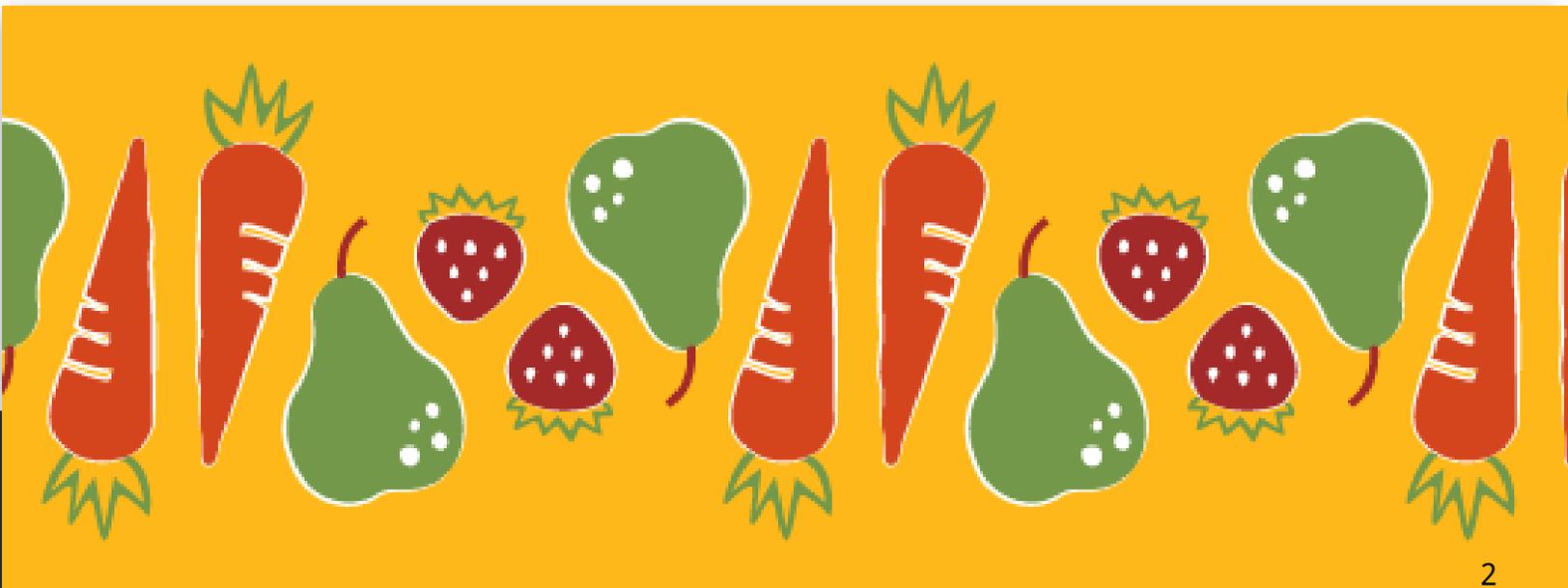


# The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement

## A Student's Guide to a Healthier Cafeteria

By  
The AZ Health Zone - Cooperative Extension -  
Nutritional Sciences

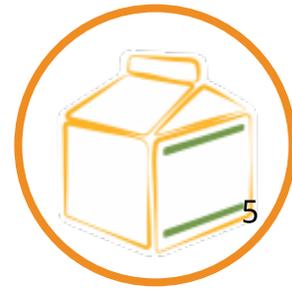
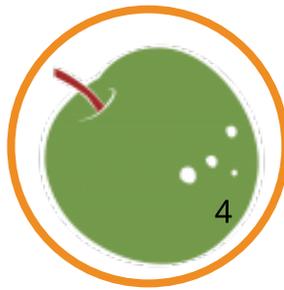
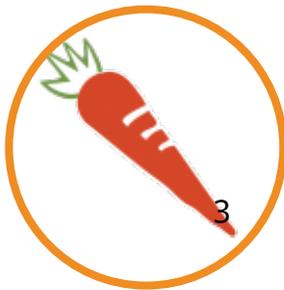


THE AZ HEALTH ZONE -  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION - NUTRITIONAL SCIENCES

# THE SMARTER LUNCHROOMS GUIDE

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Courtesy of the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement National Office and the B.E.N Center.

