

October 2025



MMSD Food & Nutrition at Kennedy PTO

Molly Gregory, RD
Dr. Jennifer Gaddis

We are the largest restaurant chain in USA.



School cafeterias
in America **serve**
45 million **meals** a
day



Overview of School Meals

USDA Requirements

- Breakfast: Five menu items offered from three required food groups - three items must be taken by student. One must be fruit.
- Lunch: 5 components offered, three must be taken by the student. One must be a fruit or vegetable.

Menu Planning and Communications

- Changes to the menu are communicated via social media and SchoolCafe emails for all those with an account.
- @mmsd_schoolfood

New Menu Items

- Hot Honey Chicken Thigh with Smoky BBQ Rice
- Butter Chicken with Cilantro-Lime Rice
- Burrito Bowl with Chicken or Black Beans
- Garlic Roasted Tofu on Golden Rice



Breakfast

Cereal



Muffins



Juice



Last Year: Processed Food

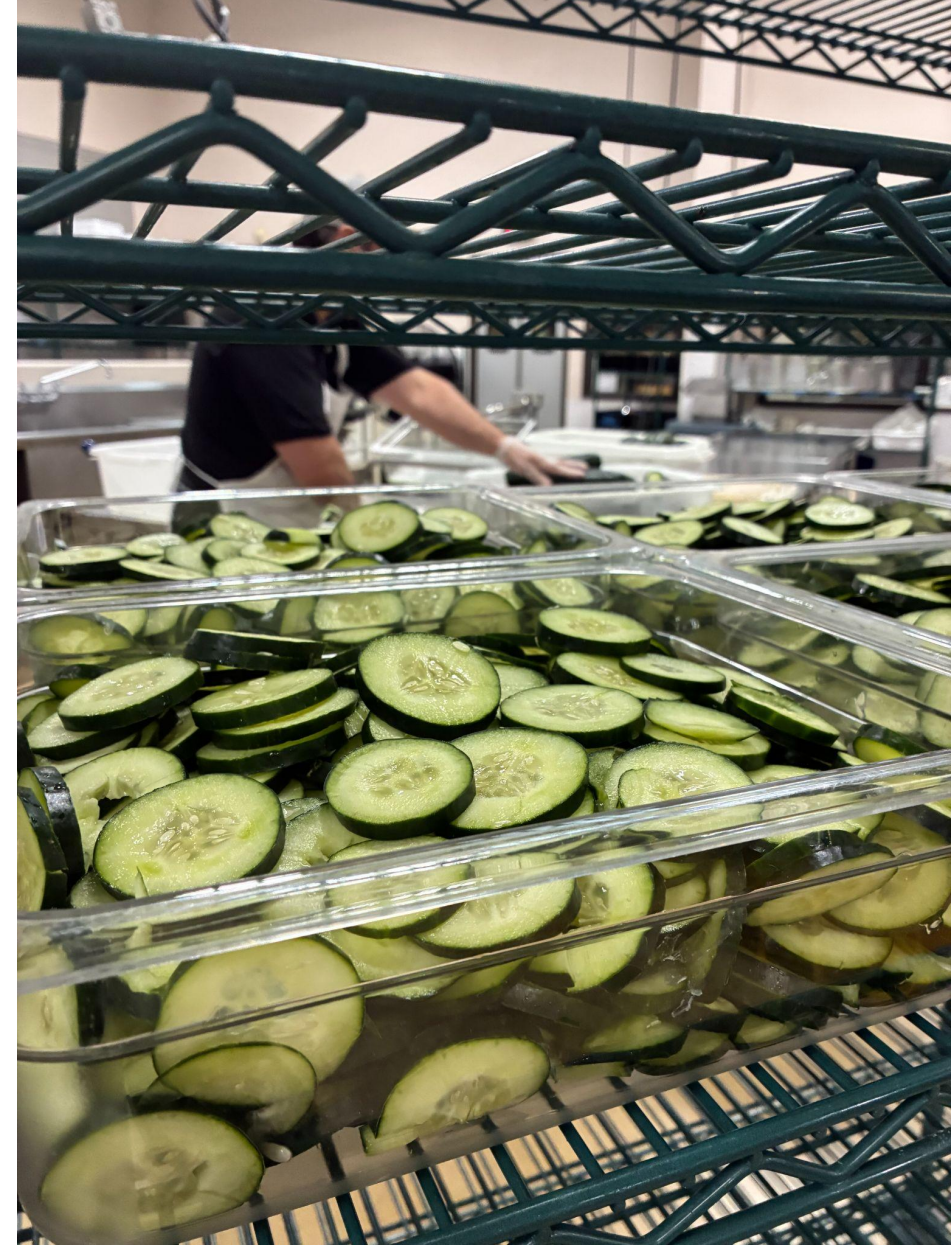
:WHOLE WHEAT FLOUR, SUGAR, EGGS, WATER, ENRICHED FLOUR (WHEAT FLOUR, MALTED BARLEY FLOUR, NIACIN, IRON, THIAMINE MONONITRATE, RIBOFLAVIN, FOLIC ACID), BLUEBERRIES, INVERT SUGAR, SOYBEAN OIL, CONTAINS 2% OR LESS OF: PALM OIL, CANOLA OIL, OAT FIBER, LEAVENING (SODIUM ALUMINUM PHOSPHATE, BAKING SODA, MONOCALCIUM PHOSPHATE), MODIFIED CORN STARCH, POTASSIUM SORBATE (PRESERVATIVE), PROPYLENE GLYCOL ESTER OF FATTY ACIDS, SODIUM ALGINATE, NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL FLAVOR, SALT, MONO- AND DIGLYCERIDES, NATURAL BLUEBERRY FLAVOR, SOY LECITHIN, SODIUM STEAROYL LACTYLATE, BLUEBERRY JUICE CONCENTRATE, MALIC ACID, BLACKBERRY JUICE CONCENTRATE, ENZYMES. CONTAINS: EGGS, SOY, WHEAT

