

Engaging Students in School Food

Schools and school food providers are encouraged to engage students in the foods and drinks offered at school and school-sponsored events. Engagement is an ongoing and interactive process and students should be engaged early and often in age appropriate and meaningful ways. Providing students of all ages with the opportunity to participate in planning healthy school menus, canteens and fundraisers can help you to improve the school food environment.



Why Engage Students?

- Enhances school engagement and peer connectedness;
- Increases student motivation and self-confidence;
- Increases student interest in the foods and drinks available at school;
- Encourages students to participate in school food services and not leave school for lunch;
- Supports social connections and encourages empowerment; and,
- Has positive effects on the school environment and school climate.

How to Engage Students?




- Include students on school council or leadership teams;
- Work with school food providers to involve students in menu development;
- Conduct taste testing of new menu items or survey students on what foods and drinks they would like to see offered at school and school events;
- Promote new menus in school announcements, newsletters and social media;
- Consider updates to the school cafeteria, or other spaces where students eat, to make it more inviting. Involve students in the plans for these spaces; and,
- Consider other aspects of the school food environment that may interest students like hands on activities with food, community gardens, recipe contests or school cookbooks.

Tips for Taste Tests or Student Surveys

- Offer the taste test or survey to all students;
- If you offer a taste test, use an evaluation sheet for students to complete (see sample provided);
- Provide incentives to students who participate. This can include stickers, bookmarks, pencils, extra class activity time, or lunch with the principal;
- Have student leaders compile results to see what menu items scored the best or what new ideas students have for menu items; and,
- Work with school food providers to add these new items to their menus.

Sample Taste Test Form

Circle the number that best answers each question. 1 is the worst and 5 is the best.

Menu Item					
How does the food look?	1	2	3	4	5
How does the food taste?	1	2	3	4	5
How does the food smell?	1	2	3	4	5
How would you rate the food overall?	1	2	3	4	5
Would you order this item if it was on your school menu?	1	2	3	4	5

Do you have any ideas for your school menu?

Thank you

Sample Student Survey

You are invited to participate in a survey about the foods and drinks at your school. Your feedback is important and will be used to help make decisions about what is offered at school and school sponsored events.

School Food Guidelines (SFG) are a tool for schools to use to increase access to healthy foods and drinks for students. Canada's Food Guide is the guiding document for these guidelines. Canada's Food Guide encourages us all to eat a variety of foods each day, such as vegetables and fruits, protein foods, whole grain foods, and to drink water.

1. Do you know that there are [School Food Guidelines](#) at your school?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know what the School Food Guidelines are

2. Would you like to try new foods at your school in a 'taste testing' before you buy them?

- Yes
- No

3. Why do you buy food from the cafeteria?

- I like the food
- There is a good variety
- Price is reasonable
- Healthy foods are available
- It is convenient
- There is nowhere else to get food nearby
- I do not buy food from the cafeteria
- Other: _____

4. What stops you from buying food from the cafeteria? (select all that apply)

- Nothing, I do buy food from the cafeteria
- I do not like the food
- It costs too much
- Not enough variety
- I don't think the food choices are healthy
- I bring my own food
- It is not convenient (e.g. long line ups)
- Other: _____

5. What suggestions do you have to encourage students to buy food from the cafeteria?

6. Where do you get the food you eat during the school day?

- I bring from home
- I purchase at a store premade
- I purchase at a fast food restaurant
- Someone drops fast food to me at school
- I buy it at the cafeteria at school
- I do not eat food during the school day
- Other: _____

7. Which of the following foods would you purchase at school?

- Fruit (in the survey you can specify types e.g., fruit kebob, fruit and yogurt parfait etc.)
- Vegetables (in the survey you can specify types e.g., raw vegetables and dip, vegetable sticks with hummus etc.)
- Muffins/loaves
- Yogurt, yogurt tubes, yogurt drinks
- Cheese and crackers
- Popcorn or Trail mix
- Granola bars
- Cereal (dry or with milk)
- Sandwiches (in the survey you can specify types e.g., chicken, veggie, grilled cheddar cheese, breakfast sandwiches etc.)
- Wraps (in the survey you can specify types e.g., chicken ranch, veggie etc.)
- Soups, stews and chili
- Salads
- Pastas and Casseroles (in the survey you can specify types e.g., lasagna, macaroni and cheese, spaghetti, stir-fry, tacos etc.)
- Other: _____

8. Do you have any other comments?

Thank you for sharing your ideas!