This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - SNAP through the AZ Health Zone. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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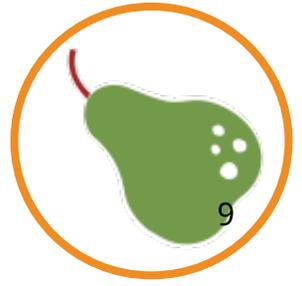
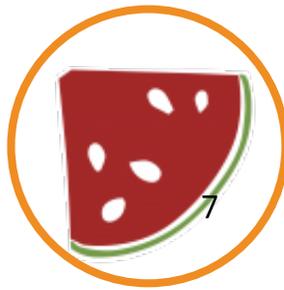




## THE GUIDE'S

# PURPOSE

is to provide simple and easy instructions for students to plan and make healthy changes in their lunchrooms.



**The purpose of this guide** is to give you, as students, an opportunity to provide your school with the knowledge, motivation, and resources needed to build a lunchroom environment that encourages your peers to make healthier choices.

**This guide provides** simple instructions on how to make healthy changes in your lunchroom using the principles of the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement. This guide also provides instructions on how to use the Smarter Lunchrooms' scorecard and how to improve your lunchroom's score. Suggestions that are offered on this guide goes beyond the strategies recommended by the Smarter Lunchrooms' scorecard. Instead, these suggestions are additional creative ideas to help you and your classmates begin and/or fulfill requirements on the scorecard. Moreover, this guide will help you and your classmates plan projects related to healthy eating such as taste test activities and start a farmer's market stand after school to help decrease fruit and vegetable waste. Some of the suggestions may require a teacher or cafeteria staff member to help you and your classmates plan and make changes. After reviewing the suggestions provided on this guide, come up with other creative ideas with your classmates on how to make your lunchroom fun and healthy. Share these ideas with your fellow classmates and teachers.

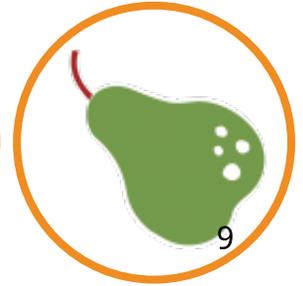
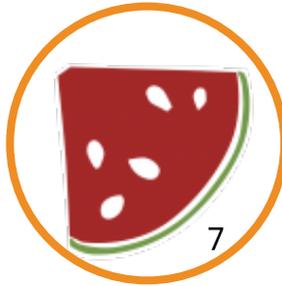


# INTRODUCTION



## THE SMARTER LUNCHROOMS MOVEMENT

is a nationwide movement that encourages students like yourselves to take action in building a healthier lunchroom.



## THE SMARTER LUNCHROOMS FOUR STEP PATH

### 1. SPOT!

Determine where your lunchroom stands before any changes are made by completing the Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard with a partner. Take "before" pictures during your first lunchroom observational tour.

### 2. PLAN!

Review your scorecard to determine areas of your lunchroom that meets the Smarter Lunchrooms criteria and areas to improve. Create a plan based on the areas that your lunchroom needs to improve on and identify small and large changes your team can work on during the school year.

### 3. DO!

Start making changes to your lunchroom based on the plan you created with your team. Make a few changes at a time and allow students to adjust before making new changes.

### 4. PROVE!

Take "after" pictures of your lunchroom and see the impact of the changes you have made. Complete the scorecard again at the end of the year and celebrate your success.



# SPOT!

## GET TO KNOW YOUR CAFETERIA

It is important that you know where your lunchroom stands before making any changes, and **the best way to start is by getting to know your cafeteria staff.**

Take time to meet up with your cafeteria staff before and during the Smarter Lunchrooms project. Ask them questions about the menu, meal preparations, foods that are discarded the most/least, foods that are most/least popular, and more topics only your cafeteria staff would know.

Continue to utilize your cafeteria staff as a resource during the year to help you know the condition of the lunchroom and monitor the progress of the changes in the lunchroom. **Keep a clear communication with your cafeteria staff.**



### Tip:

**Take pictures and have fun getting to know your lunchroom and cafeteria staff. Keep them updated on the changes you are making throughout the year.**

## COMPLETE THE SMARTER LUNCHROOMS SCORECARD

**STEP 1:** Choose two of your peers to complete the scorecard and schedule a lunchroom observation tour with your cafeteria manager.