2025-26 School Year : Homemade

- Blueberries
- White Wheat Flour, All Purpose Flour, Granulated Sugar
- Plain Yogurt, Skim Milk, Applesauce, Vegetable Oil
- Vanilla, Baking Soda, Salt



How MMSD Operates



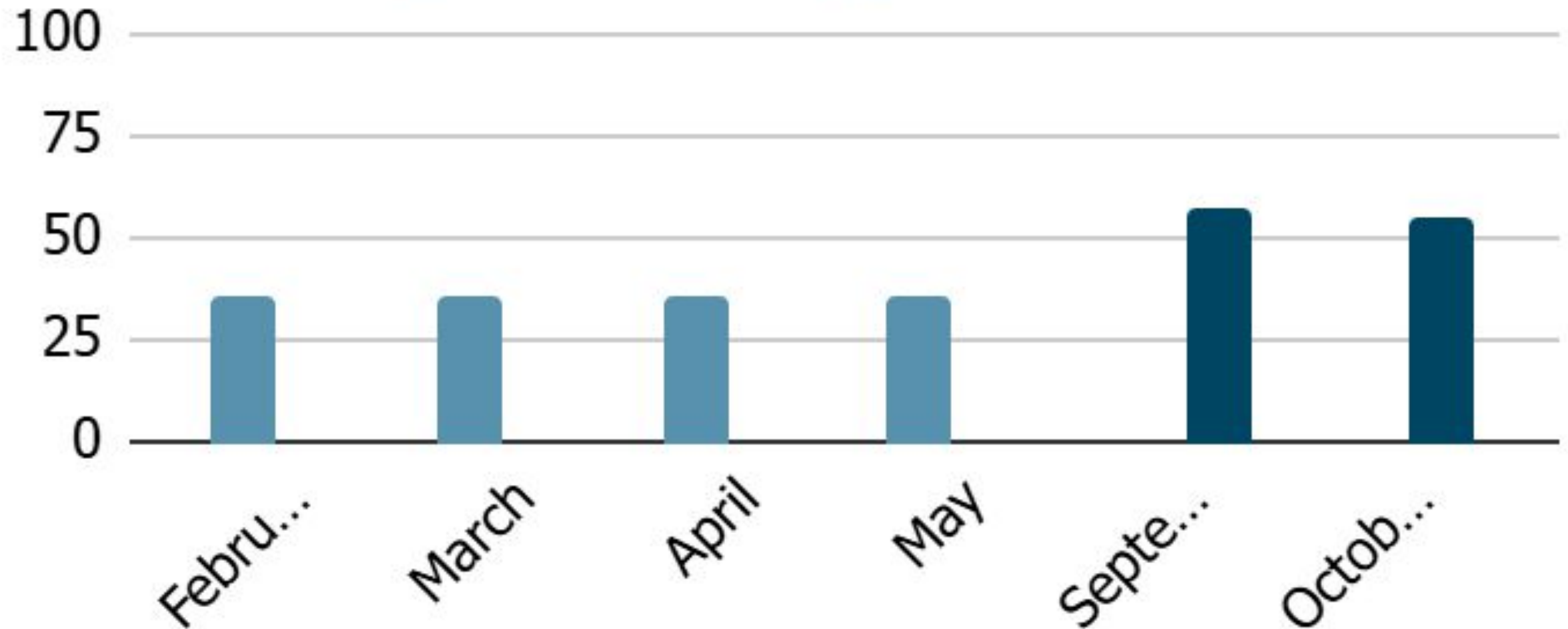


Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)



