

# Tips for Educators on Supporting Healthy School Meals



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently updated the nutrition standards for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. Ensuring that school meals are healthy and in line with current nutrition science is important for kids' health and academic success. Research shows that students who do not have reliable, healthy meals in kindergarten are noticeably behind their peers in reading and math by the third grade. Teachers and other school staff can play an important role in helping to ensure these standards are implemented successfully and that children are willing to try new options.

Here are some ways you can support healthy school meals:

- ✓ Speak **positively** about school breakfasts and lunches, and encourage your students to try the new meals even if they contain unfamiliar foods.
- ✓ Talk to your students about the new school lunches. Find out what they like/dislike, and use this as an opportunity to report back to the cafeteria staff.
- ✓ Serve as a role model by occasionally eating school lunch with your students.
- ✓ Incorporate [nutrition education](#) into your curriculum to help students understand the importance of healthy eating.
- ✓ Support the overall message of healthy eating by:
  - [Serving healthier items during class parties](#)
  - [Using non-food rewards in the classroom](#)
- ✓ Implement a snack policy in your classroom:
  - Send a [healthy snack tip sheet](#) home to parents to encourage healthy snack options.
  - If you offer snacks in your classroom, stick to healthy options [like fruits, veggies, whole grains, and low-fat dairy](#).
- ✓ Help keep parents informed about improvements to school foods by including information in class newsletters, letters home, back-to-school nights, school websites, etc.
- ✓ [Use healthier fundraising options](#) if you advise a school club or hold class fundraisers.
- ✓ Get involved by joining your school or district wellness committee.
- ✓ Learn how you can take action to support healthy options in all venues where food is sold in school by visiting [BagtheJunk.org](#).