**STEP 2:** Tour your lunchroom and complete the scorecard with your cafeteria manager during lunch time.

**STEP 3:** Have one student take the "before" pictures of the cafeteria and the lunchroom.

**STEP 4:** After completing the scorecard, make a folder for your photos and observations.



# PLAN!

## FORMING A TEAM

Now that you have completed the scorecard, create a plan for the school year incorporating the Smarter Lunchrooms strategies you want to focus on.

Gather a team of students, teachers, and staff to help you plan and implement changes in your lunchroom.

Assign tasks or roles to everyone on the team. Bigger projects can be assigned to multiple students while smaller tasks can be assigned to individual students.

Planning and implementing changes require teamwork so make sure everyone is involved in sharing ideas.

**SMARTER LUNCHROOMS SCORECARD**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ School Name \_\_\_\_\_ Completed by \_\_\_\_\_

The Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard is a list of simple, no-cost or low-cost strategies that can increase participation, reduce food waste, and increase selection and consumption of healthy school food.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Review the scorecard before beginning.
2. Observe a lunch period, check off statements that reflect the lunchroom.
3. Ask other school nutrition staff, teachers, or administration about items that have an asterisk.\*
4. Tally the score.
5. Discuss the results with stakeholders. Choose unchecked strategies to implement in the lunchroom.

SmarterLunchrooms.org

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**FOCUS ON FRUIT**

- At least two kinds of fruit are offered.
- Sliced or cut fruit is offered.
- A variety of mixed whole fruits are displayed in attractive bowls or baskets (instead of stainless steel pans).
- Fruit is offered in at least two locations on all service lines, one of which is right before each point of sale.

At least one fruit is identified as the featured fruit-of-the-day and is labeled with a creative, descriptive name at the point of selection.

A fruit taste test is offered at least once a year.\*

Focus on Fruit Subtotal \_\_\_\_ of 6

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**VARY THE VEGETABLES**

- At least two kinds of vegetables are offered.
- Vegetables are offered on all service lines.
- Both hot and cold vegetables are offered.
- When cut, raw vegetables are offered, they are paired with a low-fat dip such as ranch, hummus, or salsa.\*
- A serving of vegetables is incorporated into an entrée item at least once a month (e.g., beef and broccoli bowl, spaghetti, black bean burrito)\*.

Self-serve spices and seasonings are available for students to add flavor to vegetables.

At least one vegetable is identified as the featured vegetable-of-the-day and is labeled with a creative, descriptive name at the point of selection.

A vegetable taste test is offered at least once a year.\*

Vary the Vegetables Subtotal \_\_\_\_ of 8

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**HIGHLIGHT THE SALAD**

- Pre-packaged salads or a salad bar is available to all students.
- Self-serve salad bar tongs, scoops, and containers are larger for vegetables and smaller for croutons, dressing, and other non-produce items.

Pre-packaged salads or salad bar choices are labeled with creative, descriptive names and displayed next to each choice.

Highlight the Salad Subtotal \_\_\_\_ of 4

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**MOVE MORE WHITE MILK**

- Milk cases/coolers are kept full throughout meal service.
- White milk is offered in all beverage coolers.
- White milk is organized and represents at least 1/3 of all milk in each designated milk cooler.
- White milk is displayed in front of other beverages in all coolers.

1% or non-fat white milk is identified as the featured milk and is labeled with a creative, descriptive name.

Move More White Milk Subtotal \_\_\_\_ of 5

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**BOOST REIMBURSABLE MEALS**

- Cafeteria staff politely prompt students who do not have a full reimbursable meal to select a fruit or vegetable.
- One entrée is identified as the featured entrée-of-the-day, is labeled with a creative name next to the point of selection, and is the first entrée offered.
- Creative, descriptive names are used for featured items on the monthly menu.
- One reimbursable meal is identified as the featured combo meal and is labeled with a creative name.
- The combo meal of the day or featured entrée-of-the-day is displayed on a sample tray or photograph.

- A [reimbursable] combo meal is offered as a grab-and-go meal.
- Signs show students how to make a reimbursable meal on any service line (e.g., a sign that says "Add a milk, fruit and carrots to your pizza for the Power Pizza Meal Deal").
- Students can pre-order lunch in the morning or day before.\*
- Students must use cash to purchase à la carte snack items if available.
- Students have to ask a food service worker to select à la carte snack items if available.\*
- Students are offered a taste test of a new entrée at least once a year.\*

Reimbursable Meals Subtotal \_\_\_\_ of 11

© Smarter Lunchrooms Movement, Cornell University 2017

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## CREATE A PLAN FOR A SMARTER LUNCHROOM

**STEP 1:** Review your scorecard and determine the areas that your lunchroom is excelling at and those that need improvement.