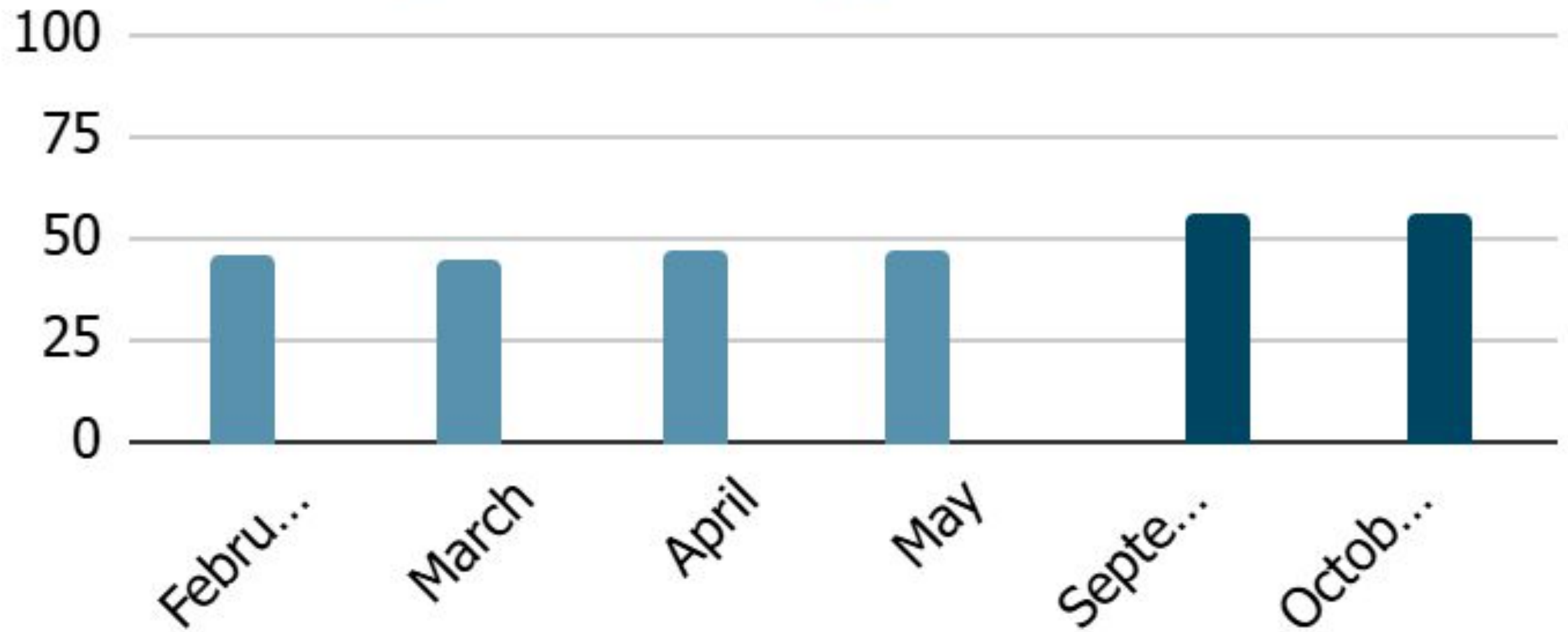
Breakfast Participation at Kennedy

■ 2024-2025 ■ 2025-2026



Lunch Participation at Kennedy

■ 2024-2025 ■ 2025-2026



Family Feedback:

Why do you pack meals from home?

A large group of graduates in maroon caps and gowns are seated in a stadium, likely attending a graduation ceremony. The graduates are looking in various directions, some towards the camera and others away. The background shows a large crowd of people, suggesting a significant event.

Nutrition

Perceived poor nutrition quality.

We can discuss how salad bar variety and whole-grain rich offerings.

Garden Bars at MMSD schools



Garden Bars



Picky Eater

If your child has a limited palette, feel free to bring their favorite entree and allow us to expand their palette with the garden bar. Take a milk, fruit and vegetable portion and the meal is still free!





Cost

All meals are free for
all students at
Kennedy.

School Meals For All!

- Participation helps your school
- Creates more local jobs
- Decreases the stigma for children who do participate in school meals

**“School
Meals aren’t
for me”**





**Socializing over a
shared meal**





**Now over to Jen
for some ideas...**

**What can families
do to improve
school meals at the
local level?**

Partner with MMSD to improve food quality!

- Ensure all school/PTO events follow existing [wellness policy guidelines](#) and Smart Snack standards
- Help MMSD apply for grants (e.g., [Chef Ann](#), [Lake MI Innovation Hub](#))
- Make farm-to-school connections (e.g., tell Molly if you know a farmer who can provide items for the Kennedy garden bar)
- Work with other MMSD PTOs and community orgs to identify the most needed and desired changes to menus
- Increase MMSD's capacity to introduce changes by providing temporary support during the roll out of new initiatives
- Support MMSD unions in [bargaining for the collective good](#)



Promote the MTI Social Media Campaign!

Myths

The Truth About School Lunch

Myth	Fact
School lunch is not healthy	School lunch includes fruits, veggies, whole grains, lean protein, and low-fat or fat-free milk. Recent studies show that since new nutritional standards were implemented in 2010, children's BMI has gone down.
School lunch does not affect how students learn	Children and adolescents experiencing hunger are more likely to perform poorly academically, have behavioral issues, and to be absent or truant.
Children won't eat the lunches that are provided	Repetition is key! Research shows that kids tend to eat a larger variety of foods when they get repeated exposures to them in a peer setting.

