Benefits to Parents

For parents, the program offers a convenient method of providing a nutritionally balanced lunch at the lowest possible price.

Benefits to Schools

For schools, the program enhances a child's learning abilities by contributing to their physical and mental well-being. Studies have shown that children whose nutritional needs are met have fewer attendance and discipline problems and are more attentive in class.

worked closely with school Food Services Directors and other administrative personnel to develop FORMS. An acronym for Free Or Reduced Meal Software, FORMS is a fully comprehensive software system that speeds up and simplifies the enrollment process. The benefits to children, their parents, and their schools are:

Benefits to Children

For children, FORMS removes the burden of each student in the family carrying home and returning an application form. A single multi-child household application form is all that is necessary.

Benefits to Parents

For parents, the FORMS system can be set to automatically send notification when it comes time to fill out the Free or Reduced application. No more wondering if they will have the application completed and submitted within the 30-day period. In addition, FORMS can import TANF and Food Stamp data for direct certification, eliminating the need to fill out an application.

Benefits to Schools

For schools, the benefits of FORMS are as numerous as they are beneficial. The software automatically calculates family eligibility by income, provides a complete history of student status changes (i.e., school transfers, lunch type, etc.), imports data from student management systems as well as exports data for No Child Left Behind, and the system runs on a client-server database-making it accessible anywhere in the school district.



Working together, the NSLP and FORMS are truly living their mission to "Feed More Kids." For more information on the NSLP's Free or Reduced Meal Program, visit www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/. To learn more about what FORMS can do for your school or district, visit FSS' website www.foodserve.com/forms.htm.

Want Biometrics in your lunch line but don't have a POS from Food Service Solutions?



CHECKOUT BioWedge

www.biometricsolution.com

BioWedge is very easy to set up and configure for existing point of sale software packages for a completely integrated biometric identification system.

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Since 1989, Food Services Solutions has made it our mission to "Feed More Kids" through the advancement of school lunch related technologies. Seeing a need to improve the NSLP's Free or Reduced Meal program, we

Best Practices: How to Improve the School Lunch Experience

There are many strategies that can help improve your students' school lunch experience, but there are a few that the non-profit group Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger have found particularly successful. The following is a summary of their list of best practices.

1. Increasing Enrollment of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Price Meals

- Encourage all students, regardless of eligibility, to return free/reduced school meal applications. Schools have found that this helps to remove stigma for low-income students and reaches those families who mistakenly think they are not eligible. Many schools have gotten all students to return the applications by:

- Asking all parents to return the free/reduced form, whether or not they have completed the application

- Providing incentives, such as free breakfast, for a period of time for any student returning the form

- Throwing class parties when all students have returned the forms

- Provide maximum anonymity for students to enroll and participate in free/reduced price meals.

- When all students return the application forms, low-income students have more anonymity

- Install computerized point of sale systems with debit accounts to protect privacy of students obtaining meals (an additional benefit is that these systems greatly reduce staff time spent on record keeping)

- Ensure that vulnerable populations of students receive the benefit of free school meals. The following students are categorically eligible for free school meals:

- Students who are homeless (living doubled up or in campgrounds or shelters)

- Students enrolled in the Migrant Education Program

- Provide low-literacy or non-English speaking families assistance with completing applications.

- Offer assistance with filling out applications by phone, at school, or at home

- Multi-lingual school meal applications are available on the USDA website: www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/FRP/frp.process.htm

2. Increasing Access to School Meals

- Provide students enough time to eat

- 20 minutes for breakfast and 30 minutes for lunch

- Serve breakfast at snack time in elementary schools

- Breakfast later in the morning helps feed those who ate breakfast very early, ate an inadequate breakfast, or who forgot to bring a snack

- Offer breakfast in the classroom in elementary schools

- Makes the meal part of the school day and reduces stigma

- Schedule recess before lunch is served

- Keep the cafeteria open between morning and afternoon classes for middle and high school students

- Offer breakfast free of charge to all students

- Schools offering free breakfast have increased participation for all students, including those eligible for free meals. Schools with more than 60% of enrollment eligible for free/reduced price meals may be able to afford loss of student payments by efficiencies gained by increased participation.

