



UTILIZING COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

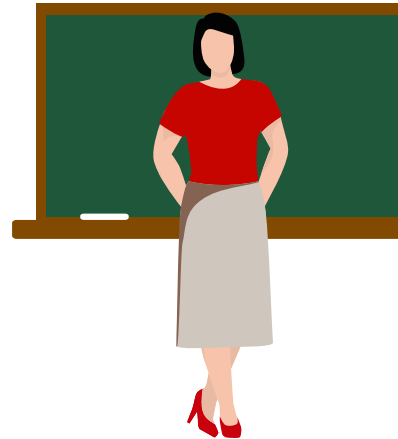
Community partnerships play a crucial role in promoting federal school meal programs and encouraging healthy eating habits among students. Social media can be a useful tool to connect and engage your students, parents/caregivers, school personnel, and community partners with your school nutrition program.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Community partnerships with your school nutrition program can cultivate and strengthen relationships, provide real-world experiences to your students, and help maximize your available resources. Community partners can be found both within and outside of your school community. You can coordinate visits/events for community members and organizations to interact with the students and promote healthy eating.

Partners Within Your School

- These community partners may include teachers, support staff, public relations professionals, IT staff, school volunteers, parents/caregivers, etc. Collaborating with them may be as simple as walking down the hall, emailing, or picking up the phone. Your students recognize these school community members. Seeing them participate in your school nutrition program will encourage your students to participate too.
- Consider connecting with teachers and/or parents to strengthen water access throughout the school day, feature more culturally relevant menu items, and provide healthier celebrations and snacks. Also, consider introducing teachers to Team Nutrition's free, downloadable [Nutrition Education Materials](#) and resources your State agency may provide.



Partners Outside of Your School

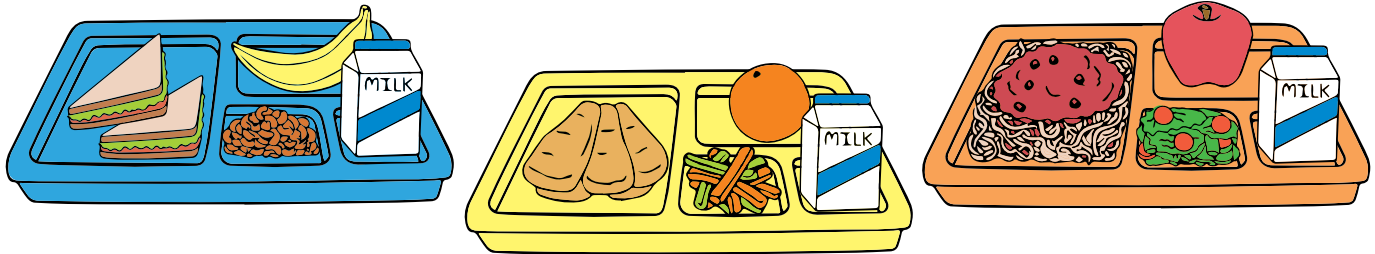
- These community partners may include local chefs, registered dietitians, farmers, Cooperative Extension staff, and SNAP-Ed educators. Collaborating with them can take a little more work (initial email or phone call with additional follow-up), but it is well worth the effort. Your students may recognize these community members from outside the school. When your nutrition program is supported by community partners, it can inspire your students to engage with it more actively.
- You can consider partnering with a local chef, culinary students, or your district's culinary program to provide culinary demonstrations or cooking classes on lower-sodium foods for your students and parents/caregivers during after school community programs/events. You can also connect with your local Cooperative Extension staff or SNAP-Ed educators to provide food, agriculture, and nutrition education in the classroom.



Before contacting outside organizations, seek support and approval from your school administration. In your proposal, outline the benefits for your students, your program, and the specific activities you want to offer. Once you have permission, consider reaching out to professionals who can support your efforts.

Don't forget to engage and educate your community partners about your school nutrition program.

- Offer to speak at an upcoming Parent-Teacher Association/Organization (PTA/PTO) meeting. Provide information and an opportunity to answer questions about your menus, the meal pattern standards, and dietary specifications of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.
- Showcase your program—enable parents and caregivers to see and taste your meals! Display your menu, serve menu items, offer samples, and share nutritional information at back-to-school nights, meet-the-teacher nights, open houses, or other school events.
- Provide the school menu, new menu item updates, nutrition education, and photos of your tasty meals using school-wide platforms, such as newsletters, emails, opt-in text messages, social media, etc.



USING THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROMOTE YOUR PROGRAM

Internet

Information about your school nutrition program should be up-to-date and easy to find on the internet. Ideally, this information should be located on your school's website homepage. Consider including:

- An introduction to your school nutrition program and why students should participate
- Menus (printer-friendly), including nutrition and allergen information
- Meal prices for students, school employees, and visitors; payment information
- Free and Reduced School Meals Application
- Contact information (email/phone number) for nutrition services



Social Media

Social media is an innovative and affordable way to engage customers—students, school personnel, and community partners—in your school nutrition program. If your school district has active social media accounts, utilize these platforms to promote your program.