BONUS BENEFIT

School lunches save caretakers money, time, and mental energy! Shopping, planning, packing, and cleaning are all taken care of at school and frees caretakers up to do other things, while exposing students to new and nutritious foods.

Call to Action

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Commit to purchasing school lunch 1-2 days a week. More participation = more funding = better ingredients.

Advocate to our local politicians to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students!

Visit <https://www.madison.k12.wi.us/food-service/menus> or scan the code for school lunch menus!

Caregiver

MTI MADISON TEACHERS INC. **nea NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION** **EJCT**

MMSD PARENTS: A CALL TO ACTION

OPT IN TO SCHOOL LUNCH!

COMMIT TO 1-2 DAYS A WEEK

More participation = more funding = better ingredients.

ADVOCATE

Let your legislators know you support the Healthy School Meals for All!

View MMSD breakfast and lunch menus and make a plan!

Contact your reps!

Communit

nea NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION **MTI MADISON TEACHERS INC.** **EJCT**

How do Healthy School Meals for All benefit YOUR community?

Benefit 1: More Jobs

Providing healthy meals to all students will require more cafeteria workers and farmers, two groups that were greatly affected by the pandemic.

Benefit 2: Investment in Wisconsin Agriculture

Higher participation allows schools to purchase better quality, local ingredients. Money goes straight to our Wisconsin farmers who can provide ingredients right to their own communities.

Benefit 3: Safer, happier communities

Think of meals at summer camp – a time for relaxation, socialization, and joy. Once the stigma of the association with poverty is removed, school lunchrooms can become the hospitable places that they were always intended to be.

Call to Action

How can you help?

1. Repost this graphic on your own social media!
2. Let your legislators know you support the Healthy School Meals for All – a bill for Universal School Meals in Wisconsin.
3. Encourage your local school board to adopt a resolution supporting the Healthy School Meals for All bill.

Scan here to let your legislators know it's time to ensure all students have access to school meals!

Social Justice

MTI MADISON TEACHERS INC. **nea NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION** **EJCT**

SMALL WAYS TO SUPPORT FOOD JUSTICE

ADVOCATE

Fight for MMSD workers to stay in Madison!

Tell the school board to approve an 8% cost of living increase so MMSD workers can afford to live in the communities they work in! Better pay = more workers in food service!

SUPPORT

Buy into school lunches 1-2x a week!

More participation = more federal \$ coming in

More participation = more food service jobs available

More participation = more local farmers/growers supported!

SHARE!

Contact your local representatives!

Tell them you support Free Healthy School Lunches for ALL children!

Share on social media!

Let other friends/family know why supporting Free Healthy School Lunch for All Students is so important by sharing this info!

**One of the most
powerful tools you
have is advocacy
and community
organizing!**



7 Key Findings on The Benefits of Healthy School Meals for All

Healthy Eating Research

Schools play a vital role in promoting children's health and well-being. In the United States, schools contribute significantly to children's overall diet quality and can provide up to half of their daily calories, especially among children from low-income families. Providing healthy school meals for all is a policy opportunity to help all children eat healthier. Healthy School Meals for all, also known as universal free school meals, provides all enrolled children in a school operating the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs a free breakfast or lunch, regardless of their family's income.

A new [systematic review](#) included in a [Special Issue](#) in the journal *Nutrients* highlights the international evidence regarding the impact of healthy school meals for all on students' school meal participation rates, nutrition and dietary intakes, food security, academic performance, attendance, body mass index (BMI), and school finances. A total of 47 studies were included in the review; 25 were conducted in the United States and 22 were conducted in other countries with developed economies.

The 7 key findings from the systematic review in the Special Issue reveal how healthy school meals for all benefit students and schools.

1 School Meal Participation

Nearly all studies found that providing healthy school meals for all is associated with increases in the number of students participating in the school meal program.



2 Diet Quality

The majority of studies found that providing healthy school lunches for all is positively associated with better student diet quality, particularly in the presence of strong school nutrition standards that include fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.



3 Food Security

There is evidence that providing healthy school meals for all improves food security among students and families with lower incomes, although only a limited number of studies have evaluated this outcome.



4 Academic Performance

Nearly half of the studies found that providing healthy school lunches for all is positively associated with students' academic performance (and no studies found an adverse impact on academic performance). More research is needed to understand the link between breakfast and academic achievement.

Academic performance may be influenced by healthy school meals for all directly through improvements in nutrition, as well as indirectly through increases in school attendance rates.



5 Attendance

Half of the studies found that providing healthy school meals for all significantly improves student attendance among students from lower-income and food-insecure households (and no studies found an adverse impact on attendance).



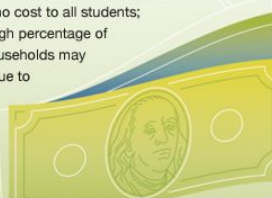
6 Body Mass Index

Healthy school meals for all with strong nutrition standards has been shown to not increase student Body Mass Index.



