

Cafeteria Chronicles: Student Engagement

Engaging with students is key to improving their health and nutrition.

Whether you are hosting a culinary competition or planting a school garden, finding opportunities to engage with students allows you to grab their attention when providing nutrition education.

Hear from Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) Recognition Awardees who found creative ways to engage with students.

Let students engage with their peers

At **Montgomery Public Schools** in Montgomery, AL, middle and high school students can act as cafeteria “ambassadors” and have peer conversations about healthy menu choices. This example of student engagement is a win-win since students learn about health and nutrition while the ambassadors build their leadership and communication skills.



Cafeteria ambassadors of Montgomery Public Schools, AL

School days can be busy, so at **Nauset Public Schools** in Orleans, MA they started an after-school club called “Pollinators in the Kitchen” to teach students about healthy eating. Club members get hands-on in the kitchen creating healthy dishes and receive a cookbook of recipes to share with their families.

This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Administration. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Let students engage in healthy competition



Livingston Culinary Cook Off in Livingston, LA

At **Livingston Parish Public Schools** in Livingston, LA, a Culinary Cook-Off gives students an opportunity to develop a new recipe for the district's food trailer, called Curbside Café. During the Culinary Cook-Off, attendees engage with the students' cooking and learn how they developed their recipes.

Boulder Valley School District in Boulder, CO hosts a student chef competition each spring to gather innovative recipe ideas. Teams of two to four middle school students create a scratch-prepared dish that must meet school nutrition standards, and the winning dish is featured on next year's school lunch menu.

Let students try new recipes at culinary events

Loudon County Public School District in Broadlands, VA hosted a Food Show at the high school in Broadlands, VA to gather student feedback on new recipes for the upcoming school year. Over 40 recipes could be sampled, along with education on health and nutrition topics from community partners. The event was a huge success, with over 250 participants!

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Brushes and Bites Taste Testing Event at Haleyville City School District in Haleyville, AL

The Child Nutrition Program and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) program at **Haleyville City School District** in Haleyville, AL collaborated to host a “Brushes and Bites” event for students and families to view art while tasting new recipes. Students were engaged in creating art or preparing food for the event, and over 900 guests attended!

These districts offered creative opportunities to engage with students while providing nutrition education. Because of their efforts, they earned the **Innovation in Nutrition Education Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) Recognition Award**, on behalf of USDA and Action for Healthy Kids.

A round of applause for these school districts leading the way in school nutrition!

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