

# Assembling and Managing a Student Nutrition Advisory Council

A Student Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC) is a group of students and other school representatives (teachers and staff) who are interested in advancing wellness in their school by engaging in the evaluation of their school meal program. School nutrition operators and other school representatives provide support, guidance, and act as a liaison to the school. Participating in a SNAC provides students a voice and a platform to engage in menu planning for their school. Student members work to:

- Create a student-centered, nutritious menu
- Improve student acceptability of meals
- Encourage students to make healthy choices



## Assembling a Council

When assembling your council each school year, consider these questions to identify potential members:

- Who can support and guide the group in addition to school nutrition operators?
  - ▶ Ask the school administration for suggestions on teachers and staff who could support and guide the SNAC. Also, consider specialty teachers, counselors, afterschool program staff, coaches, and parents.
- When identifying potential student members:
  - ▶ Ask teachers and staff for student recommendations.
  - ▶ Ask your fellow nutrition operators for recruitment suggestions! Are there particular students that regularly participate and positively engage with school nutrition staff?
  - ▶ Strive for representation of the entire student body.
  - ▶ For older students, consider initially targeting those enrolled in health, family and consumer sciences, biological sciences, pre-nursing, and culinary arts classes.



## Managing a Council

Once you have identified your council members, schedule the first meeting to set goals and organizational structure. Explain to the students the importance of their participation and how they will influence menu items and nutrition activities. Consider presenting information on the meal pattern and dietary requirements. USDA's [How School Lunch is Made and How You Can Help](#) is an excellent resource to share with middle and high school students. Ask them what their interests and goals are for the school nutrition program. Share your program goals as part of the goal setting process:

- Are you trying to increase participation?
- Are you testing new menu items and recipes?
- Do you want to develop a new menu, service line, or style of service?
- Do you want to promote good nutrition?

The group should also establish how they will be organized:

- Who is the leader?
- Who will take notes?
- How frequently will the group meet and for how long? Meeting frequency and duration depends on the grade group and tasks they are interested in completing. Meetings do not need to be long, but they should be meaningful—be sure to have an agenda. Meeting times and locations will vary depending on your unique school environment and the activities the council would like to pursue.
- How will activities and follow-up items be communicated to the group?



## Suggested Council Activities

Once the goal is set, then plan the activities. For example, if the group decides that the goal is to increase participation, then promoting National School Lunch Week would be a great activity.

Suggested activities include:

- Discuss menu options and student preferences.
- Brainstorm creative names for menu items.
- Provide a “behind-the-scenes” kitchen tour.
- Ask students to participate in taste testing new products and recipes. Check out USDA's [Taste-Testing Event Resources](#) page for posters and stickers, social media shareable graphics, ballots, and event ideas and tips.
- Distribute and collect menu surveys.
- Review menus from previous years to see if there are items that could be brought back or modified.
- Help plan promotions for National School Lunch Week and National School Breakfast Week.



- Promote school meals and healthy food choices—develop artwork, posters, and bulletin boards; write morning announcements/videos; create social media posts; etc.
- Take an active role in growing a school garden and harvesting the crops. The [Team Nutrition Garden Resources](#) page provides resources for educators, posters, and activities for elementary school children.
- Start a compost program.
- Brainstorm plate-waste reduction ideas. USDA's [What You Can Do To Help Prevent Wasted Food](#) booklet outlines tips to help school staff, parents, and students reduce the amount of food wasted at schools.
- Perform community service projects centered on healthy meals and healthy eating, such as helping maintain community garden spaces, hosting a healthful food drive, and sharing a meal with a senior citizen.
- Help facilitate a nutrition-based school assembly or fair. Consider including a cooking demo that highlights a variety of entrées offered by your program. Review USDA's [School Lunch Resources](#) for age/grade-appropriate information that can be shared with your audience.



## Celebrate and Share Accomplishments

Throughout the school year, be sure to internally review, evaluate, and celebrate the accomplishments of the group. In addition to utilizing social media, share the group's activities with the school community in a designated school space, such as a bulletin board or display case. Also, consider writing an end-of-year report outlining the group's activities and accomplishments with the school administration and local wellness committee.



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