7 Finances

There is some evidence in the U.S. that school food service budgets benefit from use of the community eligibility provision (CEP), an option that allows schools in high poverty areas to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all students; In particular, schools with a high percentage of students from low-income households may benefit financially from CEP due to increased revenues from federal reimbursements of school meals served.



Three Pathways to Healthy School Meals for All



Healthy School Meals for All Legislation

California (2022-203 budget)

- \$600 million for school kitchen and equipment upgrades to support scratch cooking
- \$611.8 million on an ongoing basis to supplement federal reimbursement rates
- \$45 million to support the California [Healthy School Meals Pathway](#) program for school foodservice workers
- Local purchasing grants

Colorado (scheduled for 2024-25; now on pause with voter referendum scheduled for November 2025)

- Wage boost grants
 - School districts are eligible to receive grants to boost wages and benefits for front-line cafeteria workers
- Parent and student advisory committees
 - These committees give decision-making power to students and parents to advise their district on food selection to ensure meals are culturally relevant, healthy and appealing.
- Local purchasing grants

Join local advocacy groups!



- Broad statewide coalition of public institutions, civil society organizations, elected officials, teachers, parents/caregivers, and youth
- Goal: school breakfast and lunch available to all K-12 Wisconsin students at no charge
- Organizing to pass a state-level healthy school meals for all bill (previously introduced)
- Intermediate work to get school board and organizational endorsement
- Learn more [here](#).



- Coalition of local groups including Madison Area Democratic Socialists of America, Freedom Inc., Wisconsin Poor People's Campaign, Families for Justice, and more
- Goal: all MMSD students guaranteed access to free and healthy breakfast and lunch
- Fundraising to pay down school meal debt
- Calling on school board to use funds from the November 2024 referendum to transition to a free school lunch model by SY 2026-27
- Learn more [here](#).




School lunch tray showing the Center for Good Food Purchasing's five core values: nutrition, valued workforce, local economies, environmental sustainability, animal welfare

INGREDIENTS OF CONCERN			
Ingredient	What is it?	Where is it found in school foods?	Why is it a cause for concern?
Artificial Flavors	Synthesized flavors added to impart tastes that are not a spice or whole food.	Many processed foods.	Indicates the absence of whole ingredients. Some people may be sensitive to certain flavoring ingredients, such as MSG, gluten, or hydrolyzed vegetable protein (HVP).
Artificial Colors/ Synthetic Food Dyes	Dyes, usually derived from coal tar, added to foods in order to make items look more appealing.	Many processed foods. Names found on product labels include: Blue 1, Blue 2, Green 3, Red 3, Red 40, Yellow 5, Yellow 6, Caramel Color, and Erythrosine.	Some are known to cause allergic or hypersensitivity reactions which may be severe or life-threatening. There are also links with behavioral problems, and some pose a small risk of cancer.
Artificial Sweeteners	Non-nutritive sweeteners added to foods.	Low or no calorie food items, such as diet soda, no or low sugar baked items, yogurts. Also named: aspartame Neotame, Acesulfame-K, Saccharin, Sucralose.	May cause dizziness or headaches in some people. Animal studies indicate a link between aspartame and lymphomas. Not shown to reduce the risk of Type 2 Diabetes.
Azodicarbonamide (ADA)	An additive used to strengthen dough.	Pizza crusts, baked products.	The use of ADA increases risk of being exposed to Semicarbazide, a byproduct that is a suspected carcinogen.
Benzoates	Prevents the growth of microorganisms in acidic foods.	Fruit juices, processed food products. Also named: Sodium Benzoate, Potassium Benzoate, Calcium Benzoate, Ethyl 4-hydroxybenzoate, Propyl 4-hydroxybenzoate, Methyl 4-hydroxybenzoate.	May cause hyperactivity in children. Sodium benzoate can react with added Vitamin C to make Benzene, a cancer-causing substance.
Bleached Flour	Bleaching process eliminates need for aging flour, producing better baking results.	Breads, pizza crusts, crackers.	Bleaching process creates a toxic byproduct (alloxan).
Bromated Flour	Flour that contains Potassium Bromate, an oxidizing agent used to improve and strengthen dough.	Breads, pizza crusts, crackers.	Potassium Bromate is considered "possibly carcinogenic to humans" by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. [1]
Butylated Hydroxyanisole (BHA)	Antioxidant preservative	Processed products, particularly meats, cereals and oils.	Listed in the official US government "Report on Carcinogens" as "reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen."
Butylated Hydroxytoluene (BHT)	Antioxidant preservative	Processed products, particularly meats, cereals and oils.	Linked to cancer in some animal studies.
Caramel Color	Coloring that can be made by heating a sugar compound with or without an ammonium compound, acids, or alkalis. Used to make foods look more appealing.	Baked goods, pre-cooked meats, soy sauces. Caramel color is regarded as a natural ingredient and is class I-IV.	When produced with ammonia, can contain contaminants (2-methylimidazole and 4-methylimidazole) which have been found to cause cancer in mice. The WHO have concluded that these contaminants are "possibly carcinogenic to humans" [2]
Carrageenan	Polysaccharides that are extracted from edible red seaweeds. Used for their gelling, thickening and stabilizing properties.	Salad dressings, Fruit Snacks, Non-Dairy milks, Fat Free Chocolate Milks.	Reported to cause gastro intestinal problems in people, and inflammation in animal studies. Animal studies suggest tumor promotion or initiation.
EDTA	Used as a food preservative, prevents foods from reacting to metals in canning water.	Canned vegetables and meats, pickled foods.	EDTA can cause abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, low blood pressure, skin problems, and fever in large amounts. [3]
Guanosine Monophosphate (GMP)	Used to enhance the meaty (umami) flavor of foods.	Soups Sauces, Seasonings. Different forms are named: disodium guanylate, dipotassium guanylate, and calcium guanylate.	Linked to hyperactivity in children and aggravating asthma symptoms. [4]
Monosodium Glutamate (MSG)	Used to enhance the meaty (umami) flavor of foods.	Many processed foods, and as an ingredient in artificial flavorings.	Large amounts have been shown to cause reactions in some people, including headache, nausea, weakness, and a burning sensation on the back of the neck and forearms. Some people report wheezing, changes in heart rate, and difficulty breathing, and reactions to small amounts.
High Fructose Corn Syrup	Sweetener derived from corn.	Common in many kinds of processed foods, not limited to sweets.	Indicates added sugars.
Hormones/Antibiotics	Encourages rapid growth of farm animals.	Meats and animal products	Increases exposure to unnecessary antibiotics and could increase antibiotic resistance in pathogens