3. Improving the School Nutrition Environment

- Reduce, eliminate and/or improve the

quality of competitive foods: vending machines, snack bars, a la carte, fundraisers

- Limit the hours when such foods are sold

- Increase the price of competitive foods compared to federal meals

- Remove competitive foods from schools altogether

- Create nutritional guidelines for competitive foods

- Make meals more attractive

- Make plates more appealing: customize plates, vary color and texture, and use brightly colored wrappings

- Provide more entrée, vegetable, or fruit options

- Increase the use of locally produced ingredients

- Offer menu choices that are convenient

- Provide "Grab 'N Go" meals that students can eat quickly and easily

- Choose hand-held foods that include all the required meal components: wraps, sandwiches, yogurt/granola parfaits, burritos, calzones, etc.

- Use "Offer vs. Serve" option: reduces waste and cost

- Involve the students in the meal program

- Encourage student representation on wellness committees

- Include students in decisions about menu choices

- Ask students to conduct taste tests or do surveys of new foods to get student input

By improving your students' school lunch experience, you will increase your chances of receiving additional government E-rate funding. It is truly a Win-Win situation. If you make it a point to implement any of these tried-and-true best practices, you will be well on your way to having your cake and eating it too!

FRAC Releases New School Breakfast Reports

School breakfast participation continues to rise, according to two reports issued by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) yesterday. According to FRAC's School Breakfast Scorecard, 6.2 percent more children participated in the School Breakfast Program, bringing total participation in the school nutrition programs to 18.9 million children. FRAC also released another report that looks at school breakfast promotion and participation in 25 large urban school districts.

The School Breakfast Program began as a pilot program in 1966 with the intent of making sure children started the school day with the boost breakfast can give. School breakfast is available to children from all socio-economic backgrounds. Studies continue to demonstrate the links between breakfast and learning, making the case stronger for more schools to expand breakfast participation and make sure all children participate. In the 2008-2009 school year, 46.7 low income children

ate school breakfast for every 100 children who ate school lunch.

To measure the reach of the School Breakfast Program in each state, FRAC compares the number of schools and low-income that participate in the breakfast program as compared to the broadly utilized National School Lunch Program. In the 2008-2009 school year, 86.3 percent of schools offering lunch offered breakfast as well. This is a slight increase from 85.7

percent last year. One of the barriers to offering the breakfast program at the local level continues to be the cost to prepare a school breakfast – which is greater than 'per meal' federal reimbursement provided to school districts participating in the School Breakfast Program.

This year, FRAC also released a report examining school breakfast participation in 25 major cities. In School Breakfast in America's Big Cities, FRAC found that 17 of the 25 surveyed districts increased the percentage of low-income students eating breakfast each day. FRAC's analysis also found that school districts that offered universal breakfast, served breakfast in the classroom, or offered bagged "grab and go" breakfasts had higher participation.

SNA has tools available to help school nutrition programs expand breakfast. National School Breakfast Week (March

8-12, 2010) is just around the corner and this year's campaign 'School Breakfast – Ready Set Go!' will introduce students to the importance of school breakfast and will demonstrate how eating school breakfast sets you up for a busy day at school. The "Ready Set Go!" theme will also help students learn about the importance of eating healthy and being active. Find out more at www.schoolnutrition.org/nsbw.

School breakfast provides at least one-fourth of the nutrients needed by a growing child. The U.S. Department of Agriculture sets the nutrient standards for the federal School Breakfast Program, requiring breakfasts provide less than 30 percent of their calories from fat, and 10 percent or less from saturated fat, meeting the goals of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Research shows that children who eat breakfast have improved memory, problem-solving skills, verbal fluency and creative abilities. Qualitative research,

including research from Harvard University and the University of Minnesota, also points to improved classroom behavior, with students being more alert, happier and ready to learn. Both studies saw an increase in math test scores in children who ate a good breakfast.

