

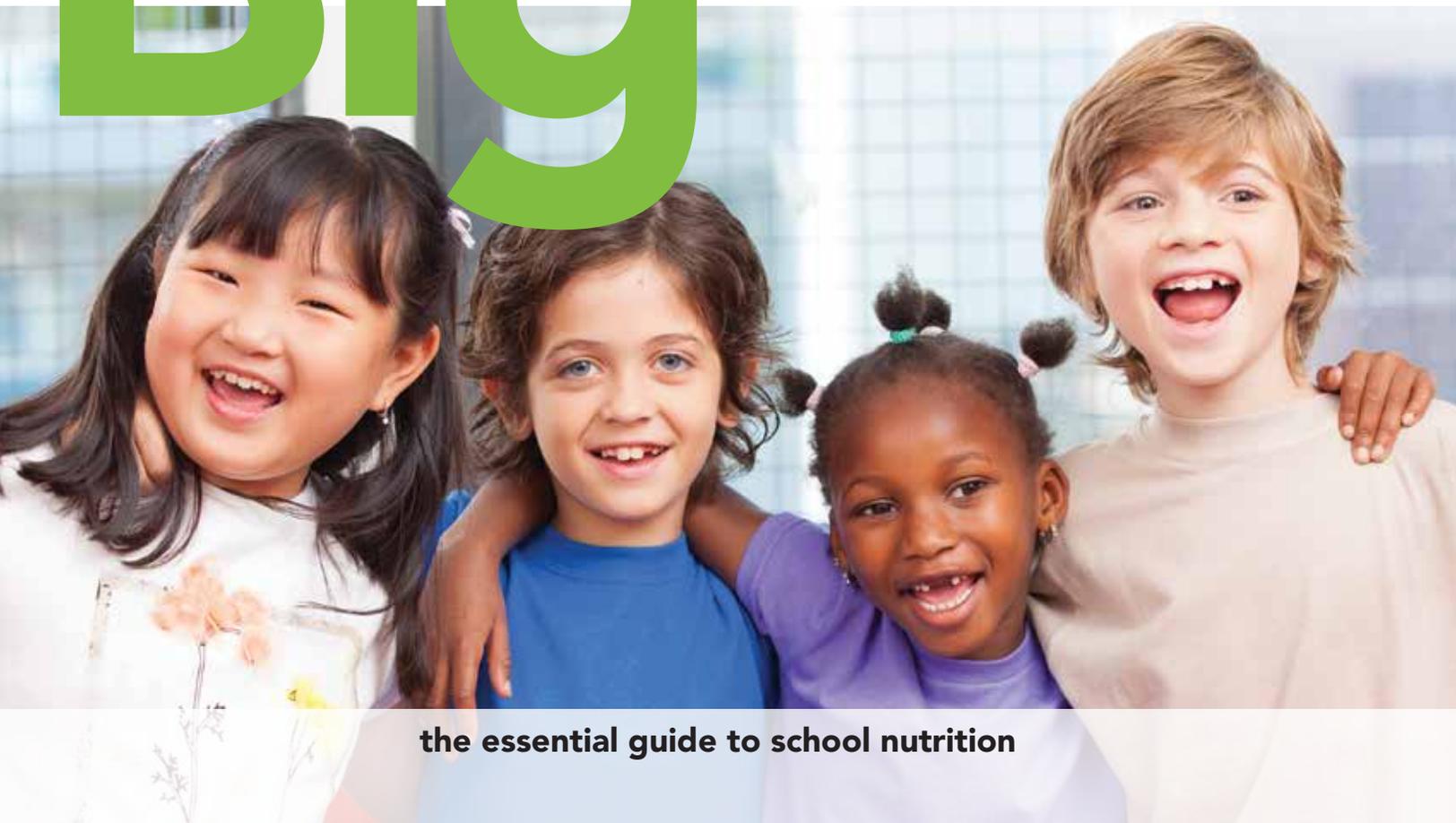
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Big

fact book 2017



Feeding Bodies. Fueling Minds.™



the essential guide to school nutrition

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National School Lunch Program & School Breakfast Program

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in more than 99,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child-care institutions (RCCIs). Established under the National School Lunch Act (NSLA) and signed into law by President Harry Truman in 1946, the NSLP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost and free lunches to 30.4 million children each school day.

Under the NSLP, schools also can offer snacks served to children in after-school educational or enrichment programs (see page 4). School districts and independent schools that choose to participate in the NSLP receive cash subsidies and agricultural commodities from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in amounts based on each meal served, totaling \$12.2 billion in federal cash payments and \$1.3 billion in commodity costs, according to USDA FY 2016 data.

The meals must be offered for free or at a reduced-price for eligible children. They also must meet federal nutrition requirements established to be in line with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, which is updated every five years. (For other regulations that apply to the NSLP, see page 6.)

NSLP ADMINISTRATION

As a permanently authorized, federal “entitlement” program, NSLP funds are budgeted by Congress each fiscal year. USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the NSLP at the federal level, but in states, the NSLP is administered by a state’s department of education or agriculture. These agencies operate the program through agreements with local school districts or other school food authorities (SFAs).

SY 2016–17 Federal Reimbursement Rates*

NSLP	\$3.22 (Free)	\$2.82 (Reduced)	\$0.36 (Paid)
SBP	\$1.71 (Free)	\$1.41 (Reduced)	\$0.29 (Paid)

*Includes six cents additional performance-based reimbursement included in HRFKA. Severe Need Schools, defined as those with 60% or more free and reduced-price eligibility, as well as schools in Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico receive additional reimbursement.

Source: USDA, July 2016



NSLP and SBP By the Numbers

30.4

million children served lunch daily

5

billion lunches served annually

99,000

NSLP operates in more than 99,000 schools and residential childcare institutions

14.8

million children served breakfast daily

2.4

billion breakfasts served annually

Source: USDA FY2016

SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

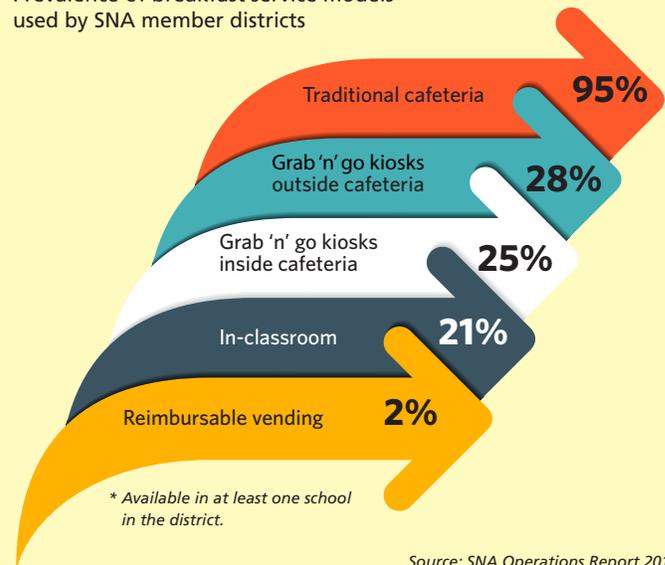
The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is another federally assisted meal program. It operates in more than 90,000 sites and serves 14.8 million children each school day, with 2.4 billion breakfasts served in SY 2015-16. The SBP was established under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, beginning as a pilot project and earning permanent status in 1975.

The program is designed to ensure that all children have access to a healthy breakfast at school to promote healthy eating behaviors and readiness for learning. Meals must be offered for free or at a reduced-price to eligible children and meet the applicable nutrition standards guided by the recommendations of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (see page 6). Unlike the NSLP, the SBP does not receive commodity support for meals served. Federal cash payments for the SBP totaled \$4.2 billion, according to USDA FY 2016 data.

While the program has grown every year for more than a decade, there is a significant gap between NSLP and SBP participation rates. Approximately 56 low-income children who receive school lunch also participate in school breakfast, according to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). By failing to be more aggressive and innovative in boosting breakfast participation, districts and states are leaving millions of federal dollars untapped that could be used to feed low-income children. See “Delivery Systems for School Meals” (page 21) to learn about the different approaches schools use to increase student participation at breakfast.

Types of Breakfast Service

Prevalence of breakfast service models* used by SNA member districts



Source: SNA Operations Report 2016



Breakfast Past, Present and Future

Great strides have been made in school breakfast participation over the past decade. Since SY 2006-07, daily participation has increased by nearly 50% among low-income children. The causes of this dramatic increase include the trend of breakfast after the bell programs (and other alternate service models), improvements to identifying low-income children as eligible for school meals and broad implementation of the Community Eligibility Provision, which allows free breakfast and lunch to be offered to all students in high-poverty schools.

School breakfast participation has grown from 0.5 million children in 1970 to 3.6 million in 1980, 4 million in 1990, 7.5 million in 2000 and, now, more than 14.5 million in SY 2015-16. There's still potential for growth: If all states had met the goal of serving 70 low-income children breakfast for every 100 that also ate lunch, it would mean an additional 3 million low-income children would have been reached—and states would have received more than \$836 million in additional federal child nutrition funding in SY 2015-16.

Source: Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) School Breakfast Scorecard Year 2015-16

NSLP/SBP Price Categories



Category	Eligibility	Participation (lunch/breakfast)
Free	Children from families with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level (\$31,590 for a family of four)	20.1 million/11.73 million
Reduced-Price (No more than 40¢ for lunch; 30¢ for breakfast)	Children from families with incomes between 130% and 185% of the poverty level (Between \$31,590 and \$44,955 for a family of four)	2 million/0.88 million
Paid	Children from families with incomes above 185% of the poverty level	8.2 million/2.22 million

Source: USDA FY2016

A woman with light brown hair, wearing a blue V-neck shirt and a black apron, is looking out of a window. In the foreground, there are several boxes of Marcella brand milk cartons. The background is a blurred view of a food truck menu with items like 'MILK AT THE TRUCK' and 'MILK'.

Other Federal Child Nutrition Programs

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), also commonly referred to as the Summer Meals Program, was created in 1968 and authorized in 1975 to serve nutritious meals and snacks to low-income children when school is not in session. Serving children who might otherwise go hungry, the SFSP often is provided in conjunction with educational, developmental and recreational activities.

The program may be sponsored by public or private nonprofit schools or other organizations. School food authorities may become sponsors themselves or contract with sponsoring organizations to provide meal service. Meals must meet nutrition standards and can be served at schools, camps, churches, community centers, parks, playgrounds, public housing complexes and other sites where kids gather.

- » In Summer 2016, there were 5,500 SFSP program sponsors providing meal service at 48,000 sites across the United States. (USDA)
- » In FY 2016, the SFSP served 2.7 million children, providing more than 153 million meals. (USDA)
- » In FY 2016, the total federal cost for the SFSP was \$477.6 million. (USDA)
- » For every 100 low-income children who ate school lunch during the 2014-15 school year, only 15.8 children (1 in 6) participated in Summer Meals programs in July 2015. (FRAC)

To decrease administrative barriers to participation, USDA offers two administrative procedures for offering summer meals. In addition to the traditional approach (“simplified” a decade ago to reduce paperwork), SFAs can offer summer meals as an extension of their NSLP; in this approach, schools are reimbursed at the NSLP reimbursement rate, however, which is lower than the SFSP reimbursement rate.

AFTERSCHOOL MEAL/SNACK PROGRAMS

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) began as a children-only pilot project in 1968, was authorized in 1975 and was expanded to include adults in 1987. CACFP serves nutritious meals and snacks to eligible children and adults who are enrolled in day care facilities and homes; provides meals to children residing in homeless shelters; and offers snacks to youth participating in afterschool care programs. In FY 2016, CACFP served 4.4 million children and adults, according to USDA. School food authorities may contract with sponsoring CACFP organizations to provide foodservice without being a direct participant in the program.

IN SUMMER 2016, THE SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM SERVED

43.5
million breakfasts

88.3
million lunches

6.3
million suppers

Source: USDA FNS January 2017 Performance Report

Both the NSLP and the CACFP provide cash reimbursements for *snacks* served to children in certain afterschool care programs. Such programs must provide regularly scheduled educational and enrichment activities in an organized, structured and supervised environment. Snacks are reimbursed at the free rate for programs in areas in which at least 50% of the enrolled children qualify for free or reduced-price meals in the NSLP. As in the NSLP and SBP, snacks must meet nutrition guidelines.

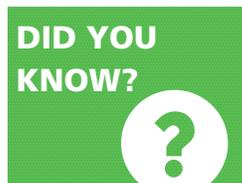
In addition, the CACFP provides funds to serve *meals* (i.e. “supper”) to children age 18 and under during the school year who participate in approved afterschool programs. These meals, which must meet federally mandated nutrition requirements, can be served at any time during the afterschool program, either at a traditional dinner time or immediately when the students arrive after school. Meals may be served in addition to or instead of a snack, depending on the length of the afterschool program. Programs that also operate on weekends or during school holidays may provide the appropriate meal.

- » More than 11.3 million children are without supervision after school, between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. More than 800,000 are elementary students. (*Afterschool Alliance, 2014*)
- » Afterschool snacks are offered by 47% of SNA member districts at a minimum of one location as either a program sponsor or vendor; 12% provide afterschool meals. (*SNA 2016 Operations Report*)
- » More than 1.37 million snacks are served daily through the NSLP. (*USDA*)

- » Organized athletic programs that are not “open to all” may not be approved sites for the Afterschool Snack or Meal Programs.
- » Snacks provided through the NSLP may be served only on days that school is in session.

COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY PROVISION

Established in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (*see page 6*), the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows schools to offer breakfast and lunch free of charge to all students, eliminating the administrative step of collecting and processing school meal applications (*see page 10 and 17 for more details*). In SY 2014-15, 13,819 schools in 2,218 districts—with a collective enrollment of more than 6.4 million students—implemented the CEP approach, according to USDA.



Approximately 24% of SNA director members were using or considering using the Community Eligibility Provision approach in their district in SY 2015-16.

Source: SNA 2016 Operations Report

Other Key Nutrition Assistance Programs

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program—This program was expanded to all 50 states in 2008, providing funding to make fresh fruits and vegetables available as snacks in selected elementary schools that have a 50% or greater free/reduced-price eligibility ratio.

Special Milk Program—provides milk to children in schools and child-care institutions that do not participate in other federal meal service programs.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)—provides food, nutrition counseling and access to health services to low-income women and children.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly Food Stamps)—enables low-income families to buy nutritious food from authorized retailers using coupons and Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)—supplements the diets of low-income needy persons by providing them with emergency food and nutrition assistance through food banks and pantries and community action agencies.

Current Federal Regulations

In 1946, President Harry Truman signed the National School Lunch Act (NSLA), establishing the NSLP, which has become the largest federal child nutrition program and the second-largest single source of federal funding for K-12 public schools. The *Federal Register* features some 75 pages of specific definitions and regulations affecting the NSLP alone. Following are some of the critical categories.

HEALTHY, HUNGER-FREE KIDS ACT OF 2010

The Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) process, scheduled every five years, has been used to legislate changes that affect the operation and administration of the NSLP, along with the other federal child nutrition programs. In the last 20 years, SNA has been joined by an increasing number of organizations (as many as 100) that have a major interest in influencing CNR outcomes.

The last CNR was the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA). The 114th Congress was unable to come to agreement on a bill to reauthorize HHFKA, so child nutrition programs continue to operate under the requirements set in the 2010 bill. What follows is a brief summary of some of the major areas that affect school nutrition programs.

Nutrition and Menu Planning

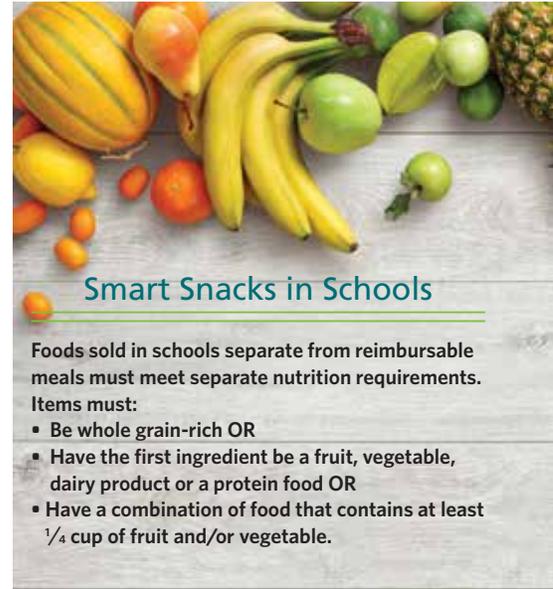
When the NSLA was passed in 1946, nutritional concerns in the United States centered on nutrient deficiencies, and the government established meal patterns with minimum food component requirements. By the end of the century, the NSLA had been amended to require that nutrition standards for school meals be

revised regularly to reflect the most recent edition of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (DGAs), issued jointly every five years by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services and developed to reflect the current, science-based consensus on proper nutrition to address health concerns. Chief among such concerns in the United States today are obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

In January 2012, after a long delay lasting across multiple CNRs, USDA issued a final rule for new nutrition standards (“meal patterns”) for reimbursable meals served in the NLSBP and SBP. The changes were the most sweeping in 15+ years, revising menu planning approaches, nutrient maximums and minimums, component requirements, portion sizes and more. Implementation for the new NSLP meal pattern standards began in SY 2012-13; standards for the SBP were phased in beginning in SY 2013-14. In addition, standards for foods sold in competition to NSLP/SBP reimbursable meals were implemented in SY 2014-15. Updated standards for CACFP were finalized in April 2016 and are required as of October 2017.

A significant NSLP/SBP change from the mid-1990s was the decision to eliminate the option for nutrient-based menu-planning approaches in favor of food-based meal patterns, with variation for grade/age group. Another major change was a requirement that students must *take* a certain amount of produce at lunch. More of the particularly notable changes to the meal patterns were:

- » increased fruits at breakfast;
- » separate fruit and vegetable components at lunch;
- » increased amounts and variety of vegetables at lunch;



Smart Snacks in Schools

Foods sold in schools separate from reimbursable meals must meet separate nutrition requirements.

Items must:

- Be whole grain-rich OR
- Have the first ingredient be a fruit, vegetable, dairy product or a protein food OR
- Have a combination of food that contains at least $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of fruit and/or vegetable.

- » vegetable subgroup (e.g. orange/red, dark green, legume) requirements;
- » new definition and increased amounts of whole grain-rich foods;
- » commercially prepared tofu permitted as a meat alternate;
- » whole and 2% milk options eliminated;
- » new minimum/maximum calorie levels for grade/age group;
- » targets for gradual reduction in sodium; and
- » elimination of added trans fats.

Most school nutrition program operators support the overall intent of the changes, and many districts have seen these requirements simply as the continuation of progressive changes initiated a decade earlier. But for some communities, the implementation of the



Additionally, food must meet calories, sodium, fat and sugar limits:

Nutrient	Snack	Entrée
Calories	≤200	≤350
Sodium	≤200 mg	≤480 mg
Total fat	≤35% of calories	≤35% of calories
Saturated fat	<10% of calories	<10% of calories
Trans fat	0 g	0 g
Sugar	≤35% by weight	≤35% of weight

new standards continues to be problematic, requiring schools, industry and kids to adopt significant dietary changes well before that cultural shift has even begun in other foodservice segments and retail.

Federal data shows that average daily student participation in the NSLP dropped when the updated standards took effect. Menu changes certainly are one factor, exacerbated by an HHFKA requirement to simultaneously raise school meal prices. With participation losses combined with cost increases, many districts continue to experience financial hardship, with certain school food authorities (SFAs) turning to the district's general fund to balance the books and a few even opting to remove individual sites (particularly high schools in affluent areas) from the program altogether.

USDA has acknowledged some of these operational difficulties and relief has been legislated by Congress.

Alphabet Soup

USDA/FNS (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services) is the federal agency with oversight of most aspects of the federal child nutrition programs. It works with the **SA** (state agency) to administer these programs, ensure compliance and disburse funds. For certain program requirements, **SAs** work with the **LEA** (local education agency), but most aspects of the foodservice operation and administration of the programs are handled by the **SFA** (school food authority).

This includes a January 2017 memo acknowledging the challenges industry and operations face in meeting the SY 2017-18 deadline for Target 2 sodium levels. USDA noted that school nutrition operations that “are working toward compliance with Target 2 but not yet fully in compliance will not incur fiscal action during Administrative Reviews.” In earlier (December 2014) guidance, states were permitted to establish an exemption that would allow struggling schools to maintain the July 2012 50% mandates for whole grain-rich items.

SNA continues to prioritize menu flexibility in its annual legislative advocacy efforts. In its 2017 *Position Paper*, the Association asks USDA to maintain Target 1 sodium levels and eliminate all future targets and to restore the initial requirement that at least half of grains offered be whole grain-rich, rather than *all* grains being expected to meet this target. Students are eating more whole-grain breads and rolls, but meeting students regional/cultural preferences for certain refined grain items (white rice, pasta, grits, bagels, tortillas) remains a significant challenge in some communities.

Food Sales/Competitive Foods

Competitive foods are defined as any foods sold on school grounds during the school day other than reimbursable school meals. This includes food and beverage items served on the cafeteria line a la carte to the reimbursable meal. HHFKA provided the Secretary of Agriculture with the authority to establish nutrition



DID YOU KNOW?

Approximately 55% of SNA member districts increased lunch prices for 2015-16.

Source: SNA 2016 Operations Report

SODIUM TARGETS

Federal Sodium Reduction Mandates

Grades	Target 1 July 14, 2014	Target 2 July 1, 2017*	Final Target July 1, 2022
Reimbursable School Breakfasts			
K-5	≤540 mg	≤485 mg	≤430 mg
6-8	≤600 mg	≤535 mg	≤470 mg
9-12	≤640 mg	≤570 mg	≤500 mg
Reimbursable School Lunches			
K-5	≤1,230 mg	≤935 mg	≤640 mg
6-8	≤1,360 mg	≤1,035 mg	≤710 mg
9-12	≤1,420 mg	≤1,080 mg	≤740 mg
Competitive Foods (a la carte, vending)			
Entrees	≤480 mg		
Sides	≤ 230 mg (≤200 mg by July 2016)		

*In January 2017, USDA issued a memo regarding flexibility for Target 2, acknowledging operational challenges among industry and school nutrition operations to meet this implementation date. See page 7 for details.

standards for competitive foods. The rule, Smart Snacks in Schools, went into effect July 1, 2014, for SY 2014-15. It affects all schools that participate in NSLP.

The Smart Snacks in Schools provisions apply to all foods and beverages sold during the school day in vending machines, school stores and school concession stands, as well as a la carte items sold in the cafeteria. Items available through occasional school-approved fundraisers are exempt. Foods and beverages sold at sporting or other events after the end of the school day are exempt. Smart Snacks renders the longstanding Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value rule moot. As with the federal meal pattern standards, states and localities may establish additional or more restrictive standards.

Administration

Community Eligibility Provision

HHFKA established an option to increase low-income students' access to nutritious meals while reducing administrative burdens for households and school districts. CEP allows schools in high-poverty areas to offer breakfast and lunch free of charge to all students without collecting and processing school meal applications. (See pages 10 and 17 for details.)

Paid Lunch Equity

HHFKA included a provision, effective SY 2011-12, that requires SFAs, regardless of their financial solvency, to gradually increase paid meal prices to be, on average, equal to the difference between the free meal reimbursement and the paid meal reimbursement.

Recognizing problems with the Paid Lunch Equity requirement, USDA offered a temporary exemption to the rule for school food authorities in strong financial standing. SFAs could apply for an exemption through SY 2016-17.

State Administrative Reviews

Districts are subject to a review, encompassing a comprehensive onsite evaluation conducted by the state agency (SA), once every three years. This is a change from the previous five-year cycle of the Coordinated Review Effort (CRE). HHFKA called for a unified review process that would incorporate breakfast, the new meal pattern and the 6-cent performance-based reimbursement into a single review process.

Professional Standards

On July 1, 2015, USDA released Professional Standards that established hiring requirements for school nutrition directors, plus education requirements for directors, managers and school nutrition staff. Hiring standards do not apply to current state agency and local school district directors, who were grandfathered into their current positions upon implementation in SY 2015-16. The standards:

- » create minimum hiring standards for directors of SFAs, based on school district size;
- » establish minimum hiring standards for directors of state agencies; and
- » Produced minimum annual training education standards for school nutrition professionals at all levels.

This HHFKA provision was designed to help ensure that school nutrition personnel have the training, tools and resources they need to manage these complex federal programs. In response to this requirement, SNA has aligned all of its education and professional development offerings to align with the federal rules. In addition, it has developed a variety of tools and resources to help SFAs to understand and manage these training requirements. These tools are available online in one, easy-to-navigate area of SchoolNutrition.org.

Wellness

Local School Wellness Policies were mandated in the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 as a way to compel school districts to make child health a priority in the areas of food, nutrition, nutrition education and physical activity, but to do so in a way that retained local autonomy, while bringing together a diverse coalition representing different segments of the community.

HHFKA strengthened the initial LSWP mandate, requiring the Secretary of Agriculture to develop guidelines that, at a minimum, include goals for nutrition and physical education, as well as nutrition guidelines for all foods available on campus during the school day. In July 2016, UDCA finalized regulations for written wellness policies established by local education authorities (LEAs), requiring them to begin development of a revised local school wellness policy during SY 2016-17. LEAs must comply with this final rule by June 30, 2017. The final rule requires wellness policies to include:

- » Specific goals for nutrition promotion and education, physical activities and other school-based activities that promote student wellness;
- » Standards and nutrition guidelines for all food and beverages sold to students on campus during the school day that are consistent with federal regulations for school meals and Smart Snacks in Schools;
- » Standards for all food and beverages provided, but not sold, to students during the school day;
- » Policies for food and beverage marketing; and
- » Description of public involvement, public updates, policy leadership and evaluation plan.

LEAs must assess the policy, at a minimum, every three years to determine compliance and progress made toward the goals.

Water

HHFKA established a requirement for schools participating in the NSLP to make potable water available to children at no charge in the place(s) where lunch meals are served during the meal service. Schools may imple-

ment this requirement in a variety of ways, including offering water pitchers/cups on tables, a water fountain or a faucet that allows students to fill their own bottle/cups with drinking water. The water must be available without restriction; however, students are not required to take water.