**STEP 2:** Discuss with your team which Smarter Lunchroom strategies you want to work on and create a timeline for making these changes. Focus on 2-3 strategies per year.

**STEP 3:** Contact the cafeteria staff and make sure that they are aware of the changes that are going to be made. Give them a chance to ask questions and offer suggestions to the plan.

**STEP 4:** Do not be overwhelmed by all the strategies on the scorecard. Plan on making a few small changes first and then branch out to larger ones depending on your timeline and resources available.



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# DO!

## IMPLEMENTING SMARTER LUNCHROOMS STRATEGIES

You have spotted the changes that need to be made. You have taken "before" pictures and created a plan to improve your lunchroom, so now is the time to DO it!

The next few pages offer simple step-by-step instructions on what you can do to see certain outcomes in your lunchroom. These are just a few ideas, so come up with more on your own!



Altar Valley School Food Demonstration in Tucson, Arizona 14



## PUT YOUR PLANS INTO ACTION

**STEP 1:** Go over your plan with your team. Make sure everyone knows which Smarter Lunchroom strategies will be addressed.

**STEP 2:** Start with one of your smaller changes and then progressively move on to your bigger changes as the year goes by.

**STEP 3:** Keep a record of the changes you have already completed or are currently doing. Records can be in the form of pictures or writing.

**STEP 4:** Have fun making changes to your lunchroom!

## Tip:

**Take pictures as you are making changes to your lunchroom to keep a record of your progress. Use these pictures to later show the improvements that you have made to your lunchroom.**



# PROVE!



## CELEBRATING YOUR SMARTER LUNCHROOM

Now is the time to evaluate the impact of the changes you have made to your lunchroom in the past year. You saw what needed improvement, you made a plan, and you finally did it! It is time to show off your new Smarter Lunchroom to your school, parents, and community.



## KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK!

**STEP 1:** Choose two students to complete a NEW Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard with and schedule a lunchroom observation tour with your cafeteria manager.

**STEP 2:** Have one student take the "after" pictures of the cafeteria and the lunchroom.

- Try to take the photos from the same location/angles as your "before" photos to make comparisons easy.
- Date, label, and save your photos somewhere secure where you can access them later such as a school website.

**STEP 3:** After completing the scorecard, make a folder for your photos and observations.

**STEP 4:** Your Smarter Lunchroom Scorecard score most likely increased and your photos visually showed improvement. Your lunchroom now has evidence to help students make healthy choices. Share your success with your school, parents, and community! You can do this through a school newsletter, Facebook Page, etc.



# SUGGESTION 1

## SLICE THAT FRUIT!

Students sometimes find eating fruits and vegetables intimidating because of their size. Help make eating fruits and vegetables easier by asking your cafeteria staff to cut up your fruit before they are served. This can increase fruit and vegetable consumption during lunch and reduce food waste.



South Fork Elementary  
School, Idaho

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Bonneville High  
School 18

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## OFFERING SLICED OR CUT FRUIT

**STEP 1:** Encourage your lunchroom staff to slice your fruit.

**STEP 2:** Write a letter to your cafeteria staff and chefs explaining why you would like sliced fruit instead of whole fruit. Here are some key points you can include:

- Sliced fruit is more appealing to students than whole fruit because it is more convenient and easier to eat.
- Schools that offer pre-sliced fruit see students eat two times more fruit.
- Students like ready-to-eat bite-sized food better than bulky or whole foods.

**STEP 3:** Meet with your cafeteria manager and offer ideas of different sliced fruit that could be served. Some fruits you can include are sliced apples, peeled oranges, stemless grapes, cut strawberries, etc.

**STEP 4:** Slice the fruit and watch your peers make healthier decisions.



# SUGGESTION 2

## FRUIT/VEGGIE-OF-THE-DAY

Featuring a fruit and/or vegetable increases its visibility and makes it more attractive to students. Use creative, descriptive names to increase appetites because if it looks and sounds delicious, it **MUST BE** delicious! Choose one fruit and/or vegetable to be the fruit/vegetable-of-the-day and display it in a creative way in the service line.