Article provided by:



www.schoolnutrition.org

Prepare Now for Summer Feeding!

Even though the air outside is cold, school nutrition programs across the country are preparing for summer. The end of the 2009-10 school year is only a few short months away, making January the perfect time to plan on becoming a Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsor.

Over nearly 20 million children receive free or reduced price meals daily during the school year. Come this summer, however, only 2.9 children will participate in the Summer Food Service Program, according to the Food Research and Action Center's (FRAC) 2009 report, "Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation."

Congress authorized the Summer Food Service Program in 1975 to ensure that children in lower-income areas continue to receive nutritious meals during long school vacations, when they do not have access

to a healthy school lunch or breakfast.

Over nearly 20 million children receive free or reduced price meals daily during the school year. Come this summer, however, only 2.9 children will participate in the Summer Food Service Program, according to the Food Research and Action Center's (FRAC) 2009 report, "Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation." While there was a very modest increase in participation, many eligible children are still not receiving adequate nutrition during the summer months.

There are resources for school nutrition programs looking to sponsor the SFSP. FRAC has a toolkit that helps summer feeding sponsors expand program participation. The November 2008 issue of School Nutrition magazine has several great articles on operating a summer feeding program. Additionally, SNA will be releasing a summer feeding toolkit later this spring.

It's easier for many school nutrition programs to operate the SFSP! The Fiscal Year 2008 Omnibus Appropriations Act, which was signed into law two years ago, extends the cost accounting procedures commonly known as the "Simplified" Summer Food Service Program. Twenty-six States and Puerto Rico have been operating under the simplified procedures. This Act extends these simplified procedures to all sponsors in all States. As of January 1, 2008 all SFSP sponsors receive the maximum "meals times rates" operating and administrative reimbursements without regard to their actual costs.

Sponsors may combine their reimbursements to pay for any allowable cost, whether operating or administrative. Under these new procedures:

- Sponsors do not have to report their costs to the State agency, although they must maintain records for the State agency's review;
- Costs do not have to be categorized as "operational" or "administrative"; and,
- Reimbursement is based on "meals times rates", without comparison to actual or budgeted costs.

The summer 2010 reimbursement rates were published this week in the Federal Register. The maximum allowable operational reimbursement for lunch or suppers in the continental U.S. is \$3.2475, up to \$1.8475 for breakfast, and \$0.7625 for snacks, depending on the type of service and location. Higher rates apply in Alaska and Hawaii.

Article provided by:



www.schoolnutrition.org

Best Practices: Fresh, Popular Items Sell

When it comes to increasing student interest in school lunch, it is important to start with a good product. Give kids what they like: fresh, popular food that looks and tastes great. However, be certain to choose foods that meet the nutritional guidelines. Simply offering healthful, attractive food at school can help children learn to eat right.



MYTH: *We do not have the money to make lunches that look and taste great*

FACT: *School lunches that look and taste great will bring more customers—and more money for your program*

When selecting foods, follow these simple guidelines:

Keep meals colorful

Offer diverse fruits and vegetables every day. Make sure each menu includes foods of different colors.

Perk up the packaging

Wrap sandwiches in fast food-like paper wrappers, place cut fruits and salads in clear cups to show off their colors, or try a take-out box for Asian foods.

Focus on fresh

Prepare and assemble food right before serving time, in front of students, so they can see it is fresh. Canned and frozen foods can fit into menus that look and

taste fresh when the food is prepared just before serving.

Tempt them with taste

Taste tests reveal what students like to eat. Reflect their preferences in the foods you serve.

Test the temperature

Remember the old saying, "Hot foods hot, cold foods cold!" The right temperature not only keeps food safe but also makes food look and taste its best.

* This article is a summary of "Feed More Kids for School Lunch Success: Product and Price," an informative pamphlet provided by the California Department of Education Nutrition Services Division. For more helpful hints on how to improve your food service program, visit their website: www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu.

...WHAT'S FOR LUNCH?

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