OTHER FEDERAL REGULATIONS

Purchasing

Buy American

Federal law requires schools to purchase food products produced and processed in the United States where “practicable.” A product is deemed domestic if more than 51% of the final processed product consists of agricultural commodities that were grown domestically (on American soil). In general, a small difference in price may not be used to justify the bypassing of the domestic product requirement. That is, the fact that an imported product is cheaper is not sufficient cause to purchase it over a domestic product (although USDA has not clarified this point in regulatory language). Foods provided through the USDA Foods program (*see page 11*) must be 100% domestic products.

CN Label

The voluntary CN Labeling Program allows a commercial food processor to demonstrate how its product contributes to meal pattern requirements. Eligible products include main dish items that contribute to the meat/meat alternate component (such as pizza, burritos, egg rolls) and juice and juice drink products that contain at least 50% real juice (such as drinks, punches, bars). USDA/FNS evaluates the product’s formulation. There is no federal requirement for schools to purchase CN-labeled products or for manufacturers to participate in the program.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Smart Snacks in Schools provisions apply to all foods and beverages sold during the school day in vending machines, school stores and school concession stands, as well as a la carte items sold in the cafeteria. Items available through occasional school-approved fundraisers are exempt. Foods and beverages sold at sporting or other events after the end of the school day are exempt.

Procurement

Details about procurement in school nutrition appear beginning on page 24. But state and local rules may exceed federal law in this complex area; check with your state agency for questions regarding specific purchasing rules that apply to school food authorities and vendors serving the K–12 segment.

REMEMBER

Federal rules are the minimum standard. Every state and locality can apply additional and more restrictive rules and regulations to school meal programs.



Operations Food Safety

School nutrition programs are required to implement a school food-safety program based on HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) principles (*see page 27*) and receive two required health/safety inspections for each school kitchen participating in the NSLP or SBP. Schools must post health inspection reports in a public place and provide copies upon request.

HHFKA required the Secretary of Agriculture to develop guidelines for instituting administrative holds on suspect foods purchased by USDA and used in federal child nutrition programs. Additionally, USDA works closely with states to continually improve procedures and communications related to food recalls (*see page 28*).

Anonymity

Federal law, both in statute and regulation, requires that there be no overt identification of children who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. This applies to the sharing of data from school lunch applications, except

as specifically allowed by law, as well as to the way a child is served his or her meal so that the way the meal is paid for does not identify eligible children.

Application Approval/Verification

To be eligible for free or reduced-priced meals, a child must be directly certified or the family must submit an application. One meal application may be completed for the entire household, rather than for each student. Once a family is certified to receive free or reduced-price meals, that eligibility is secure for the length of the school year.

Direct certification is a process in which the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program office provides information to districts to qualify children automatically for meal benefits. HHFKA expanded direct certification to include children receiving Medicaid benefits. The 2010 Act also eliminated the need for full Social Security numbers on applications in favor of only the last four digits.

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows schools in high-poverty areas to offer breakfast and lunch free of charge to all students without collecting and processing school meal applications. Any district, “group” of schools within a district or individual school with 40% or more “identified” students—children eligible for free school meals who are already identified by other means than an individual household application—can choose to participate. The majority of identified students are directly certified through data matching because their households receive SNAP, TANF (*page 6*), Food Distribution on an Indian Reservation (FDPIR) and/or (in some states and areas) Med-

icaid benefits. Identified students also include children who are certified for free meals without an application because they are homeless, migrant, enrolled in Head Start or in foster care.

Civil Rights

Administrators of federal school meal programs must include a non-discrimination statement on all materials that mention the programs, including nutrition education materials or menus sent home. A “And Justice for All” poster must be displayed in a predominant area for students to view. USDA requires that all staff who work with child nutrition program applicants or participants receive annual civil rights training.

Foodservice/Contract Management Companies

Any SFA may contract with a foodservice management company to manage its foodservice operation in one or more of its schools. However, such contracts cannot be written to operate a la carte foodservice unless the company agrees to offer free, reduced-price and paid reimbursable meals to all eligible children. All other regulatory requirements for procurement and operation apply. In contracting with a management company, schools retain signature authority and oversight responsibility for their program, and may not assign this responsibility to others.

USDA Foods Program

The USDA Foods program, formerly known as *commodities* or *donated foods*, offers a wide range of foods to support the goals of the 1946 National School Lunch Act to produce and serve nutritious school meals and support American agriculture. USDA Foods are healthy, high-quality options for school meal operations. All USDA Foods items meet strict quality, nutrition and food safety standards and are 100% domestically grown and processed, as required by law.

Items are offered via State Distributing Agencies (SDAs) to schools and account for approximately 15% to 20% of the foods served as part of the reimbursable school lunch on any given day. Economies of scale achieved through large-volume purchases allow USDA to procure these foods for schools at a lower unit cost compared to prices that most individual school districts might otherwise pay.

The SDA receives an entitlement budget based on the total number of lunches served within the state the previous year. The SDA then works with school districts to make decisions on what to purchase with those entitlement dollars; these purchases are made with real money tied to meal counts.

As school nutrition departments continue to face tightening budgets, the value of USDA Foods is an increasingly important asset. Every dollar's worth of USDA Foods incorporated into the menu represents a dollar saved in a school nutrition operation's cash expenditures for commercial food products. Maximizing the use of USDA Foods in school menus also allows operators to direct funds into other areas of the program, such as equipment upgrades, merchandising or marketing.



USDA Foods = Healthy Choices

USDA nutritionists, food scientists and industry specialists work together to continually explore ways to offer healthier food choices that help schools create meals consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, the MyPlate food guidance system and school meal pattern requirements. Consider just a few examples of how USDA Foods can support the most recent changes to the meal patterns:

FRUITS: USDA only purchases fruit that is packed in extra light syrup or equivalent and many fruit options have no sugar added. USDA offers fruit in a variety of forms for direct delivery, including fresh, frozen, canned, dried and 100% juice.

VEGETABLES: USDA Foods vegetables are *all* low-sodium or no-salt-added. In addition, USDA Foods offers a range of options in each subgroup category, including fresh baby carrots, sweet potatoes, canned and dry beans, frozen broccoli and spinach and a variety of tomato products.

MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATE: Many low-fat and lower-sodium meat and cheese products are available. USDA Foods has lowered the sodium profile of many of its items, including cheese, plus ham, chicken and turkey products, to help schools meet sodium requirements. USDA continues to research further reductions through its work with manufacturers and processors.

WHOLE GRAINS: USDA Foods offers only whole-grain and whole grain-rich products for direct delivery. Program offerings include tortillas, pancakes, pastas and flour, as well as brown rice and rolled oats.

HOW IT WORKS

The procurement and distribution of USDA Foods is coordinated by the Food Distribution Division (FDD) of USDA/FNS, in partnership with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). USDA Foods come to school food authorities (also known as recipient agencies, or

RAs) through the SDAs. USDA distributed more than \$1.3 billion in USDA Foods nationally to states in FY 2016.

Each year, USDA publishes a Foods Available List for the upcoming school year. The list includes more than 200 items and offers a mix of fresh, frozen, canned



DID YOU KNOW?

All USDA Foods are local to someone! State of Origin reports and maps showcase where USDA Foods products are produced each year, allowing a school interested in ordering local foods to see which USDA Foods tend to come from its own or a neighboring state. Let's use fish as an example. In FY 2015, all USDA Foods salmon was produced in Alaska, Oregon and Washington, and all USDA Foods catfish was produced in Mississippi and Alabama.

Just as USDA Foods fish was predictably sourced along regional lines, the data reveals that schools most likely received their USDA Foods cheddar cheese from producers in Wisconsin, their USDA Foods grits from Kansas and their USDA Foods bulk turkey—both boneless skinless turkey thighs and whole birds—from Minnesota. In that year, all the USDA Foods frozen strawberries came from California and all the wild frozen blueberries came from Maine. Local produce is also available through the USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, as vendors have the option to include State of Origin labeling in the ordering catalog.

Source: USDA FY 2015 State of Origin Report

and dried fruits and vegetables, whole grain options and a variety of proteins, including lean meat, poultry, fish and dairy. SDAs submit food orders to FNS/FDD on behalf of school districts, based on their requests. Note, however, that an SDA may offer only a subset of the 200 items on the Foods Available List to its school districts, due to factors related to the state's distribution and delivery system and inventory management, as well as USDA's minimum ordering quantity requirements.

USDA Foods are made available to state agencies and schools in three main forms: **"Direct delivery"** items are fully finished products or ingredients that can be prepared at central kitchens or schools; **"bulk"** items can be diverted to approved further processors and incorporated into a wide variety of end products; and the **USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program** delivers fresh fruits and vegetables through fresh produce vendors contracted by the Department of Defense.

Each state receives an annual "entitlement" dollar amount to order USDA Foods, based on the total number of reimbursable lunches claimed by the state in the previous school year. School food authorities participating in the NSLP are offered USDA Foods equivalent

to their **Planned Assistance Level (PAL)**. The PAL is equal to a defined per-meal rate multiplied by the number of lunches claimed the prior school year. The national average value of donated foods is announced in the *Federal Register* each year. In each school year, not less than 12% of the total cash reimbursements and USDA Food assistance provided in the NSLP must be in the form of USDA Foods. When total USDA Foods support for the NSLP does not meet the 12% "floor" required in any given year, additional funds are added to the state entitlement, creating an "effective" rate that includes the federally published rate plus the estimated 12% dollars. States pass this to RAs in the form of PAL to allow additional USDA Foods to be purchased. For SY 2016–17, the effective per meal rate is 32 cents per meal. For most school districts, this PAL becomes like a "debit" account, against which schools request their USDA Foods.

The SBP receives no USDA Foods entitlement assistance. However, school food authorities may utilize USDA Foods to support any component of the school meal programs, including breakfast.

Some operators make the mistake of considering

USDA Foods to be “free food items,” undervaluing the food and failing to make the same rigorous effort in USDA Foods ordering decisions as they do with other expenses. Understanding the role of USDA Foods in a school nutrition program is critical to effective financial management. USDA has created the USDA Foods Cost Analysis Tool (a part of the USDA Foods Toolkit and available on the FNS website; see inside back cover) to help SFAs compare costs of the USDA Foods they are planning to order against commercial bid prices in an effort to determine the best value for their school meal operation.

PROCESSING USDA FOODS

USDA Foods further processing allows SDAs and RAs to contract with commercial food processors to convert raw and/or bulk USDA Foods into a variety of convenient, ready-to-use end products. The SDA or RA must competitively procure the services of commercial food processors.

In addition to the contract between the processor and the SDA or RA, a processing agreement with FNS or the SDA, as appropriate, allows the processor to receive USDA Foods like bulk chicken to produce finished end products such as grilled chicken breast

and fajita strips. The value of USDA Foods is passed through to the RA in the form of lower costs for the finished product.

There are 110 processors participating in USDA Foods processing in more than one state, and more than 80 USDA Foods items are available for further processing. The processing of USDA Foods provides the RA with the opportunity to receive a wider variety of end products that meet individual district needs and local flavor preferences.

TO LEARN MORE

Think of the USDA Foods distribution process as a new game you want to learn! Check out the online USDA Foods Toolkit for Child Nutrition Programs for a wealth of resources and marketing tools, as well as the Food Distribution Webinars and Training page to view webinar archives on such topics as USDA Foods program basics, creative recipe ideas, entitlement, the processing program and tips on ordering and inventory management. In addition, the Institute of Child Nutrition offers a number of free USDA Foods Online Training Courses. Find the URLs for these resources on the inside back cover.



DID YOU KNOW?

USDA distributed more than \$1.57 billion in USDA Foods in 2017.

Source: USDA 2017

Get in touch with your own SDA by visiting <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/food-distribution-contracts>. Explain that you want to learn more about USDA Foods and request that staff direct you to appropriate websites, training courses and print materials that detail options and procedures to meet your specific needs and questions. Operators also can turn to their state agencies when seeking solutions to challenges encountered when using USDA Foods. State agency personnel should be able to provide guidance regarding managing entitlement dollars, food storage problems, product delivery issues and product inconsistencies. Remember that good communication is a two-way process. Your state cannot address your concerns if you don't voice them!

Choice = Flexibility

When it comes to menu items, one “size” generally does not fit all in school foodservice operations. A cafeteria may serve young children, older teens or everyone in between. Perhaps the menu planner strives to accommodate cultural preferences or incorporate fresh produce

from the school's farm to school partnership.

But USDA Foods can work well in a wide variety of school meal operations because basic items offer a versatility than can be incorporated into numerous of menu items. USDA Foods offers more than 50 agricultural

products through a selection of 200+ different items and pack sizes. This variety offers greater flexibility to districts and schools with varying labor and equipment constraints that have an impact on menu planning.