Ingredients of concern shared by Minneapolis Public Schools



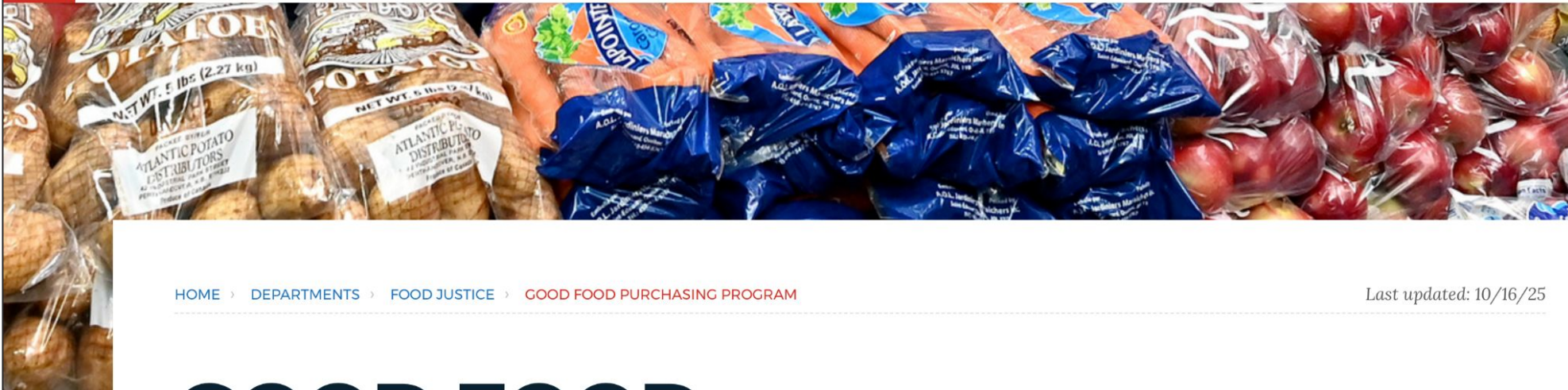
Madison-level Action: Advocate for adoption of the Good Food Purchasing Policy

