



Culturally Inclusive
Recipe Toolkit

IDENTIFYING AND ENGAGING WITH UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS IN YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY TIP SHEET



Many schools and districts have underrepresented groups in their community. There are many ways to engage with these groups.

Update your demographic data

School community demographics can change frequently. One way to monitor changes in demographics is to review the race and ethnicity information submitted on the annual meal benefits application at least once per year, or another form used by your school's administrator or district leadership.

Engage your students

Students are a primary source of information for food and flavor preferences. They can also provide valuable insight into what foods they typically eat at home and in their communities outside of school.

Conduct a student survey or focus group for student feedback regarding cultural foods. Invite students to submit a family recipe that they would like to see offered in the school meals program.



Leverage school and community support resources

Contact staff at the school or district level who may have a role in serving underrepresented groups and individuals. Community schools and schools that receive Title I funding may have a Community School Coordinator who connects students and families with support services. A social worker, language interpreter, or English Language Learners (ELL) teacher may share information with families about school meals and help facilitate communication with school nutrition staff and leadership. Connect with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) and Women, Infants & Children (WIC) staff and other community nutrition educators to share resources.

Reach out to teachers and staff

A staff advisor for cultural or culinary student groups may be aware of leaders or liaisons to community cultural groups. A history or social studies teacher may engage students in projects exploring their cultural heritage. School staff and teachers from a cultural community can be invited to contribute ideas or recipes for the project.

Seek information about cultural foods and events

Look for fliers or announcements regarding student cultural group celebrations or open meetings. Attend festivals, parades, or other events presented by cultural communities around the school or district. Visit smaller grocery stores and markets in cultural communities outside of your own to expand your awareness of foods and ingredients from other cultures.



Be seen

Have a school nutrition program presence at school open houses, parent and family nights, community service fairs, and similar school and district events. Actively engage with the community outside of the cafeteria and invite comments and feedback.



Expand your knowledge and understanding

School nutrition directors and leadership can become more aware of effective strategies for cooperative engagement with cultural communities through training on trauma-informed practices, implicit or unconscious association, shadow work, and deconstructing structural racism. School nutrition staff training on these topics can increase cultural competence, cultural humility, and foster a culture of inclusivity in the school nutrition program.



Connect with other projects and initiatives

Check with your school board and administrators, the district's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) officer or specialist, or other leadership that may provide insight into larger initiatives or projects to engage underrepresented cultural groups in your school or district.

Respect boundaries

Underrepresented groups and their communities may decline the invitation to participate in a recipe project for a variety of reasons. Be respectful when the answer to an invitation to collaborate is "No, thank you."

Acknowledge mistakes

Navigating collaboration and communication around culturally inclusive foods is challenging, and mistakes are to be expected. When made, they should be acknowledged, and effort made to move forward in a way that applies new knowledge. This is how relationships are built.

Ask your staff

Engage any food and nutrition staff from an underrepresented cultural community in the school. They may have knowledge or experience in adapting cultural foods for themselves and their families.