School Nutrition Market



Among the complexities of the K-12 school nutrition segment is the fact that school districts are so distinctive, even—and especially—*within* the district. A single large, county-based, school district might include schools at all ranges of the socio-economic spectrum; some isolated, others with open campuses and easy access to external competition; featuring a mix of old and new facilities; and so on. These factors and others can influence every operational aspect of the school meals program.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

- » In SY 2014–15, there were approximately 13,600 public school districts with close to 98,200 schools, including about 6,500 charter schools. (*National Center for Education Statistics*)
- » Total public school enrollment is projected to increase to 52.9 million students by SY 2024–25. (*NCES*)
- » In Fall 2016, an estimated 50.4 million students

LARGEST 20 U.S. SCHOOL DISTRICTS

District	Student Enrollment SY 2015-16
New York City, NY	1,122,783
Los Angeles, CA	646,683
Chicago, IL	397,138
Miami-Dade, FL	356,964
Clark County, NV	318,040
Broward County, FL	266,255
Houston, TX	215,255
Hillsborough County, FL	207,469
Orange County, FL	191,548
Palm Beach County, FL	186,605
Fairfax County, VA	185,541
Hawaii, HI	180,895
Gwinnett County, GA	173,246
Dallas, TX	160,253
Wake County, NC	155,000
Montgomery County, MD	154,434
Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC	145,202
Philadelphia, PA	134,241
San Diego Unified, CA	129,779
Duval County, FL	128,685

Source: 2016 American School & University

attended public elementary and secondary schools. (NCES)

- » In SY 2014-15, nearly half of all U.S. public school districts (46%) had enrollments of less than 1,000 students. These districts collectively educate only slightly more than 5% of America's public school students. (NCES)
- » Conversely, 2% of public school districts have enrollment of more than 25,000 students. These districts enroll more than 35% of all U.S. public school students. (NCES)
- » An estimated 26% of SNA member districts have an open campus high school. This is most common in the Northwest (in 66% of districts) and least common in the Southeast (less than 10% of districts). (SNA 2016 Operations Report)
- » Nearly 36% of SNA member districts report having completed a renovation in the past two years, and 25% are planning a renovation. In addition, nearly 24% of SNA member districts report having completed a new construction project in the past two years, and nearly 23% are in the planning stages of some type of construction. Renovations and new construction of production areas and serving lines are more common than projects occurring solely in the dining areas. (SNA 2016 Operations Report)

ECONOMIC FACTORS AFFECTING SCHOOLS

- » Approximately 1 in 5 kids, or a total of 13 million children, live in households without consistent access to sufficient food. (Share Our Strength 2016 Fact Sheet)
- » In 2014, approximately 20% of school-aged children—10.7 million—in the United States were living in poverty; this is an increase from 17% in 1990. (NCES)
- » Approximately 22 million children rely on free or reduced-price school lunches; 12 million rely on free

or reduced-price school breakfasts; and 4 million rely on free summer meals. (Share Our Strength 2016 Fact Sheet)

- » Youth (under age 18) living in poverty increased from 42% of all American children in 2009 to 43% in 2015, although this is still an improvement from the high of 45% in 2012. (National Center for Children in Poverty)
- » High poverty schools, in which more than 75% of the students qualify for free/reduced-price meals, accounted for 24% of all public schools in SY 2014-15. (NCES)
- » The percentage of children under age 18 from low-income families varies across racial/ethnic groups. In 2015, 63% of black children (6.2 million), 61% of Hispanic children (10.8 million), 30% of white children (11 million), 29% of Asian children (1 million) and 39% of children of some other race (1.4 million) lived in low-income families. (National Center for Children in Poverty)

CONTRACT FOODSERVICE MANAGEMENT

In some cases, districts choose to contract out their foodservice program, hiring an outside operator to manage and serve the students. According to USDA's 2013-14 Special Nutrition Program Operations study, nearly 3,000 SFAs used foodservice management companies. Of these:

- » The majority (60%) contracted with national companies;
- » 28% contracted with regional companies; and
- » 12% contracted with small companies.

Management companies are more common in large, urban and high-poverty SFAs, as compared to very large SFAs, rural SFAs and medium-poverty SFAs.



DISTRICT DEFINITIONS

There is no national uniform standard for defining the administrative authority of a school district. In some cases, it might be a geographic boundary; in others, it might be based on grade levels. Consider just a few examples:

- » **Archdioceses & Dioceses**—jurisdiction that governs Catholic schools
- » **Area Educational Service districts**—regional agencies that coordinate services for a group of “regular” districts
- » **Central (CSD)**—one central administration oversees the entire district
- » **Consolidated (also CSD)**—indicates that the district was formed from two or more districts; also known as a union district
- » **Elementary school districts**—operate elementary schools only
- » **High school districts**—operate high school and/or secondary schools only
- » **Independent (ISD)**—typically indicates that the school district boundaries rarely coincide with municipal or county lines; the specific meaning varies from state to state
- » **Joint**—indicates that the district includes territory from more than one county or administrative area
- » **Regional districts**—enroll students from two or more towns/villages
- » **Unified districts (USD)**—operates schools at the elementary and secondary level

Funding for School Meals

FEDERAL

There are four primary ways that school meal programs are funded at the federal level.

Section 4—This is the basic subsidy that schools receive for every lunch served that conforms to meal requirements. This reimbursement rate is adjusted annually based on changes to the Consumer Price Index category for food away from home. Similar funding exists under other sections of the National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (for breakfast and snacks), but, in general, these all are referred to as Section 4 funds. In addition, SFAs certified as in compliance with meal pattern requirements are eligible for a 6-cent-per-lunch performance-based reimbursement.

Section 11—As part of the “War on Poverty” in the 1960s, supplemental funding was authorized so that poor children had access to nutrition programs at school. It also established additional reimbursements for meals served to children in the free and reduced-price categories. This section of the law also established a formula for annual adjustments in the rates to reflect increases in the cost of the program.

Section 6—This establishes funding for the USDA Foods Program. Schools participating in the NSLP are entitled to receive commodities equal to the number of lunches served times an annually adjusted rate. For most, this support is received in the form of commodity foods purchased and distributed by USDA (*see page 11*).

Section 32—Initially established before the start of the NSLP, it encouraged domestic consumption of agricultural commodities and generally supported domestic agriculture producers. In the late 1950s, Congress began transferring Section 32 funds directly to the NSLP, and it since has become a major source of funding for school nutrition.

The total appropriations for all the federal child nutrition programs for FY 2017 is \$23.2 billion.

STATE & LOCAL

Each state is required to provide a certain matching amount that is based on a rate set in the 1980s. Many states provide additional reimbursement on top of the matching requirement, which can range from per-meal reimbursements to salary support to general funds to assist with program operations. Currently, 32 states provide additional funding to assist in the costs of operating a school meal program (including labor costs).

Some districts and states have eliminated the reduced-price co-pay for breakfast and, in some grades, for lunch. Whether a state pays the reduced-price fee or the district’s general budget does so, the effect has

been an increase in participation by students from low-income families. As of 2015, six states cover the lunch reduced-price co-pay for all or some grades. Eight states cover the co-pay for breakfast.

HHKFA included a provision, effective SY 2011-12, that requires school food authorities, regardless of their financial solvency, to gradually increase their paid meal prices to be, on average, equal to the difference between the free meal reimbursement and the paid meal reimbursement. This is called the Paid Lunch Equity requirement (*page 8*).

SNA’s *2016 Operations Report* found that a majority of member districts indicated increasing

lunch prices between SY 2014-15 and SY 2015-16 (just over 30% increased breakfast prices in the same period). The median meal price increase for both breakfast and lunch was 10 cents.

School meal prices, just like restaurant prices, differ from one community to the next, taking into account variations in local food and labor costs, as well as what families are able and willing to pay. When school meal prices increase, even gradually, student lunch participation declines.

AVERAGE MEAL PRICES

Meal	Elementary	Middle	High
Lunch	\$2.34	\$2.54	\$2.60
Breakfast	\$1.39	\$1.47	\$1.51

Source: SNA 2016 Operations Report

PROVISIONS 1, 2 AND 3 & CEP

In 1994, Congress authorized three special provisions for SFAs to facilitate enrollment, eligibility and participation in school meal programs—and reduce administrative costs associated with applications collection and processing.

Provision 1—Allows schools where at least 80% of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals to take applications every other year, rather than annually.

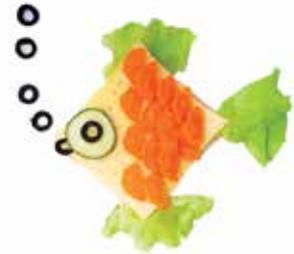
Provision 2—Allows schools to serve all enrolled children for free if the school agrees to accept reimbursements based on the percentage of meals served during a base year. For example, if a school serves 85% of its meals free, 10% at the reduced price and 5% at full price during the base year, it may choose not to collect applications and serve all children for free—and be reimbursed at the rate of 85% of total meals served times the free rate, 10% of total meals served at the reduced rate and 5% at the basic (Section 4) rate. After three years, schools must either collect applications again or demonstrate that the economic status of the community has not changed significantly, in which case they may renew this provision status for an additional four years.

Provision 3—Similar to Provision 2, Provision 3 reimburses schools that elect to serve all children free based on an initial year's data, but it reimburses at the same dollar amount as the base year, adjusted for inflation and enrollment changes, rather than the eligibility status percentages.

According to SNA's 2016 Operations Report, approximately 6% of SNA member districts use Provision 1, 9% use Provision 2 and 1% use Provision 3.

HHFKA established the **Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)**, which allows schools in high-poverty areas to offer breakfast and lunch free of charge to all students without collecting and processing school meal applications. Any district, "group" of schools within a district or individual school with 40% or more "identified" students—children eligible for free school meals who are already identified by other means than an individual household application—can choose to participate. Reimbursements are determined by multiplying the percentage of identified students by 1.6 to determine the percent of meals that will be reimbursed at the free rate. For example, a school with 50% identified students would be reimbursed for 80% of the breakfasts and lunches eaten at the free reimbursement rate and the remaining 20% at the paid rate. Approximately 24% of SNA director members were using or considering using the Community Eligibility Provision approach in their district in SY 2015–16, according to Association research.

Area eligibility creates an option for high-poverty schools and LEAs to obtain reimbursement based on the percentage of students who are directly certified for free meals. It's used for certain programs, such as the Summer Food Service Program. Any school or LEA in which at least 40% of students are directly certified for free meals and that agrees to serve school breakfasts and lunches without charge would be eligible for this option.



2016 Federal Funding for Child Nutrition Programs

USDA Expenditures for all Child Nutrition Programs:

\$22
BILLION

Percentage of Federal Funding for Child Nutrition Programs:

School Lunch	61%
School Breakfast	19%
Child and Adult Care	16%
Summer Food	2%
Other*	2%

*Includes State Administrative Expense Funds
Source: USDA FY 2016



GRANTS

An increasing number of school nutrition programs also rely on grants from private foundations, government agencies, industry and other sources. These can help fund special projects and initiatives, ranging from nutrition education campaigns to school breakfast expansion strategies. While grants have become a welcome source of funds to support a wide variety of school nutrition program goals, many districts struggle with sustaining creative projects and initiatives for the long haul, after the funding has been exhausted. In addition, districts in many communities without high-poverty populations are often ineligible for many grants, but still struggle to find the finances to make operations improvements or offer student engagement initiatives.

School Meal Costs

An average school nutrition program has a number of expenses—beyond food and labor—that must be factored into tight budgets.

These include:

- Supplies
- Equipment, Purchased and Leased (kitchen, office, dining, vehicles)
- Purchased Services (contracts with vendors for data processing, consultant fees, custodial/maintenance, printing, advertising, legal, human resources, etc.)
- Property Repair/Maintenance
- Electricity, Fuel, Water
- Transportation (fuel and oil, insurance, repair/service of vehicles owned or leased)
- Professional Development
- Marketing and Recruitment
- Indirect Costs/Fund Transfer*

**Note: Indirect costs are those that cannot be identified directly, because the amount is prorated across supportive services and incidental supplies that are not easily identifiable with a specific school program/department, such as utility costs. In September 2016, USDA released guidance on indirect costs, as required by HHFKA, providing best practice ideas and resources to help SFAs ensure that indirect cost expenses are limited to those reasonable, necessary and allocable to provide quality meals for the programs.*

Other Revenue Sources for SN Operations

Even when maximizing reimbursements through participation in multiple federal child nutrition programs (lunch, breakfast, snacks, summer), few school nutrition operations can meet all of the costs associated with providing school meals—and stay in the black—without turning to revenue sources beyond government funds. This delicate balancing act is further complicated by federal, state and local nutrition and wellness regulations and/or policies that can limit what school nutrition operations may sell in addition to regular meals.

A LA CARTE

Many school nutrition operations sell individual food and beverage items as alternatives or additions to reimbursable meals. Items sold on an a la carte basis can provide school nutrition directors greater price flexibility and higher profit margins, resulting in a revenue stream to offset costs or to create a fund for improvements and initiatives.

A la carte items have helped to draw greater student participation to the school meals program. They are seen as a competitive tool to counteract food sales by principals, school groups, student stores and other non-school foodservice purchase points.

A provision in HRFKA to give authority to the Secretary of Agriculture to regulate the nutrition standards of *all* foods sold on campus was intended to level the playing field and reduce internal competition for participation in the reimbursable school meal programs. The provisions of the Smart Snacks in Schools rule (*see page 8*) apply to all foods and beverages sold during the school day in vending machines, school stores and school concession stands, as well as a la carte items sold in the cafeterias. Items available through occasional school-approved fundraisers, bake



sales and classroom parties are exempt, as are foods and beverages sold at afterschool sporting events or other activities. States and local communities with stronger standards for competitive foods are able to maintain their own policies.