**CITY of BOSTON**

Mayor Michelle Wu

INFORMATION AND SERVICESPUBLIC NOTICESEEDBACK

简体



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Last updated: 10/16/25


GOOD FOOD PURCHASING PROGRAM

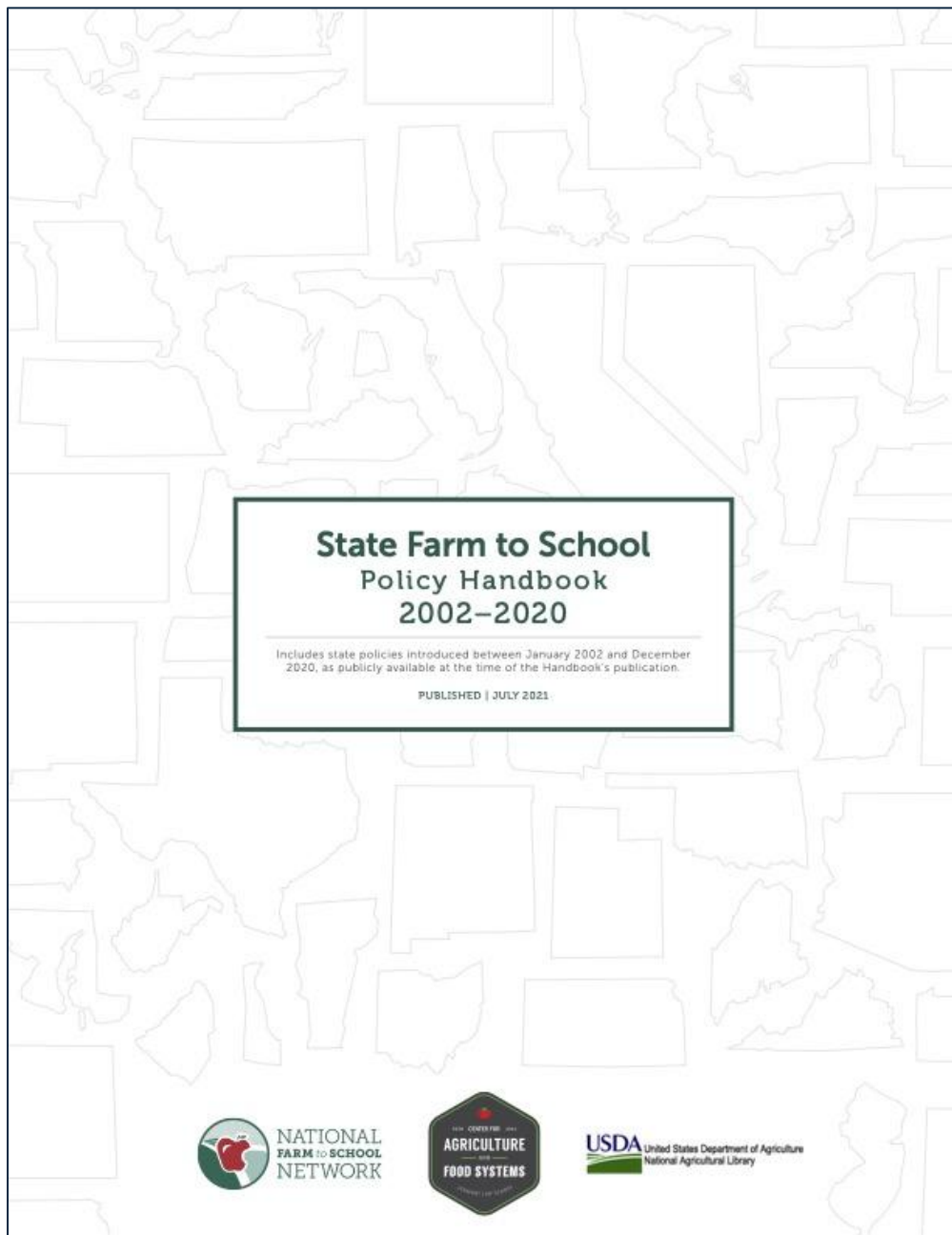
Directs the City's buying power towards quality food that delivers health to people, communities, and the planet.

Have Questions? Contact:

[OFFICE OF FOOD JUSTICE](#)

 617-635-3717

 FOOD@BOSTON.GOV



This is a VT school lunch, using local food. Learn how to advocate for state funding in Wisconsin!



Are you looking for funds to purchase local foods?

Local Food for Schools Funds (LFS)

Bring Local Food to YOUR School!

What to Know:

- More than 38,000 schools nationwide are bringing local food to their students, otherwise known as Farm to School.
- Students are more likely to eat their fruits and vegetables and to try new, healthy food with Farm to School programs.
- Farm to School programs have a positive impact on the local economy and a win-win for school communities.

How to Apply:

1. Review the training recording.
2. Complete the request for applications.
3. Submit written plan describing how you will spend the funds.

Scan the QR code to get started!



Missouri
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION

MO DESE Food & Nutrition Services
foodandnutritionservices@dese.mo.gov

the
guardian
org

About this content

Sunny Baker

Wed 19 Mar 2025 13:00 EDT

Local food for schools helps farmers and kids. So why is Trump cutting funding?

Agriculture department cuts to funding for local food in school meals betrays growers, kids and collective wellbeing



📷 A kindergarten student eats breakfast at PS 124 in New York City. Photograph: Michael Loccisano/Getty Images

If you happened to smell hickory smoke in the city this week, we were probably to blame,” the North Little Rock school district’s child nutrition program shared in a 30 January Facebook post featuring a picture of the day’s lunch.

The locally sourced menu included school-smoked chopped beef, pulled pork, fresh apples and coleslaw. This isn’t standard cafeteria fare, but funds from the US government helped kids in this [Arkansas](#) town get fresh, nourishing foods produced by farmers and ranchers in their own community.