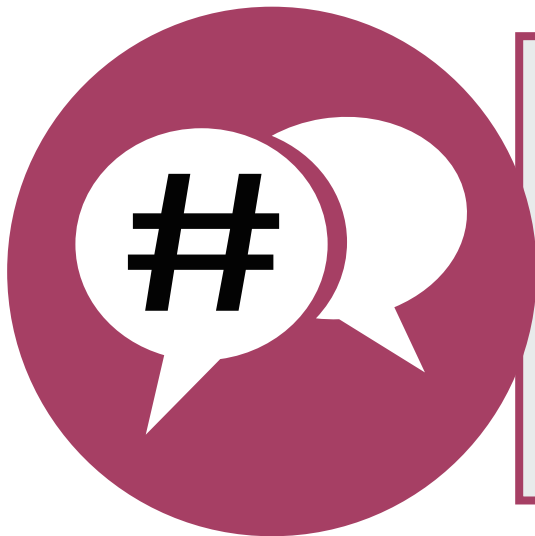
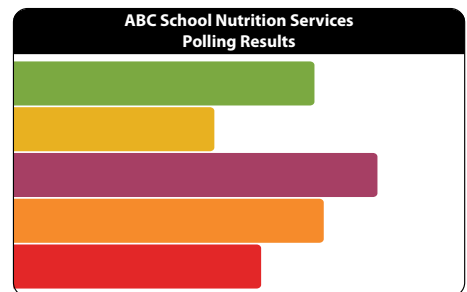
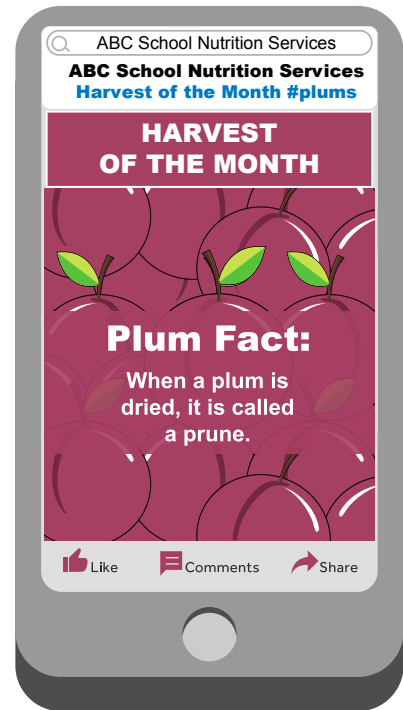
Effectively use social media by tailoring content for each platform to the audience you want to reach. For example, students are likely on different platforms than their parents/caregivers or the wider school community.

Listen to the [Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition's](#) webinar recording of [Engaging Student Influencers for Product Selection, Menu Planning, and Program Promotion](#) for ideas of how schools utilize "student influencers."

If you're starting out, partner with your district. Add your school nutrition program information to existing district social media pages to promote, manage, and build your base of followers. Advertise through existing school communication channels, such as the district website and newsletters, that you're on social media.

Wondering what to post on social media?

- Announce the daily menu and invite students to the cafeteria.
- Share enticing photos of your meals. Focus on publicizing new menu items and highlighting when you will offer them.
- Introduce and share fun facts about your staff.
- Promote theme days or weeks and special events. For example, post photos of the menu items you plan to offer (or did offer) on National Read Across America Day (“Dr. Seuss Day”).
- Share agricultural information, nutrition facts, and the health benefits of the various items offered on your menu.
- Present opportunities for parent/caregiver participation by inviting them to share meals with their children.
- Present opportunities for student participation.
 - For example, host a competition asking students to take a photo of their meal and share it with the school nutrition program for their chance to win a prize.
 - Also, consider utilizing polls! Social media is a great tool for simple surveys with your older students. Use the “poll” feature to post a question and let the students vote. Feel free to ask more than one question, but try to keep the number of questions you ask at a time to a minimum. Ideally, keep questions to three or less to keep customers engaged.



Consider these social media posting tips:

- Upload an image or use emojis with your message to increase the number of people who see and interact with your post.
- Tag school affiliates so they can share your program; in return, share other school community pages.
- Ask the school community to share your posts.
- Encourage and respond to comments.
- Utilize students to create content for your social media pages.

SOCIAL MEDIA ACTION PLAN

As you consider how to start or improve your use of social media, setting a goal and developing an action plan can be helpful. Use the template below as a guide to frame your social media goals and the milestones to help you achieve it.

Goal (measurable and specific): By October 1, 202X, establish a social media plan that includes engagement on two platforms—one geared toward students and one geared toward the school community.			
Milestone			
What will you do to achieve the expected outcome?	Person Responsible	Target Date	Date Completed
1. Identify two social media platforms to engage our customers—one aimed at students and one aimed at the school community.	Director	09/01/202X	09/01/202X
2. Determine a regular interval in which to post to both platforms; identify school affiliates to tag to share posts.	Director	10/01/202X	10/01/202X
3. Write the first posts (include photos)!	Manager	10/15/202X	10/15/202X

Now you try!

Goal (measurable and specific):			
Milestone			
What will you do to achieve the expected outcome?	Person Responsible	Target Date	Date Completed
1.			
2.			
3.			

Community partnerships and social media can both be used to engage students in your school nutrition program and promote healthy menu items.

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