Many school nutrition operators have seen the SY 2014-15 implementation of the Smart Snacks nutrition standards have a negative effect on a la carte revenue. SNA research found that nearly 75% of responding directors saw a la carte revenue decline in the first year of implementation of the Smart Snacks regulations

(SNA 2015 Trends Survey). However, in communities where restrictive local and state standards have been in place for a longer period of time, or when schools have met criteria for recognition in the HealthierUS School Challenge, anecdotal reports indicate a gradual bounce-back in sales, as students adjust to the changes and more compliant products become available from industry.

CATERING, CONTRACTS & CONCESSIONS

Catering is another service many school nutrition operations offer as a way to boost revenues—and positive public awareness. The *SNA 2016 Operations Report* found that a majority of school nutrition operations had some kind of catering program. Nearly 65% provided “in-school” catering services, and one-fifth of operations offered catering for events and activities outside of school.

In some districts, catering service is somewhat modest: coffee, sandwiches and baked goods for meetings and small events held onsite. In other districts, the school nutrition operation offers more extensive service, competing for contracts for school-based functions (such as the senior prom or dinner theater) and outside events (including birthday parties, weddings and banquets). In larger districts with extensive programs, the operation might have personnel dedicated specifically to managing the catering operation.

As proven foodservice experts in the community, school nutrition operators often have the opportunity to take on additional services and meal programs. These include contracts to provide meals and snacks to Head Start programs, charter schools, before- and afterschool care programs, the Summer Food Service Program, juvenile corrections facilities and child-care centers. In some cases, a successful school nutrition operation might take on the foodservice contract for other neighboring districts. SNA’s *2016 Operations Report* found that 6% of respondents manage a multi-district operation. Those that do, serve a median of two additional districts.

Smart Snacks vs. Reimbursable Meals

Although a la carte entrée items, which are subject to Smart Snacks in Schools regulations, and reimbursable meals are both served in the cafeteria, requirements vary slightly between the two. This means that an item that meets the criteria for reimbursable meals might not be able to be offered as an a la carte item.

Nutrient	Smart Snacks	Reimbursable Meals	
Calories	≤350	K-5	550-650
		6-8	600-700
		9-12	750-850
Sodium	≤480 mg	K-5	≤1,230 mg
		6-8	≤1,360 mg
		9-12	≤1,420 mg
Sugar	≤35% of weight	No regulations	
Saturated Fat	≤10% of total calories	≤10% of total calories	
Trans Fat	0g	0g	

In some communities, the school meal program also competes for foodservice contracts to serve adults, as well as children. These include the local Meals on Wheels program, elder care facilities, parks and recreation programs, sports facility concession stands, government offices and more.

VENDING

Schools and districts have come to rely on income from vending machines to support discretionary spending. In fact, according to the *SNA 2016 Operations Report*, nearly 30% of SNA member districts provided vending services *within* the cafeteria for non-reimbursable menu items, and increasingly they are taking on vend-

ing management throughout the school and district. By negotiating revenue-sharing agreements with principals and superintendents, the school nutrition director can influence or control stock, manage competition and earn revenue with minimal associated costs.

Beverages and snacks are the most common items offered in school vending programs. As with a la carte service, item variety increases in higher grades. In the months and years ahead, both a la carte and vending sales likely will continue to be affected by new federal nutrition standards. Meanwhile, progressive school nutrition directors are turning to vending as another point of sale for *reimbursable meals* to help increase participation, especially at the secondary school level.

Delivery Systems for School Meals

How does a school meal get from the warehouse to the table? There are several production and service systems that school districts use—and a single district sometimes will apply more than one. Many factors influence the systems that are used, including the district's geographic location, size, number of schools, number of employees, enrollment, depth of the area labor pool, vendor availability, layout of existing kitchen facilities, available equipment, percent of free/reduced-price-eligible students, average daily participation and more. New construction/renovation provides the best opportunity for foodservice operations to make drastic changes in production and service systems.

FOOD PRODUCTION SITES

A district with a totally centralized food production system manages production at a single facility, with distribution of menu items or meals (requiring finishing only) to all service sites. A totally decentralized system sees complete preparation of all menu items at each individual facility that serves students. But most school districts rely on a combination of central, onsite and satellite kitchens, providing transportation of meals and/or menu items between sites.

When food must be transported, additional operational challenges arise, including maintaining food quality and food safety. Districts that transport food also incur additional fuel costs.

- » **Central production kitchens** typically prepare large volumes of food for service at other facilities. Central kitchens may produce bulk items (such as taco filling, packaged salads and rolls), preplated meals or both.
- » Most **onsite kitchens** are not as large as central kitchen

ens, and they regularly provide service at that site. An onsite kitchen may receive some menu items from a central production facility—and it may prepare certain items to be delivered to other service sites.

- » **Satellite kitchens** receive most or all foods from another production facility. A typical satellite kitchen provides reheating or hot/cold holding for appropriate menu items, and staff may prepare some very basic menu items for service. Both transport and onsite equipment designed to hold foods at proper, food-safe temperatures are top requirements.

These definitions may vary among operators. For example, “central kitchen” has been used to define both a production-only facility and a high-volume serving site (such as a high school) that also serves students. This can make research findings in this area somewhat unreliable in painting an accurate picture of how these systems are used in school districts today.

PRODUCTION OPTIONS

When relying on conventional food preparation methods, the majority of menu items might be prepared from scratch, using raw ingredients (including USDA Foods). For example, pasta sauce might be made from raw ground beef and tomato sauce prepared from canned tomatoes with herbs and spices. With increased national attention on rising obesity rates and strategies that discourage a reliance on highly processed menu items, many school districts are making operational changes to provide more scratch-prepared meals.

But even with a renewed focus on serving fresh-prepared items in schools, many districts lack the equipment, skilled labor, food safety assurances and/or funds to provide 100% from-scratch menus.

FAST FACT

66%

of SNA's member districts report using salad or produce bars, and 71% report offering pre-packaged salads to students.

Source: SNA 2016 Operations Report

Convenience foods, in which menu or recipe items are received in nearly final form from food processors and manufacturers, continue to play a significant role in school foodservice operations, often allowing a “speed-scratch” hybrid approach. This tends to mean assembling menu items using a combination of fresh ingredients, from-scratch recipes and minimally processed foods.

Also, districts increasingly are entering into agreements that allow vendors to process bulk USDA Foods into convenience items (*see page 11*). Thus, a school foodservice operation might procure frozen, par-baked, whole-grain pizza dough from a manufacturer and top it with processed tomato sauce and lowfat cheese from USDA Foods, along with locally procured fresh vegetables to offer a minimally processed menu item.



FAST FACT

BREAKFAST SERVICE TIMES

Of the SNA member districts that offer breakfast:

- 92% do it before the official start of the school day
- 33% offer it within the first 10 to 15 minutes of the official school day
- 26% offer it during a morning break (this is most common at the high school level)

Source: SNA 2016 Operations Report

Both central and onsite kitchens tend to employ a combination of conventional and convenience food preparation methods. For conventional cooking, a district with a dedicated central production facility likely will use equipment designed to produce extremely high yields. Sufficient storage can be a significant challenge for onsite kitchens using conventional prep methods.

Convenience systems tend to increase food costs but save on high labor costs, address shortages of skilled cooks and bakers, reduce food safety risks and help to avoid replacement of expensive equipment. Such systems also allow for more efficient production management when single kitchens must serve growing enrollments in reduced time periods.

Some school districts (or other school food authorities) purchase reimbursable pre-plated meals from outside contractors, which range from local caterers to national manufacturers to other area school nutrition operations. This is not the same as using the services of a foodservice/contract management company, as the district maintains financial and operational control of the program. But for districts with labor problems, that do not have labor/equipment support for satellite sites or that are serving during a renovation or other disruption, purchase of preplated meals is practical option to consider.

SERVICE SYSTEMS

Service systems also vary, with secondary schools tending to have more sophisticated cafeteria designs than their elementary counterparts. As competition grows from external (and internal) sources and as time pressures increase to serve more students during shortened lunch periods—school districts are adopting systems

that resemble food-court and restaurant-style service. Overall, the prevalence of approaches other than traditional cafeteria lines increases substantially with district size. Some of the most common types follow:

- » Many elementary schools and facilities in older, unrenovated buildings continue to rely on the time-honored **standard service line**, with students entering at one end—picking up trays, menu items and beverages—and exiting at a cashier stand at the other end. Per the SNA 2016 *Operations Report*, 99.8% of SNA member districts use a standard cafeteria line at one or more school sites.
- » In **scramble service**, students may move among stations to pick up the items offered in each location, allowing them to choose preferred food items without losing valuable eating or socializing time. Boasting increased variety and multiple point-of-service and cashier stations, scramble systems require some training and signage to ensure students select all of the components of a reimbursable meal.
- » **Self-service food bars**, including salad, potato and other themed bars, allow students to personalize their selections just as they can in other commercial foodservice settings. Similarly, some school nutrition operations are offering more **made-to-order** options, staffing stations in order to assemble a range of menu items, from deli sandwiches to burritos to rice bowls.
- » Reimbursable meal components and a la carte items may be served in **kiosks or carts** in hallways, courtyards, central areas or within the cafeteria. Portable or permanent carts provide additional opportunities to attract customers—and help keep students on campus and food dollars away from external and internal competition. According to 2016 SNA research,

School Foodservice Equipment Purchase Plans Within the Next Year

SNA member districts surveyed in SY 2016-17 reported they planned to make the following equipment purchases within the year:

42%

Serving equipment

41%

Utensils, trays or tableware

36%

Computer hardware or software

36%

Refrigerator or freezer

31%

Oven/range cooking equipment

27%

Steam cooking equipment

18%

Cleaning equipment

9%

Tilt skillet or broiler cooking equipment

3%

Other

Source: SNA 2016 Operations Report

and service decisions. Ongoing school construction projects affecting cafeterias and kitchens necessitate the purchase of new equipment and/or technology. SNA's 2016 *Operations Report* found that 82% of member districts surveyed planned to purchase new foodservice-related equipment during SY 2016-17. Purchase plans increase significantly among the larger districts, with a majority planning purchases in eight of the nine equipment categories examined in the survey (see right). At least 75% of the largest districts have plans to purchase refrigerators/freezer equipment and/or oven/range cooking equipment.

Budgeting for equipment purchases remains an ongoing challenge. In a 2013 PEW Charitable Trusts/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation study, a significant majority of school districts, 88%, report that they don't have sufficient equipment to meet the combined challenge of enhanced nutrition standards and student acceptability. More than 85% of districts are "making do" in the absence of funds for such purchases.

The *Serving Healthy School Meals* study found that only 42% of school nutrition operations reported having a budget to purchase capital equipment, and less than half of these expected the budget to be adequate to meet their equipment needs. Significant kitchen infrastructure was also a concern in most districts. Across all kitchen types (central/commissary, full-service, production and finishing/satellite kitchens), only 12% needed no equipment, a mere 8% needed less than \$10,000 in equipment, 13% needed to budget between \$10,000 and \$50,000 for necessary equipment and 28% needed between \$150,000 and \$500,000 in new equipment.

approximately 24% of member districts use grab 'n' go inside the cafeteria, while 13% use these outside the cafeteria. In the largest districts, these numbers increase to nearly 40% and 33%, respectively.

- » **Reimbursable vending** is a relatively new option gaining popularity with operators and students. Students can select complete reimbursable meals from vending machines that also collect the point-of-service information necessary to claim federal reimbursement. Approximately 3% of SNA member districts offer this option, according to a 2016 study.
- » Eyeing the commercial **food truck** trend, some K-12 operations are going mobile with converted buses, vans, trailers and trucks, though it's still a small percentage—just 1.1% of SNA member districts, per the Association's 2016 research.
- » For breakfast service, nearly half of SNA districts offer an **"alternative" service venue**—meaning, other than the cafeteria line—although these are commonly used in combination with traditional cafeteria service. Of those with alternative service venues, nearly 43% offer breakfast through direct delivery to classrooms; 56% offer breakfast through grab 'n' go kiosks outside the cafeteria; 52% offer breakfast through grab 'n' go kiosks inside the cafeteria; and 5% offer the meal through reimbursable vending (SNA *Operations Report 2016*). Of districts that offer alternative breakfast service, 77% continue to offer **hot breakfast items**, most commonly at grab 'n' go kiosks, whether inside or outside the cafeteria.

EQUIPMENT PURCHASES

Equipment is a key factor in the determination for menu development, food procurement and meal prep

Purchasing & The Supply Chain

In school nutrition operations, purchasing responsibilities tend to include the formal procurement process, as well as forecasting, ordering, receiving, storing and maintaining inventory. The menu drives virtually all aspects of school nutrition purchasing. Because school districts purchase the bulk of their food and cafeteria/kitchen supplies with federal funds, the purchasing process is subject to a variety of federal, state and local regulations, as well as ethical purchasing standards. In many school districts, the school board must approve award decisions before contracts can be established.

