



Marketing School and Summer Meals

A Guide to Jumpstarting Communication

Schools and parents work hard to keep kids well fed. Unfortunately, when it comes to school and summer meals, providing good food isn't enough. Parents and students need to know about the food — what is in it, what it tastes like, where to find it, how to get it and how much it costs. This toolkit will help you share all of that vital information. Use this quickstart guide to help you navigate the variety of materials and find best practices for implementing them. Many of them are also customizable to help you get the ball rolling.

Available Documents:

A handful of resources are available to start sharing messages right away. These can be used in their entirety and simply need to be printed and posted.

Printed Material

Several print materials are already prepared and ready to be shared. These documents focus on different audiences, so use the one that fits your needs.



Mythbusters: For parents. Addresses common misconceptions about school and summer meals.



By the Numbers: For parents. Data and proof points to back up messages.



Talking Points: For schools. Messages and tips to spread the word.

Social Posts

Prepared social posts make marketing easy. These posts take advantage of the specialized tools of social media platforms to deliver messages to parents and older high school students.

Outreach Content

E-newsletters can share in-depth information and personal stories about the people involved in delivering school and summer meals. This template can get you started with your own newsletter content and provides direction about what to include in each dispatch.

Posters and Signage

Help students and their parents keep school and summer meals in mind by placing posters and signage in high-traffic areas. These focus on the nutrition and variety of school and summer meals and should encourage these audiences to choose meals served at your school.

Web Banners

Promote nutritious school and summer meals on school websites or other local partner sites. Parents visit these sites to stay up to date on school information, and banners help put information right at the top of the page and can link back to other relevant information.

Tested Strategies

Facebook:

Facebook remains the most popular social media platform with parents, according to our research. Keep messages visually engaging and short on text. Posts should include a visual - either a photo or video - and a short one- or two-sentence post to quickly share information that audiences can interact with. Longer posts can be successful, but these should also include a brief takeaway first or a visual that can share a key point for those who won't spend the time reading the entire post.

Instagram:

Instagram is the primary channel we'll be using to reach older students. Visuals are even more important here. Posts on your feed will remain there permanently and keep engaging content available for users to find again later. Stories and Reels can pull users in but are only available for a limited time. Make sure to use an attractive image — showcasing colorful food, staff preparing or serving meals or students eating together.

Email and Text Messages:

Parents prefer email and text communication. These channels allow them to view messages on their own time. Also, be sure to respect parents' time by sticking to the essentials.

What To Do

Remember most viewers are parents. Focus on short posts highlighting healthy food. Share messages about how nutritious the food is or the cultural or dietary variety available. Be sure to give advance notice about important dates, like special meals and busy times of the year where parents might choose school lunches over making food at home and how that might help them save time or money.

What To Do

Reach the student audience with honesty and humor. Take advantage of the visual aspects of the platform by posting colorful pictures of food. Highlight tasty looking food, fresh ingredients, the “human” element of preparing meals for hungry students and a “behind-the-scenes” look at how the food gets onto students' plates. Make sure you're taking pictures in good lighting, so the food looks natural and appealing.

What To Do

Include school meal program information in newsletter content. Be sure to give parents links to find more information or enroll if appropriate. Remind parents about what meal options are available and how and where to access them.



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