Just Introduced: Bipartisan Bills to Support Local Food Purchasing

NFSN Staff

August 11, 2025

Great news, advocates! National Farm to School Network is proud to endorse two new **bipartisan** bills that would strengthen markets for local farmers. We've worked alongside national partners and Congressional offices to propose a permanent grant program for state, territory, and Tribal governments to purchase local food for schools and community food programs. This legislation has **bicameral** support, meaning it has backing in both the Senate and the House.

- **In the Senate:** Strengthening Local Food Security Act (S. 2338)
Introduced by: Senators Jim Justice (R-WV) and Jack Reed (D-RI)
[\[Press release\]](#) | [\[Read the bill\]](#)
- **In the House of Representatives:** Local Farmers Feeding Our Communities Act (H.R. 4782)
Introduced by: Representatives Chellie Pingree (D-ME-01), Rob Bresnahan (R-PA-08), Josh Riley (D-NY-19), and David Valadao (R-CA-22) alongside numerous cosponsors.
[\[Press release\]](#) | [\[Read the bill\]](#)

Recent Posts

Your Vote, Their Meal: Keep School Meals & Support Local Colorado Producers

October 27, 2025

Building Farmer Connections in Early Care and Education

October 23, 2025

The Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant FY 2026 Cycle is Open! Here's Our Analysis

September 29, 2025

Don't worry if that's not your thing. There are so many ways to help, especially when it comes to food education!



Enhance the student experience

Reimagining School Cafeterias



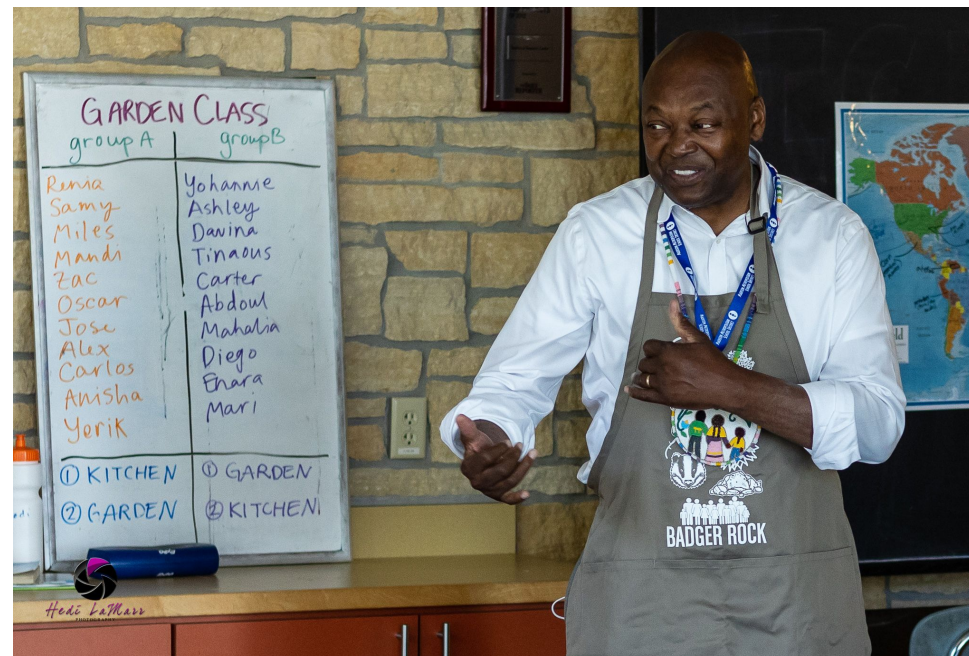
A human-centered study on the current state and future of school food

- Volunteer to support mealtimes at Kennedy
- Use the [FoodCorps model](#) to engage students in “reimagining” how we might make the cafeteria/classroom space look and feel like an appealing place to eat and help implement those changes!
- Volunteer to support interested teachers in providing [food- and garden-based education](#)
 - Consider partnering with and/or supporting [REAP](#) or [Rooted](#).



Copy what's working elsewhere in MMSD

Example: Fellow CEP school Badger Rock has amazing school [garden classes](#) and CommUNITY dinners to support the meal program and promote intergenerational connection/learning!



Have FUN and engage the community!

- Support [Rainbow Days](#) and other food education events
- Use a [Jr. Iron Chef Competition](#) to engage with PTO groups like this example from [Boulder Valley School District](#).
- Host [Real School Food Challenges](#), which are great to engage community and parent groups and/or fundraise.
- Host [community meals](#) to engages families and the PTOs across Madison.





**Now back to
Molly...**

Questions for Kennedy PTO

1. Does the school have recess before or after students eat lunch?
 - a. Research shows children eat more of their meals when recess is before lunch!
2. What mid-morning snacks are provided to students?
 - a. How might this be serving (or not serving) the goals of child nutrition and quality education?



Final take away: Please support school meals

- School meals are just as important to academic success as textbooks and transportation.
- Your participation is an investment in the food service industry. It creates job and support farmers and growers. And, it supports working families when and where they need it most.

Call to Action





Thank you!

Feel free to contact us!

Molly: megregory@madison.k12.wi.us

Jen: jgaddis@wisc.edu