Back to school means new teachers, new classmates, new subjects, and other adjustments. This year, back to school also means new school lunches. It can take a little time for kids to get used to a new teacher, different rules, harder subjects, or more homework. It also may take a little time for kids to get used to different foods in the cafeteria.

{Depending on the type of article you are responding to, you can either choose option 1 or 2 below to use to adapt your letter.}

1. School food service will need to prepare fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in several ways before they find enough options students enjoy. Maybe they will need to engage the students with test tastes, fun facts about new fruits and vegetables, or have the kids vote on their favorite options. Parents can help by encouraging their kids to try new foods and reinforcing the idea that healthy food can taste great. Some schools across the country have already implemented strong school lunch standards and students do like the new meals (sometimes after a period of adjustment). There may be a small dip in sales when the standards are first implemented, but in most cases sales return to the original level, and in many cases sales increase as meal quality improves.

2. There is money available for healthier school lunches, but school food service directors will need to be proactive to get it. If schools are meeting the new school nutrition standards, they can receive six additional cents per lunch. In addition, schools should set reasonable prices for school lunches and a la carte foods to cover their true cost and ensure that funds meant for providing healthy foods to low income children are not diverted to subsidize food for higher income kids. Helping your school get these resources will mean more money for fresh and wholesome food that will benefit all students.

Back to school can be a time of adjustment. Students might need time to adjust to new teachers and subjects, and our school lunch program might need time before it is fully accepted by students or adjusted financially, but both our students and our school lunch program are moving forward. To find out more about how you can help improve your school’s food, please visit schoolfoods.org/back2school.