All school food and supply purchases must be made using a competitive process, whether formal or informal. School districts can and should consider other criteria—including food safety, reliability, customer acceptance, marketing support and delivery terms/conditions—besides lowest price. Districts that participate in purchasing cooperatives participate in the procurement process along with other members of the cooperative.

The school nutrition procurement process is lengthy and intense for school nutrition directors, purchasing staff and vendors (see the *sample timeline on page 25*). If significant changes are made in the menu from one year to the next, finalizing specifications and testing new products with students are steps that add to the overall timeline.

FORMAL PURCHASING

School districts must use formal purchasing methods when the amount of the purchase exceeds the “simplified acquisition threshold.” This amount is set at \$150,000 at the federal level, but states and local school districts may set this threshold lower. Districts must apply the lower threshold in determining the means

for a purchase. Districts may use an Invitation for Bid (IFB) or a Request for Proposal (RFP); both of these require formal advertising of the procurement document and award of the contract in writing. An IFB is typically used for food and supply purchases, while an RFP is more commonly used for service-type contracts than for food purchases. In general, a bid is appropriate when the only point of differentiation between products or vendors is price. If other factors, such as service, are important and quantifiable, an RFP may be used.

INFORMAL PURCHASING

School meal operations can use an informal purchasing process—buying from a vendor based on an informal price quote—when the amount of the purchase is less than the small purchase threshold. Price quotes still should be documented, and informal purchasing still requires a written description of the item(s). School food authorities should request written responses from three or more suppliers.

TYPES OF AWARDS & CONTRACTS

There are many ways to award a school nutrition contract. Each has pros and cons, and operations must choose the process based on their specific needs:

Bottom Line—This means that the lowest-price, most-responsible bidder is awarded the contract based on the total price for all items combined at projected quantities.

Aggregate—This system, used by many school districts, means bidding and awarding bid items in similar categories, such as canned foods and staples; frozen foods; milk and other dairy products; and bakery items. The school district will be served by several different

vendors/specialty wholesalers.

Line Item—This bid considers the price of each product separately, and the contract is awarded item by item to the lowest bidder. This process may be used by large school districts that receive truckload deliveries to a central warehouse. Since distributors are given no guarantees of the number of cases to be delivered, they may choose not to bid or they may place minimum invoice amounts on all deliveries.

Prime Vendor—When a school nutrition operation acquires 80% or more of its food supply from one source, this vendor typically is considered a “prime vendor.” Broadline distributors, which offer refrigerated, frozen and dry items, often are prime vendors. Advantages of this approach include higher volumes and lower costs without precluding competition during the bid process. Prime vendor options can make school business more attractive to distributors because of larger drop sizes. Small and rural districts may have difficulty finding a single vendor to fill most needs without limiting competition. Even when prime vendors are used, districts often make separate purchases for certain items, such as dairy, bread or fresh produce.

Many small and medium-sized school districts find that they can increase their purchasing power significantly—and receive more competitive bids—when combining their purchasing needs with other school districts in the region (or even across the state), forming a **purchasing cooperative**. According to SNA’s *2016 Operations Report*, nearly two-thirds of responding districts indicated that their operation belongs to some kind of purchasing cooperative. One disadvantage of certain purchasing cooperative models is the need for operations to be flexible and compromise on menu

A Typical School Bid Cycle

October/November	New products are reviewed for pre-approval
December	Development of menus and bid specifications begin
January	Menus for the next school year are planned
February	Specifications are finalized; bid documents are finalized
March	Bids are publicized and vendors begin to prepare bids
April	Bids open and are evaluated
May	Bid is awarded for the next school year

items and specifications for the benefit of the entire group. Per SNA research, the use of purchasing cooperatives is more common among smaller to mid-sized districts and least likely among large districts.

Regardless of the type of award or contract, all purchases using child nutrition funds must be competitively procured in an environment that fosters free and open competition among all.

PRICING MECHANISMS

The pricing mechanism in the contract includes both the cost of the product and the freight charges. The contract also includes the distributor's costs (financing inventory, delivery charges, marketing cost, profit), which often are referred to as the "fee-per-bid unit."

Types of pricing mechanisms include:

- » **Fixed Price**—means the price quoted cannot be adjusted during the period of the contract. This method is used most frequently for canned and frozen foods.
- » **Fixed Price with Escalator/De-escalator Clause (Market-based Pricing)**—means the price is fixed for a specific amount of time but can be increased or decreased according to the market-based price. This method is most frequently used with produce, milk and eggs. When an escalator/de-escalator clause is

applied, it should include a publicly available index such as the Consumer Price Index, for determining the amount of adjustment allowed.

- » **Cost Plus Fixed Fee**—means the fixed bid price is for delivery of product, overhead costs and profit—plus the market-based price, which is based on the cost to the vendor. This is often used for purchasing fresh products that see market prices vary substantially during the year.
- » **Volume Discount**—is a reduced-pricing structure offered to a school district based on the volume of the purchase.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PURCHASING

The **USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (DoDFresh)** began as a pilot program in 1995, allowing DOD to supply produce to schools through a collaboration between DoD, FNS and AMS. States may allocate a portion of USDA Foods entitlement funds to buy fresh produce. States and school food authorities can choose from hundreds of available products. As of February 2017, schools in 48 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam participate in the program, per USDA 2017 data.

Who Decides?

What are the purchasing roles of everyone in the school nutrition operation? Note that responsibilities can vary, depending on whether purchasing is conducted by a general district business/purchasing office, the foodservice operation is autonomous (either centrally or on a site basis) in purchasing or the operation participates in a cooperative.

- » **Director/Supervisor/Specialist:** ensures that purchasing policies/procedures fit into the overall program; is involved in or in charge of developing specifications and overseeing the bid process; is involved in or in charge of developing the menu.
- » **Manager:** ensures that procedures are followed at the school level; is responsible for helping employees to understand and comply with procedures; oversees inventory, ordering, receiving and storage of onsite products; influences purchase decisions of menu items.
- » **Employee:** influences purchase decisions of menu items; assists with various receiving, storage and inventory management responsibilities.

The **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)** began as a small pilot in four states in 2002. Intended to bring fresh and dried fruits and vegetables to students free of charge outside of the NSLP/SBP, it allows participating schools to be creative in offering produce items as snacks to students during the school day. The program was made permanent in 2004. School selection requirements are very prescriptive and require that schools with the highest level of free/reduced-price enrollment receive priority.

FAST FACT

72%

of SNA member district directors report using student taste-testing of food items to promote healthier school choices. Nearly 15% more directors are considering or planning to do taste-tests.

SNA 2016 Operations Report

FARM TO SCHOOL

Farm to school programs continue to gain ground and attention across the country. Although there is no single federal program that regulates or administers appropriations for such initiatives, USDA/FNS operates the USDA Farm to School Program, which conducts research, training and technical assistance, as well as administers grants. Farm to school initiatives are also championed by some nonprofit organizations, state agencies and many local communities.

Models range from programs that offer nutrition education and/or lessons on agriculture (through school gardens/greenhouses, farm tours and classroom activities) to formal procurement agreements between area food producers and school food authorities.

According to USDA's 2015 Farm to School Census, more than 42,580 schools in 5,250 districts participated in some type of farm to school program in SY 2013-14. Census data also found that schools purchased nearly \$790 million in local food from farmers, ranchers, fisherman, food processors and manufacturers in the same year. This represented an 105% increase over SY 2011-12. Additionally, nearly half of the districts planned to



DID YOU KNOW?

Per SNA 2016 research, nearly 50% of SNA member districts report participating in farm to school initiatives, an increase from 32% in 2011. In a separate 2015 survey, USDA found that 42% of surveyed districts were involved in such activities, with another 16% planning to start a program in the future.

*Source: SNA 2016 Operations Report;
USDA 2015 Farm to School Census*

purchase even more local food in future school years. In USDA's 2013 Farm to School Census, respondents to the Census defined "local" as within the state (26%), within 50 miles (21%), within 100 miles (13%), with smaller percentages for "within the region," "a day's drive," "200 miles" and other definitions.

A review of existing programs finds that interest in farm to school and other locally sourced procurement has extended far beyond fruits and vegetables. School nutrition programs all over the country—especially in

states without a large agriculture base or with a short growing season—are finding they can purchase locally raised meats, cheeses, breads, honey and more. In addition, schools are growing more creative in making local harvests last across the school year, whether it is turning a tomato crop into a marinara sauce or wheat into flour for whole-grain rolls and pizza crusts. Schools are also beginning to participate in *sea* to school programs, expanding school food procurement to include locally caught, farmed and processed fish.

Food Safety

Foodborne illnesses are diseases caused by consumption (or ingestion) of contaminated foods or beverages. Outbreaks occur when two or more individuals become sick from a common exposure, such as consuming the same food item. The consequences of a foodborne illness range from mild discomfort to debilitation and death. School operations must be particularly vigilant, because children are especially vulnerable to foodborne illness due to their underdeveloped immune systems.

While most school nutrition programs can boast excellent food safety records, outbreaks that can be linked to school meals tend to affect large numbers of consumers and always receive significant press attention. Thus, the safety of school meals continues to be scrutinized and criticized by interest groups and the news media.

TRAINING

Food safety training is an essential aspect of employee training in school nutrition operations. Many states mandate food safety certification for managers in all foodservice operations. Even in areas without a state or local mandate for food safety certification, school districts often have internal requirements.

According to a 2012 report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding training and credentialing requirements for newly hired district foodservice directors, 90.2% of states provided technical assistance to districts and schools on developing food safety plans. In addition, 78.4% of states provided technical assistance to schools on using the cafeteria as a place where students might learn about food safety, as well as food preparation or other nutrition-related topics.

HACCP

The National School Lunch Act requires all school food authorities to implement a school food safety program based on HACCP principles. The food safety program must apply to every location where food is stored, prepared or served for child nutrition program meals offered through schools. Implementing HACCP is an ongoing systematic program that must be updated and maintained every year and with every menu item change.

The majority of districts use the “Process Approach” to HACCP, which begins with a grouping of menu items into three key categories based on the number of times the menu item passes through the temperature danger zone. The three categories include: No Cook Preparation (Process 1), Same Day Service Preparation (Process 2) and Complex Food Preparation (Process 3). “Critical control points” and corresponding “critical limits” are assigned within each category. Critical limits are time and/or temperatures that must be achieved or maintained to control a food safety hazard. Monitoring of food and storage areas during receiving, storage, preparation and service is essential to maintaining food safety.

One key concept of HACCP is identification of specific hazards (those directly related to the particular food or menu item being prepared, such as E. coli bacteria associated with ground beef) and non-specific hazards (resulting from system-wide factors, such as improper handwashing). A HACCP-based food safety program includes development of SOPs (standard operating procedures) related to non-specific safety considerations such as personal hygiene (including employee health, handwashing and glove use), procurement and storage.



DOUBLE DANGER

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, **produce** accounts for the vast majority (46%) of domestically acquired foodborne illnesses.

This was twice as much as the next prevalent category: **meat and poultry (22%)**.

Source: Emerging Infectious Diseases, 2013, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



FAST FACT

The same pathogens that cause food poisoning can cause arthritis, kidney failure, meningitis and Guillain-Barré syndrome. The Food and Drug Administration estimates that 2% to 3% of all food poisoning cases lead to secondary long-term illness such as these.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

FOOD RECALLS

Food recalls for USDA Foods are initiated and managed through USDA and the state agencies that distribute USDA Foods. Recalls for food items purchased commercially are initiated and managed by the manufacturer. Response procedures differ, and it is essential that staff be trained to respond to a food recall *prior* to an event.

Recalls are classified as Class I, II or III, depending on the level of risk and the “reasonable probability” that eating the food will or will not cause serious, adverse health consequences. For example, the discovery of a food with an undeclared allergen or ground beef contaminated with *E. coli* 0157:H7 would be considered Class I, with a reasonable probability that eating the food would cause serious health consequences or death. Foods with minor labeling problems, such as undeclared ingredients that are *not* allergens, likely would be considered Class III, where use of the produce would not cause adverse health consequences.

To improve timely communication with various audiences, an interagency website, www.foodsafety.gov, includes information about USDA Foods and commercial food recalls and alerts. Foodservice professionals and consumers alike may sign up to automatically receive information about recalls and alerts by email. The USDA State Emergency Notification System (SENS) is available for state agencies to use when communicating with recipient agencies about recalls that specifically involve USDA Foods.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & FOOD DEFENSE

Recent natural disasters have underscored the importance of **emergency management** throughout the community. School districts and school nutrition departments are encouraged to have a plan in place for a wide variety of situations. A food safety emergency plan should address, at a minimum, time and/or temperature abuse due to power outages and contamination of food due to flood waters or other elements. Procedures within the plan should address communication, food loss, food delivery and service of meals in preparation for an emergency and during the response period. It is essential to update emergency plans as needed and provide training to staff.

Operators also should be prepared to feed more students in the weeks and months after a community crisis. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act provides federal funds, including school meals to children who are in a short- or long-term homeless situation, including being displaced following a storm or other natural disaster. In addition, districts may be asked to make their facilities and/or food supplies available to the Red Cross and other emergency partners during or after a natural disaster. Emergency management plans should cover these contingencies, as well.