## FEATURING FRUIT-OF-THE-DAY / VEGETABLE-OF-THE-DAY

**STEP 1:** Coordinate with a cafeteria staff member and choose one fruit and/or vegetable to be the "Fruit- and/or Vegetable-of-the-Day" and give it a catchy name. You can also decide to do a "Fruit- and/or Vegetable-of-the-Week" instead of choosing a different item daily. Here are some examples that you can use:

- Juicy Grapes
- Monkey Phones (bananas)
- Snappy Apples
- X-ray Vision Carrots
- Sizzlin' Beans
- Cool-As-Cucumber Slices
- Power Peas
- Tasty Tiny Tree Tops (broccoli)

**STEP 2:** Create a decorative sign for the Fruit- or Vegetable-of-the-Day. Write descriptions of the fruit or vegetable (health benefits, interesting facts, etc.) and why students should eat it.

**STEP 3:** Place the sign next to the service line so that students can see it and use it to advertise the fruit or vegetable for that day.



# SUGGESTION 3

## TASTE-TESTING STATION

Help students overcome their fear of new fruits or vegetables by putting up a taste-test station for students to try fruits and/or vegetables without having to commit to a whole serving. Make an event to offer free fruit and vegetable tastings at least once a year to increase students intake of fruits and/or vegetables.



## TASTE TEST OR SAMPLING STATION

**STEP 1:** Coordinate with your lunchroom staff to offer a fruit or vegetable taste-test at least once a year during students' lunch time.

**STEP 2:** Write a letter to your cafeteria staff explaining why students would benefit from having a taste-test. Here are some key points you can include:

- Taste-testing exposes students to new smells, taste, and textures.
- It encourages students to try new fruits and vegetables.
- It allows students to try the fruit/vegetable first before taking too much and throwing it away.

**STEP 3:** Make survey sheets for students to fill out after they have taste tested the fruit or vegetable. Did they like it or not like it? What did they like or not like about it?

**STEP 4:** Watch students have fun test-tasting different fruits and vegetables!



# SUGGESTION 4

## SPICE UP THE VEGETABLE!

People say "variety is the spice of life," so why can't this be true for vegetables, too? Well now they can. Let your peers spice up their lunch by adding a flavor station with herbs and spices at the end of the service line or at a separate cafeteria table. Have fun choosing which spices to offer but make sure your spices are calorie and sodium free!



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Billerica Public Schools, Massachusetts

## SPICE AND SEASONING STATION

**STEP 1:** Coordinate with your lunchroom staff to offer a flavor station for you and your peers to experiment with different spices and seasonings and to encourage students to eat more vegetables.

**STEP 2:** Think of simple spices and flavors that the lunchroom staff could include. Some ideas are:

- Lemon juice or slices
- Parsley flakes
- Garlic powder
- Cinnamon
- Vinegar and olive oil
- Hot sauce

**STEP 3:** Add labels with suggestions for what items these spices taste good on. For example:

- Cinnamon on sweet potatoes or applesauce
- Oregano on cooked carrot medley
- Garlic powder on green beans



DO!

# SUGGESTION 5

## COLORFUL SALAD BAR

Make your salad bar fun and colorful by using creative names and labels to highlight the salad bar. This will put healthy options in the spotlight and help students realize the variety of different fruits and vegetables offered at the salad bar. Let students know how delicious the salad bar is by creating appetizing names for each salad bar option.



Corvina-Valley Unified School District, California.

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## DESCRIPTIVE NAMES FOR SALAD BAR

**STEP 1:** Use creative names to draw the student body's attention to the salad bar.

**STEP 2:** Think of fun and catchy names for your salad bar options. You can even incorporate your school colors or mascot into the names! Here are a few ideas:

- Turbo Tomatoes
- X-ray Vision Carrots
- The Athlete's Meal
- Sunny Salad

**STEP 3:** Coordinate with a cafeteria staff member and use signs and/or a sample plate of salad to advertise the salad bar and demonstrate appropriate portion size.

**STEP 4:** Put the signs and the sample plate next to the salad bar and watch students make healthier decisions.



# SUGGESTION 6

## FEATURE MILK

Milk has important nutrients that are essential for growing kids. Both white and flavored milk are offered at schools, but some communities express concern about the amount of sugar in flavored milk. Instead of taking away flavored milk, promote 1% or fat-free white milk by advertising the benefits of white milk and creating catchy names.



