

Fresh Perspectives Series

Examining common misconceptions surrounding school meals to offer guidance on how to steer the conversations within your community!

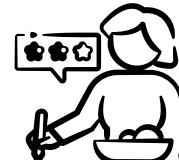


Claim: “My Kid Hates School Meals”

Let’s Take a Closer Look...

Response: In some cases, school lunch and breakfast may lack the freshness and certain flavors of homemade meals, which may not cater to kids’ taste preferences or meals may appear unappealing due to their presentation. Interestingly, children may also associate school meals with a lack of choice, as they are often limited to a set menu. Although these perspectives may exist, it is important to recognize that they are **not universal**.

Some schools have successfully implemented **farm-to-school programs and school gardens**. Also, schools have **hired district chefs** to enhance the quality of their meals and overall cafeteria experience, resulting in increased satisfaction and participation! Many schools’ success stories begin with increased **student involvement in menu planning and taste tests**, which helps better align meals with students' preferences.



Crucial Points to Chat About...

Here are our recommended points to offer up during any discussion to effectively **express your commitment and efforts** to tailor your meals to students’ preferences, and promote program participation:

- ✳ **Involving Students:** Highlight frequent taste tests and the establishment of a student committee for menu planning, which significantly enhances the school meal experience.
- ✳ **Adherence to Nutritional Guidelines:** Discuss how school meals are crafted to adhere to nutritional guidelines, ensuring students have access to balanced and healthy options, which frequently include fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- ✳ **Financial Assistance and Benefits:** Inform that meal programs can be more affordable for families, relieving them of the daily costs and time involved in preparing and packing lunches. Offering free or reduced-price options also guarantees that all students can enjoy nutritious meals.
- ✳ **Farm-to-School Initiatives and Meal Quality:** Focus on planning, implementing, and educating students and parents about the fresh, local meals served in schools. This approach can boost participation, as students are more likely to enjoy meals when they understand the origins of their food.