A **food defense** plan is established to protect food from intentional contamination with the intent to cause harm. Since food defense and emergency preparedness concepts overlap, districts may opt to develop a single, comprehensive plan.

Opportunities & Challenges in School Nutrition

Over the course of more than 70 years of experience in delivering school meals to provide for children's health and academic success, school nutrition professionals have faced—and met—numerous challenges. Changing times bring new issues to the fore—as well as some cyclical opportunities and concerns.

TECHNOLOGY

Along with their peers in other foodservice segments, K-12 school nutrition operators must grapple with ever-changing technologies that affect not only how they manage, but how they market. While student customers may find such approaches as social media, mobile apps and digital signage to be second nature, adult employees tend to adopt new communications and operational technologies with greater caution.

Still, school nutrition employees at all levels are learning to embrace technologies that help to streamline operations and are turning to these with greater frequency and enthusiasm. For example, 2016 SNA member research finds that:

- » 97.7% use computer- or Internet-based POS systems
- » 72.9% use nutrient analysis/menu planning software
- » 46.7% provide online free and reduced-price applications

Other foodservice operational technologies gaining traction in the K-12 segment include online training and conferencing, financial management software, inventory tracking software, wireless/handheld POS units, labor tracking software, free and reduced-price application scanning, and procurement/commodity software.

As customers become more savvy in technological preferences, school nutrition operators must respond in kind in order to reach students, their parents, other stakeholders in the school community and the media.

In particular, SNA member districts report using the following technology to aid in parent communication and outreach (SNA 2016 *Operations Report*):

- » Online payments (81.7%)
- » Automated phone calls, texts and emails for low-balance notifications (61.8%)
- » Online parent monitoring/restriction of food purchases (54.6%)
- » Online access to nutrition and allergen information (45.1%)

To gain credibility with student customers—and help drive participation—school cafeteria teams are stepping up their use of:

- » Social media (33.8%)
- » Mobile apps (25.8%)
- » Online ordering (22.3%)
- » Digital menu boards (15.9%)

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

School nutrition professionals continually walk a narrow tightrope in winning the hearts and wallets of students in the face of commercial competition while being mandated to serve menu items that meet strict nutrition standards. In addition to applying tech and marketing tools that mimic the strategies and options kids have at the local food court (e.g., made-to-order items, apps, social media, limited-time offers, etc.), K-12 operators also work to actively engage students in making decisions about nutrition, health and physical activity that will last a lifetime. In this quest, some operators are exploring nudge marketing strategies to encourage students to make healthier choices. Tactics include moving fruit items to a premium merchandise location, creating easier access to unflavored milk selections and creatively naming vegetable-based side dishes



DID YOU KNOW?

The number of U.S. children living in poverty in 2015: **14,509,000.**

The number of U.S. children living in extreme poverty: **6,537,000.**

Source: Children's Defense Fund, *Child Poverty in America 2015: National Analysis*

to attract curiosity and interest.

School nutrition operations also use time-tested approaches, including clever, prominent signage and displays, special occasion promotions, contests and classroom activities to promote nutrition messages.

To gain student buy-in of school meal offerings, school nutrition staff must work to boost student engagement in the entire program through a variety of nutrition education and marketing outreach initiatives.

Among the most popular with SNA member districts, according to SNA's 2016 *Operations Report*, are:

- » Student taste-testing of new menu items (72.3%)
- » Nutrition education (52.1%)
- » Farm-to-school initiatives (49.9%)
- » Social media outreach (38.1%)
- » School gardens (33.2%)
- » Chef partnerships/recipe development (18.4%)

FAST FACT

Technologies used by
SNA member districts to
communicate with parents
and students:

34%

use social media

26%

use mobile apps

Source: 2016 SNA Operations Report

FOOD WASTE

The need to apply such strategies to persuade children to actually consume healthier items is becoming ever-more critical. A 2013 study completed by researchers at Colorado State University and published in *Public Health Nutrition* examined plate waste in elementary and middle school students participating in NSLP, determining that elementary school students wasted more than a third of grain, fruit and vegetable menu items. Additionally, middle school students left nearly 50% of fresh fruit, 37% of canned fruit and a third of vegetables unconsumed.

Concern about the overall volume of waste going into U.S. landfills is also back in the forefront. Schools have unique challenges in minimizing food waste, which currently adds up to about 133 billion pounds of food annually, according to USDA estimates. Forecasting appropriate service amounts for fickle students across multiple lunch periods is a challenge. Leftovers

are frowned upon. Even the approach of allowing students to exchange uneaten, unopened food items on “sharing” tables is a policy that is embraced in some schools and prohibited in others for a host of political and food safety reasons.

To combat these challenges, directors and managers must apply creative strategies during all facets of planning and producing school meals. For example, during the menu planning period, a director might allow for “chef’s/manager’s choice” days to allow individual sites the opportunity to use up extra inventory. Another tactic is to take advantage of the versatility of some ingredients (such as diced chicken) in different recipes scheduled back to back.

Operators also can control food waste through rigorous training to ensure staff know proper receiving, storage and preparation procedures. These include inspecting deliveries for spoilage, first in/first out inventory management, batch cooking and various culinary techniques.

FINANCIAL PRESSURES

School nutrition professionals are facing an ever-increasing list of barriers to managing a financially self-sufficient operation. Rising costs (food, labor, benefits, fuel). Lagging reimbursement rates. Reduced or eliminated fund balances. Unfunded or underfunded mandates. NSLP participation declines.

In addition, unpaid student meal charges continue to plague many districts. Approximately three-fourths of SNA members surveyed in the *SNA 2016 Operations Report* had unpaid student debt at the end of SY 2014-15. Many school nutrition operations also are being asked to support the district through the payment of indirect costs (*see page 18*), such as employee screening,

facilities management and utilities. In September 2016, USDA released guidance on indirect costs, as required by HHFKA, providing assistance to SFAs to ensure that indirect cost expenses are limited to those considered “reasonable, necessary and allocable to provide quality meals for the programs.”

While operators continue to prioritize streamlining strategies, stretching their limited financial resources while maintaining nutrition integrity, ongoing budget crunching remains one of the most-pressing concerns for districts of every size.

POVERTY

One strategy working in communities of different sizes and socio-economic profiles is to focus on offering additional child nutrition programs, such as summer meals (as a SFSP sponsor or vendor) or serving supper meals as part of the CACFP. Other K-12 operations are working to expand participation in these programs, as well as school breakfast. This strategy can serve as a win-win, generating additional reimbursement revenue with relatively little additional cost to the school nutrition operation, while providing a valuable resource to low-income families in the community.

School meal programs have a long history as a critical safety net for children from low-income families. The U.S. Census Bureau’s report, *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015*, released in September 2016, puts the number of Americans currently living in poverty at 43 million (13.5%), a decrease of 3.5 million from 2014. The percentage of children (under age 18) living in poverty dropped from 21% in 2014 to 19.7% in 2015, but remains a staggering proportion.



More than half (54.8%) of SNA district director members report they offer summer meals, and federal data shows continued growth in this program in the number of sponsors, serving sites and daily participation. In addition to participation in federal meal programs, 14.1% of SNA district director members report that they offer a “Backpack” program to provide low-income children with food items for the weekends and holidays, when school is not in session (*SNA 2016 Operations Report*), while 12.6% offer an afterschool meal or supper program.

SPECIAL DIETS & FOOD ALLERGIES

School nutrition operations tend to incur additional costs to provide special diet meals; foods often are more expensive due to the small quantities needed or limited

available options. Special diets might need to be developed for children with food intolerances and allergies, as well as food-related health conditions, such as celiac disease, diabetes and issues with swallowing.

Food allergies have represented a growing area of public attention and concern. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that food allergies affect 4% to 6% of U.S. children—nearly 6 million, or 1 in 13 children. Studies indicate that 16% to 18% of school-age children with food allergies have had a reaction in school, and of those, 25% occurred in a student who had not yet been diagnosed with a food allergy, according to Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE). **Food intolerances**, in contrast do not result in immune-mediated, life-threatening responses and should not be confused with food allergies, but still

may require accommodation by the school nutrition operation.

Because food allergies are potentially life-threatening, parents of children with food allergies can be particularly vocal and persistent about changes to menu offerings, meal and snack policies and procedures both in cafeterias and classrooms. An example is the elimination of all peanut or tree nut products, including items brought from home and throughout the school facility. But some allergy-management philosophies recommend a policy of “life skills management,” focused on providing clear identification of foods with allergens and helping students to choose menu items accordingly.

School nutrition directors, as well as managers and employees, must be knowledgeable about managing



DID YOU KNOW?

Nearly 38% of SNA member districts report that certain food items are banned in all or some of their schools due to concerns about food allergies.



Source: SNA 2016
Operations Report

food allergies in order to protect affected children, while balancing the needs of all children. In 2013, the CDC published *Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools and Early Care and Education Programs* to help schools develop appropriate policies and procedures.

In some cases, a child's food allergy may meet the definition of a disability and, therefore, be protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Schools that receive federal funds are required to work with the parents of such children to create and implement a 405 plan, which outlines needed accommodations, aids or services.

CLEAN LABELS

The growing interest by consumers for foods with clean labels—that is, those that are free from certain ingredients, such as artificial colors, sweeteners or preservatives—offers both an opportunity and a challenge to school foodservice operators. Some are able to cite longstanding policies to prohibit procurement of, say, products with artificial sweeteners or MSG. Others see the clean label trend as a chance to use the buying power of K-12 to help shift practices at the retail level. While clean label priorities might appeal to health advocates, they can contribute to higher meal costs, a burden that not all operations are prepared to handle. And, although industry partners are again retooling their formulas to meet demand for these “clean” products, the inventory isn't quite there yet for most districts to purchase in necessary quantities.

R&D CHALLENGES FOR INDUSTRY

School nutrition operators and their vendor partners face a daunting challenge: create menu items that are nutritious—and, perhaps, provide a clean label—while proving acceptable to some of the toughest food critics ever faced: kids and their parents. It's a research and development challenge that is very much equal parts science and art.

In an effort to meet the increased demand for products that comply with the different federal child nutrition program meal patterns and Smart Snacks rules, many companies have revisited their existing portfolio of K-12 products. One company reported having to reformulate 136 products to comply with new requirements—to the tune of more than \$2.7 million, according to an article in a 2014 issue of *School Nutrition* magazine.

In addition to numerous research steps (including employing different ingredients, proportions, cooking processes, taste-testing), reformulated products must be tested for safety and shelf life, plus new packaging and labeling must be developed. Extensive documentation for USDA Foods processing, CN-Labeling (as appropriate) and various food product databases and applications must be managed.

Vendors see *new* product development as both an opportunity and a challenge. Given current trends for nutritious alternatives to cross *all* foodservice and retail markets, the leading edge presented by K-12 requirements can mean that a company may have better success than a decade ago in taking its school products to non-school segments and expanding its revenue potential.

School Nutrition Professionals

They may work in the school nutrition services, school foodservice, child nutrition or child health program department. They may be called by any of a vast number of titles, but there is consistency in the primary job responsibilities for four basic categories of school foodservice and nutrition professionals.

SCHOOL FOODSERVICE/NUTRITION DIRECTOR **Similar titles include Executive Director, Supervisor, Coordinator**

In most districts, the foodservice/nutrition director oversees all aspects of foodservice in all schools or sites. This person plans, organizes, directs and administers the nutrition services operation in accordance with the policies of the superintendent and board of education and within compliance measures set by local state and federal governments. In some districts, the director may act as an assistant superintendent and have responsibilities unrelated to foodservice.

SCHOOL FOODSERVICE/NUTRITION SUPERVISOR

Similar titles include Coordinator, Specialist, Field Manager, Assistant Director, Dietitian, Executive Chef

Larger districts that require greater central management may have supervisory staff who support the director and are given responsibility for certain areas of operational management. These areas may include procurement, financial administration, menu planning, recipe development, nutrition education, wellness coordination, catering/vending operations, production facility management, training coordination, warehouse management and more. In addition, supervisory staff may be given several individual service sites to oversee and support. In some small school districts, an assistant director may be a secretary or bookkeeper.

SCHOOL FOODSERVICE/NUTRITION MANAGER/ASSISTANT MANAGER

Similar titles include Head Cook, Lead

Managers typically lead the day-to-day operations at one (sometimes more) individual school or feeding site. Foodservice managers must ensure high standards for safety/sanitation and meal quality. In addition, they supervise site employees, place food/supply orders, account for meal service and a la carte sales and ensure that adequate inventory is available. An assistant manager position may support the site manager.

SCHOOL FOODSERVICE/NUTRITION EMPLOYEE

Similar titles include Assistant, Technician, Worker

School foodservice employees in an individual school are responsible for the preparation and serving of all menu items. Additional responsibilities include receipt and storage of products, cleaning and dishwashing, as well as the care and maintenance of some equipment. Employees in cafeterias and kitchens include cooks, bakers, technicians, dishwashers, cashiers and assistants. School nutrition employees also may work at the district level as bookkeepers, secretaries, drivers and production/warehouse facility workers.