## HIGHLIGHTING THE FEATURED MILK

**STEP 1:** Choose 1% or fat-free white milk as the featured milk.

**STEP 2:** Think of some catchy names or fun facts about the milk and create fun signs to be displayed next to the milk. Here are some ideas:

- Moo-Moo Milk
- Contains calcium for strong bones!
- Mighty Milk

**STEP 3:** Coordinate with your lunchroom staff to make sure white milk is offered in all beverage coolers and is displayed in front of the other beverages in the coolers.

**STEP 4:** Watch students take the milk, drink it, and become stronger from all that calcium and vitamin D.



# SUGGESTION 7

## DISPLAYING POSTERS IN DINING AND SERVICE AREAS

The lunchroom is a place for students to socialize, eat, and take a break from a long day of school work. Make the lunchroom look friendlier, cleaner, and brighter by displaying student-made posters in the dining and service areas of the lunchroom. This will help make the lunchroom a place students want to be.



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## DISPLAY POSTERS

**STEP 1:** Design posters for your lunchroom! Collaborate with classroom teachers or school clubs to create lunchroom- and/or nutrition-themed artwork with students.

**STEP 2:** You can also print out free/inexpensive posters that are available online through federal and nonprofit organizations like the AZ Health Zone. Go online with a teacher or staff member and select posters with a teacher's permission.

**STEP 3:** Choose posters that encourage your peers to try healthy food options or posters with nutrition facts or health benefits.

**STEP 4:** Hang up the hand-made or printed posters in the lunchroom so that students can read them while waiting in the service line or eating lunch in the dining area. Watch the lunchroom become a brighter and friendlier place to eat.



# SUGGESTION 8

## MENU BOARD

Do you know what is offered at lunch today? It is common for students to come to school not knowing what they will be served. Change that by creating a menu board of lunches that will be served that week! A neat and colorful menu board will not only bring a brighter feel to the lunchroom but also stimulate students' appetite!



## CREATING A MENU BOARD

**STEP 1:** Find your lunchroom's menu for the month by going online through your district website. Ask a teacher for assistance if you need help finding the menu.

**STEP 2:** Get a menu board, such as a whiteboard, and write the menu options in clear handwriting. You want the menu to be clearly visible from five feet away.

**STEP 3:** Once the menu is written, make it look fun. Add some color, borders, pictures, and highlight the featured items. Some ideas include:

- Veggie and fruit of the day
- Special named meals such as "Bobcat Meal" (use your mascot instead of bobcat)
- Special entrees

**STEP 4:** Coordinate with a lunchroom staff member and place the menu board at the front of every service line and watch students get excited for the offered lunch meals! If you have a TV screen, you can also use that to highlight the menu for the week.



DO!

# SUGGESTION 9

## DAILY ANNOUNCEMENTS



Morning announcements offer a great opportunity to prime students' appetites and get them excited for lunch, so use it to your advantage! Encourage front office staff to announce the daily lunch special, the fruit- and/or vegetable-of-the-day, and any other special events that might happen during lunch in a fun and interesting way during morning announcements.



## DAILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

**STEP 1:** Choose 1-2 students to make the announcements everyday. If the students are unable to make the announcements, ask a staff member to take on the role.

**STEP 2:** Coordinate with the front office and cafeteria staff about the time and content you can say during the morning announcements.

**STEP 3:** Plan out what you will say before you say it on the morning announcements. Let the entire school know every morning what is on the menu that day. Here are examples of announcements you can make:

- "Today on the menu is Asian Beef and Broccoli Bowl, Rainbow Crunch Salad, Snappy Apples, and Moo-Moo Milk."



DO!

# SUGGESTION 10

## CHEF FOR A DAY

Getting students just like you involved in the lunchroom can help develop character and pride in their school. It can also provide important insight into students' food preferences. Plan a day for students to become a chef for a day with the lunchroom staff and make this a fun opportunity for your fellow classmates to be helpful and creative in the lunchroom!



## CHEF FOR A DAY

**STEP 1:** Coordinate with a lunchroom staff member and teacher to gather the ingredients, utensils, and to set aside 30 minutes for this activity once a year.

