



Directors' Best Practices Conference

Coming Together to Feed Kids During a Pandemic

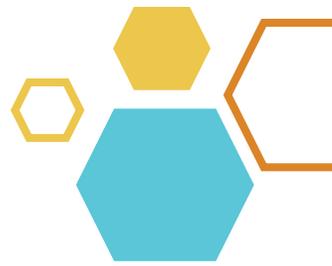
A COMPILATION OF SHARED IDEAS

Our Directors' Best Practices Conference speakers and attendees shared some great ideas through presentations, the chat conversation, and in the daily Zoom room conversations. In this document we compiled these great ideas so you can put them to use.





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MARKETING

- Put flyers advertising meal offerings in doctors' offices, especially pediatrician offices or other places children and families tend to visit.
- Program robocalls and use local radio stations and news outlets to share meal pick-up times and locations with parents. Even if you need to pay for a local radio spot, some districts have found the expense is worth it because of the increase in participation.
- Set up a hotline number for parents to use if they have questions.
- To reach non-school age children and home-schooled children, contact the appropriate personnel in your city or town to request reverse 911 calls to inform those families about the availability of free meals.

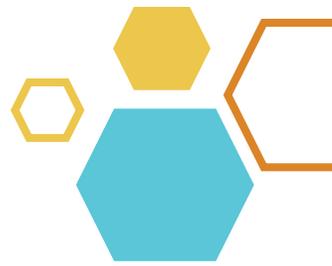


Develop a flyer to explain free meals to your community. A template can be found [here](#). A free, effective and easy-to-use resource for developing flyers is [Canva](#).

- Share information in Facebook Community groups and encourage the group administrators to pin school nutrition announcements to the top.
- Do a weekly Facebook Livestream and review the recipes for food sent home that week and/or the weekly menu.
- Host a decorating contest with pictures on social media, and then vote through the "likes" with giveaways and prizes to the winning school, student or staff member. Make it seasonal: Best Thanksgiving Spread, Best Gingerbread Decoration, etc.
- Reach out to building administration or other departments in your district who communicate with parents through established channels, such as reminder systems, parent e-memos, etc.
- Encourage parents to complete free and reduced applications through messages that detail why "it is more than just a meal application" (take-home one-pagers, reverse 911 calls, etc.). Consider offering a giveaway for all families that apply.



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MEALS FOR HYBRID AND VIRTUAL LEARNERS

- Breakfast bundles before the school day ends—kids grab them on the way out to eat for breakfast the next day.
- Designate a program manager to oversee the lists of who is virtual/hybrid/in person and how they are getting meals. Be sure to request an updated monthly list of virtual learners from your front office to keep track of everyone's status. Send out reminders about meal pick-ups.



If the food sent home requires preparation, provide weekly online recipes and prep directions for family members (see this example from [Burke County, Georgia](#)). Include QR codes on food packaging that link to your website.

MENU IDEAS

- It's pizza time! Send home a pizza with each student for 5 days' worth of entrees per student. In the baking instructions, encourage them to bake 1 slice at a time. If you are sending home meals with two students in the same family, they will receive two pizzas per week. You can also do this with other multi-portion meals (such as pre-sliced lasagnas or pasta bakes).
- Check out [SNA's helpful resource, Managing Menu Needs](#) —it's great for brainstorming! Plus, discover vendors that have solutions to your school nutrition challenges in the Buyer's Guide. All the companies listed have demonstrated a deep commitment to the K-12 foodservice segment and are members of SNA.
- Check out SNA's [Innovative Solutions Showcases](#) for new product ideas.



If participation is low and you are getting feedback that students do not have enough choice or variety, conduct a student survey, and use the feedback to work with principals on expanding menus.



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FOOD SAFETY

- Utilize QR codes on food packaging for food safety information and directions for preparation.



Use ice blankets and cold hotel-style pans that you freeze overnight, and they can keep things inside them cold (below 41 degrees) up to 6 hours. Many can be cut to the exact size you need. Do an internet search for “ice blankets” to find several options.

FAMILY MEALS

- Expand meal service to families by providing weeknight family dinners for sale to teachers and staff with children and to community members.

DEVELOP AND UTILIZE COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Partner with local restaurants for a Restaurants2School program—restaurants provide food and get reimbursed, produce aggregator may act as coordinator.
- Designate full time floater(s) to cover staff that need to quarantine.

STAFFING ISSUES

- Designate full time floater(s) to cover staff that need to quarantine.

GRANTS

- There are various grant opportunities available for all types of school districts, even low free/reduced districts. *School Nutrition* magazine’s article, [“Grants: Go Get ‘Em!”](#) provides a great overview about pursuing grant funding. Also, see this [list of available grant opportunities compiled by the School Nutrition Foundation](#).



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