SNA Advocacy

Legislative and regulatory advocacy is in the very DNA of the School Nutrition Association, stretching back to 1946, when the organization first came to be and the bill establishing the National School Lunch Program was signed into law. In 1990, the Association moved its national headquarters from Denver, Colo., to the nation's capital, in recognition that a strong, visible Washington presence was essential. In 2014, SNA's Strategic Plan identified advocacy as one of the most critically important activities of this organization.

ADVOCACY APPROACH

SNA's advocacy efforts rely heavily on individual member participation in multiple ways. The Association regularly surveys its members, requesting feedback to identify top policy priorities, and it asks them to participate in individual grassroots lobbying.

SNA's national **Public Policy & Legislation (PPL) Committee** includes regional representatives charged with being an information conduit with SNA state affiliates and their members. From collecting district-level commentary on the practical effects of new policy to calling for letter/email-writing campaigns to legislators, PPL is a critical link in ensuring member participation in advocacy. An SNA staff team works closely with PPL members, the Board of Directors and consultants on the mechanics of various advocacy objectives.

The direction of SNA's advocacy efforts is set in the annual **Position Paper**, which is considered the best representation of the primary issues affecting SNA members, articulating the Association's suggestions for solving identifiable problems. It is used to frame discussions with members of Congress, as well as USDA staff. The *Position Paper* is crafted through a process that involves thousands of SNA members.

During SNA's annual **Legislative Action Conference (LAC)** each spring, attendees use the *Paper* as the foundation for meetings with individual legislators and/or their staff members. SNA members are encouraged to continue active communications with lawmakers back home, raising awareness about school nutrition complexities.

2017 AND BEYOND

Although the 114th Congress failed to pass a Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill when it adjourned in December 2016, leadership of the 115th Congress has indicated that it will not take up a new bill in 2017. Given the reality of the federal deficit and the absence of Reauthorization legislation, SNA's advocacy positions at the time of this publication are focused on the following areas:

- » SNA requests that Congress **oppose any effort to block grant school meal programs**. Block grants will cut funds and eliminate federal nutrition standards for school meals. Block grant funding caps will prevent schools from serving additional at-risk students when local economic downturns or rising enrollments increase the number of children eligible for free or reduced-priced meals. SNA vigorously opposed a House-proposed school meal block grant pilot in 2016 and continues to take a firm stand against any effort to dismantle federal school meal programs.
- » SNA urges Congress to support schools, U.S. farmers and students in the next Farm Bill by providing **6 cents in USDA Foods for every school breakfast served**. Currently, commodity support is only provided for school lunch. Expanding USDA Foods to support the SBP will help schools cover rising

costs, advance USDA's mission of supporting America's farmers and allow more students to benefit.

- » Overly prescriptive nutrition standards have resulted in unintended consequences, including reduced participation, higher costs and increased food waste. SNA requests **practical flexibility** to prepare nutritious meals that appeal to diverse student tastes. In particular, USDA should maintain the Target 1 sodium levels and eliminate future targets and restore the initial requirement that at least half of grains offered, not all, be whole grain-rich.
- » Duplicative and overly burdensome administrative mandates divert school nutrition professionals' attention from their mission of nourishing students. SNA asks that Congress provide \$1 million to conduct an independent study of the federal child nutrition programs with the intent of **simplifying regulations and improving efficiencies**.

SNA Resources

The School Nutrition Association (SNA) offers a wide variety of programs and resources designed to help school nutrition professionals improve their skills, grow their programs and promote the benefits of school meals to the general public.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

In July 2015, USDA published Professional Standards requirements that, among other things, establish training standards for school nutrition directors, managers, staff and state agency directors. In addition to providing SNA members with a variety of tools and resources to help them navigate the specific requirements of the Professional Standards rule, all SNA professional development programming is aligned with Professional Standards.

The **SNA Certificate in School Nutrition Program** provides a career ladder to climb within the school nutrition profession—from entry-level assistant to district director. SNA offers three certificate levels, each with appropriate standards for academic education, specialized training, work experience and continuing education. In addition, SNA offers the **School Nutrition Specialist (SNS)** designation, which demonstrates the highest proficiency in the profession. To earn this credential, applicants must qualify for and pass a national exam. Most designees are operators, but an increasing number of state agency and industry representatives also have earned the SNS credential. A *Study Guide* and a consolidated list of resources are among the tools to help operators prepare for the exam.

SNA provides a number of education and training resources to members, including learning opportunities

at national meetings and how-to articles in its monthly magazine. In addition, highly attended **Webinar Wednesdays** are offered several times a year on a variety of hot topics. Most webinars provide continuing education units (CEUs) that can be used toward SNA's certificate and credentialing maintenance and Professional Standards annual training requirements. Webinars are closed captioned to ensure that the hearing impaired can fully participate in SNA e-learning events. SNA's Webinars On-Demand Library hosts recordings of all SNA live webinars and are available exclusively to SNA members for viewing at their convenience.

The Association produces, often with support from industry partners, periodic **toolkits** focused on different topic areas, such as media relations, social media and serving afterschool suppers. Some of these are developed with allied organizations in cooperation with SNA's philanthropic sister organization, the School Nutrition Foundation (SNF). For example, SNA/SNF is a partner in a coalition to expand breakfast in the classroom service, with financial support from the Walmart Foundation. Innovative practices are highlighted on the **Beyond Breakfast blog** and featured in the online **Breakfast in the Classroom Resource Center**. SNA/SNF is also working with Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry initiative to advance the **Schools as Nutrition Hubs** concept to expand participation in all available federal child nutrition programs.

SNF also offers **scholarship** programs to help eligible members defray some of the costs related to continuing education and training. Scholarships are available to members pursuing professional growth, a college degree, first-time national meeting participation and more.

INFORMATION RESOURCES

School Nutrition is SNA's award-winning monthly magazine. School nutrition professionals turn to **SN** for information, how-to steps and best-practice models on dozens of topics. Each issue features special articles on a monthly theme, while regular columns highlight business topics, nutrition, safety/sanitation, equipment, food, new products and more.

The Association's award-winning website, **SchoolNutrition.org**, is your one-stop-shop for keeping abreast of school nutrition topics. In addition to timely news updates and online professional development resources, the site is your source for customizable public awareness materials, archives of conference presentations, research studies and much more. The Career Center offers a resource to employers and job-seekers and the Legislative Action Center is a comprehensive hub of materials related to legislative and regulatory initiatives

In addition to the magazine and web resources, SNA members and allies can subscribe to a number of free e-newsletters. **SN Express: News from the School Nutrition Association** is a weekly round-up of news about SNA resources, programs, initiatives and Association activities and opportunities. The daily **SNA SmartBrief** compiles news articles from across the United States on a variety of child nutrition topics each weekday. The weekly **Tuesday Morning** provides timely updates on legislative and regulatory happenings that affect the federal child nutrition programs. Each month, **Industry Insider** delivers the latest news and information especially critical for SNA industry members.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

SNA continues to promote positive awareness of school meal programs through its [Traytalk.org blog \(www.TrayTalk.org\)](http://www.Traytalk.org) and [Facebook.com/TrayTalk page](https://www.facebook.com/TrayTalk), as well as the “About School Meals” section of [SchoolNutrition.org](http://www.SchoolNutrition.org). Information about the benefits of school meals, success stories from coast to coast and FAQs help to showcase school nutrition operations to parents and other stakeholders. In addition, support materials are available to school nutrition professionals to use to promote their own achievements to their communities.

As part of a 2015–17 **PR campaign**, SNA created numerous tools to help members promote their programs and share their stories. Resources include: customizable school lunch and breakfast flyers to promote meal programs to parents; colorful, creative and sharable content for use on social media platforms; an animated video that promotes both the value of school meal programs and the contributions of school nutrition professionals, and messaging documents for SNA leaders.

SNA continues to maximize the opportunities provided by social media in an effort to raise awareness about the Association and its members. At press time, its [Facebook page \(Facebook.com/SchoolNutritionAssociation\)](https://www.facebook.com/SchoolNutritionAssociation) has more than 12,000 fans, its [Twitter feed \(@SchoolLunch\)](https://twitter.com/SchoolLunch) has topped 29,500 and its [Instagram page \(@schoolnutritionassoc\)](https://www.instagram.com/schoolnutritionassoc) has more than 1,600 followers.

National promotions help to draw positive attention to school meals. Each fall, SNA observes **National School Lunch Week**, while **National School Breakfast Week** is celebrated in early March. These campaigns are supported with many online resources, as well as products for purchase through the **SNA Emporium**. In addition, **School Lunch Hero Day** and

School Nutrition Employee Week, which fall in early May, are opportunities to recognize the outstanding commitment of professionals at all levels.

To assist SNA members in pursuing their personal wellness goals and serve as community role models, SNA, with support from Jennie-O Turkey Store, offers the **STEPS Challenge**, an annual program of resources and inspiration designed to encourage better health and wellness choices.

MEETINGS

Each year, SNA brings together thousands of school nutrition professionals, industry representatives and allies through its national conferences and meetings. Held in July, the **Annual National Conference (ANC)** is the largest and most substantive meeting of its kind in the nation for the school nutrition profession, featuring more than 120 quality education sessions, hundreds of exhibit booths and numerous networking opportunities. SNA also now offers an annual **Virtual Expo**, which began in 2017. This free expo allows SNA members to connect with exhibitors, who answer questions in real time, network with colleagues and industry representatives and access recorded education sessions to earn CEUs.

In January, SNA’s **School Nutrition Industry Conference (SNIC)** provides directors with opportunities to build partnerships with industry on the latest topics in school nutrition. The annual **Legislative Action Conference (LAC)**, held in the spring, allows attendees to learn critical legislative and regulatory issues affecting the federal child nutrition programs and share key messages with elected representatives. State leaders participating (by invitation only) in the **National Leadership Conference (NLC)** each spring

learn skills and strategies for strengthening the national Association, as well as their own state affiliates.

Twice a year, SNA offers an **Industry Boot Camp**, an educational seminar designed specifically for industry members who want to learn more about the complexities of the K–12 school nutrition segment.

RESEARCH

SNA continually is exploring the latest trends, factors and issues affecting the school nutrition environment and profession. The Association produces the biannual **School Nutrition Operations Report** and the **Back to School Trends Report**. Other useful research is found on SNA’s website, including SNA’s tracking of school year participation rates in lunch and breakfast programs and links to research and resources on school nutrition topics.

The Journal of Child Nutrition & Management is a free, online, peer-reviewed journal designed to disseminate research findings in school nutrition.

To learn more about all of these resources, contact the **SNA Service Center** at (800) 877-8822 or visit www.schoolnutrition.org

Other Helpful Resources

In addition to SNA's web pages, e-newsletters and social media channels, a number of websites from other organizations include up-to-date information useful to those seeking to build a better understanding of K-12 school nutrition issues.

U.S. Department of Agriculture

General information about Child Nutrition Programs
www.fns.usda.gov/cnd

Food and Nutrition Service & Team Nutrition
www.fns.usda.gov
www.fns.usda.gov/tn

National Agricultural Library Food and Nutrition Information Center
www.nutrition.gov

USDA Foods

American Commodity Distribution Association
www.commodityfoods.org

USDA, Food Distribution Division
www.fns.usda.gov/food

USDA Foods Toolkit for Child Nutrition Programs
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/usda-foods/usda-foods-toolkit-child-nutrition-programs>

Farm-to-School

Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) Network for Education and Training
www.gaps.cornell.edu

National Farm to School Network
www.farmtoschool.org
USDA Farm to School
www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/F2S

Food Allergies

FARE (Food Allergy Research and Education)
www.foodallergy.org

Food Safety Center of Excellence for Food Safety Research in Child Nutrition Programs
<http://cnsafefood.k-state.edu>

FoodSafety.Gov
www.foodsafety.gov

Partnership for Food Safety Education: Fight BAC!
www.fightbac.org

Health & Nutrition

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
www.eatright.org

International Food Information Council
www.foodinsight.org

MyPlate
www.choosemyplate.gov

Healthy School Environments

Alliance for a Healthier Generation
www.healthiergeneration.org

Action for Healthy Kids
www.actionforhealthykids.org

Fuel Up to Play
www.fueluptoplay60.com

HealthierUS School Challenge
www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html

Hunger & Poverty

Food Research and Action Center
www.frac.org

National Center for Children in Poverty
www.nccp.org

Share Our Strength
www.nokidhungry.org

School Administration

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
www.aasa.org

Association of School Business Officials International
www.asbointl.org

National School Boards Association
www.nsba.org

Training & Technical Assistance

Institute of Child Nutrition
www.theicn.org

Trends

Pew Charitable Trusts
www.pewtrusts.org

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
www.rwjf.org/en/our-work.html

| VISION |

The School Nutrition Association (SNA) has been advancing the availability, quality and acceptance of school nutrition programs as an integral part of education since 1946. Recognized as *the* authority on school nutrition programs, SNA has 52 state affiliates, hundreds of local chapters and more than 57,000 individual members.

| MISSION |

SNA is the national organization of school nutrition professionals committed to advancing the quality of school meal programs through education and advocacy.



Feeding Bodies. Fueling Minds.™

School Nutrition Association | 120 Waterfront Street, Suite 300 | National Harbor, MD 20745

301.686.3100 | 800.877.8822 | F: 301.686.3115 | www.schoolnutrition.org | facebook.com/SchoolNutritionAssociation | twitter.com/SchoolLunch