**STEP 2:** Choose six students to participate in this activity.

**STEP 3:** Create three teams of two students each.

**STEP 4:** The challenge is to create the best salad you can. You can use any vegetables, herbs, dressings, etc.

**STEP 5:** Once the salad is created, name it.

**STEP 6:** Next, take a vote by tasting the salad.

**STEP 7:** The winning salad can be passed out during lunch time.



DO!

# SUGGESTION 11

## STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

Get your peers involved in the ins and outs of the Smarter Lunchroom program. This will enable students to be excited about lunch, and it will get more student participation in the Smarter Lunchroom program, too. Have students sign up for different roles like wiping down tables after lunch or decorating posters for the lunchroom.



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## STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

**STEP 1:** Reach out to your student body and ask if they would be interested in volunteering in the lunchroom during their lunch period or study hall.

**STEP 2:** Create a list of jobs these students can do throughout their lunch period. Here are some examples below:

- Help create posters and signs
- Decorate the service line
- Help younger students with lunch line selection
- Keep an eye on the recycling and compost stations

**STEP 3:** For older students, ask a teacher if volunteering in the lunchroom could count towards their community service hours.



# SUGGESTION 12

## STUDENT SURVEYS

Feedback is very helpful in figuring out what parts of the school's lunch service students like and don't like. Have your peers fill out a short survey about the school's lunch service and see what they say! In the long run, this could save the school money and make students happier about their meal choices.



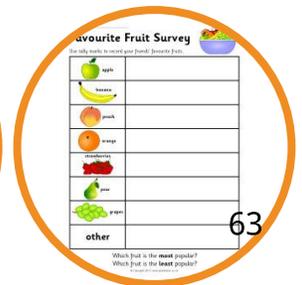
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## STUDENT SURVEYS

**STEP 1:** Choose a few students to help lead a survey.

**STEP 2:** After asking a teacher what time is best, go into a classroom and ask students what they like. You can even conduct this survey after lunch.

**STEP 3:** There are many different surveys you can do. Choose one that is right for your school! An example of one is below:

- "Raise your hand if you liked the creamy Alfredo pasta sauce better than the turbo tomato pasta sauce."

**STEP 4:** Record your findings and give them to the food service director so they can use it for future meal planning.



DO!

# SUGGESTION 13

## SAVE INSTEAD OF WASTE

When students get full or do not like an item they bought, don't let them throw it away. Instead, have them put it in a "save-instead-of-waste" box created by your team! Decorate a box or bin and set it out every lunch period and see unwanted foods like untouched and uneaten fruits and vegetables being saved instead of thrown away.



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## CREATING A BOX FOR WASTE

**STEP 1:** Have a few students decorate 2-3 medium-sized boxes or bins.

**STEP 2:** Label the boxes and set them out in the lunchroom at every lunch period.

**STEP 3:** Advertise the boxes and encourage students to put their unwanted food in the box at the end of their lunch period instead of throwing it away. Make sure the food has not been eaten, you do not want a half-eaten apple in the save boxes.

**STEP 4:** There are many different things you can do with the leftovers. Coordinate with a teacher and think of the best way to utilize the leftover food. Here are some ideas below:

- Hand it out to students to be eaten as snacks during the school day
- Give it to students and families to take home
- Donate it to a local food bank or charity



DO!

# SUGGESTION 14

## FARMERS' MARKET



Farmers' markets are not only for farmers; you can hold a farmers' market, too! When you have a lot of leftover fruits and vegetables, an after-school farmers' market is a great way to advertise all the food you have and reduce food waste. It also encourages families to try new foods and learn new recipes to make at home.



## FARMERS' MARKET

**STEP 1:** Coordinate with a lunchroom staff member about opening up an after school farmers' market using the leftover fruits/ vegetables from lunch or the waste boxes.

**STEP 2:** Designate at least five students to be in charge of setting up, running, and taking down the farmers' market.

**STEP 3:** Determine where you will display the fruits and vegetables. Will it be in your lunchroom, classroom, or outside?

**STEP 4:** Advertise this event through announcements, newsletters, etc. Encourage students and families to come and check out all the produce!

**STEP 5:** Encourage your school and community to try new dishes. Go online and find recipes that you can give out to people based on the produce you have. A website that has great recipes is [azhealthzone.org](http://azhealthzone.org).



# IMAGE REFERENCES

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