

This is about more than a campaign. It's a movement that inspires parents, educators, and communities to see school meals for what they truly are:
a foundation for every child's success.

MADE WITH SCHOOL LUNCH TOOLKIT

An educational campaign designed by



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FOREWARD

Hello School Nutrition Champions,

Every day across America, millions of students walk into school cafeterias and receive more than just a meal—they receive the foundation for their future success. What happens in our cafeterias—the meals, the socialization, the interactions—matters profoundly. Not just for nourishing students today but for tomorrow’s potential.

The School Nutrition Association (SNA) and National Dairy Council (NDC) are proud to collaborate on Made With School Lunch, a movement designed to transform how we and our children think about, talk about, and experience school meals. It’s a platform to celebrate the incredible impact that school nutrition programs have on children’s lives and to challenge outdated perceptions that no longer reflect today’s reality.

Today’s school meals are nutritious and thoroughly designed to support learning and growth. They meet rigorous federal nutrition standards while still appealing to students’ developing palates. They bridge socioeconomic divides, bringing children together around shared tables. Most importantly, they provide the essential building blocks for academic achievement, physical health, and social development.

Yet despite these remarkable qualities, school meals often remain underappreciated and misunderstood. Stigmas persist. Misconceptions abound. The dedicated professionals who create these meals rarely receive the recognition they deserve.

It’s time to change that narrative.

The Made With School Lunch campaign offers tools, resources, and inspiration to help everyone become champions for school meals. By harnessing consistent messaging, compelling visuals, and authentic stories, we can elevate school nutrition programs to their rightful place as an essential part of the school day.

This toolkit serves as your roadmap. Within these pages, you’ll find carefully crafted messaging, activation ideas, and strategies to help you implement this campaign in ways that resonate with your unique community. Whether you’re looking to boost participation, reduce stigma, or celebrate your nutrition team, you’ll find resources to support your goals.

As we launch this initiative, we invite you to imagine the possibilities. Together, we can build a future where school meals are universally embraced as pathways to potential. Where the question “What will school lunch make you?” inspires limitless answers.

Thank you for joining us on this journey.

School Nutrition Association & National Dairy Council



CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

The Made With School Lunch campaign has been developed with clear objectives that guide our messaging, outreach, and activations:

1.

Increase participation and engagement with school meals by promoting that school meal programs are for everyone.

Our goal is to boost participation rates in school meal programs within three years by showing that school meals provide nutritional and social benefits for all students, regardless of background.

2.

Combat the stigma surrounding school meals.

We aim to address and break down common myths about school lunches through targeted content that challenges misconceptions about nutrition quality, who school meals are for, and their overall value to students and communities.

3.

Promote the long-term benefits of school meals.

By creating content that connects school meals to future success, academic performance, and overall health, we demonstrate how today's nutritious school meals fuel tomorrow's achievements.

4.

Position school meals as an essential component of student success.

Our vision is a future where school meals are seen as integral to student success, embraced by all, and provided fairly across all communities.



IMPORTANT DATES

March 3–7, 2025

National School Breakfast Week (NSBW)

March (All Month)

National Nutrition Month

May 2, 2025 (First Friday of May)

School Lunch Hero Day

May 5–9, 2025

Teacher Appreciation Week

June (Varies)

Summer Meals Kickoff

July (Ongoing)

Summer Meals Promotion

August–September

Back-to-School Season:
It's time to start planning your activation

September (Varies)

School Wellness Week

October 13–17, 2025

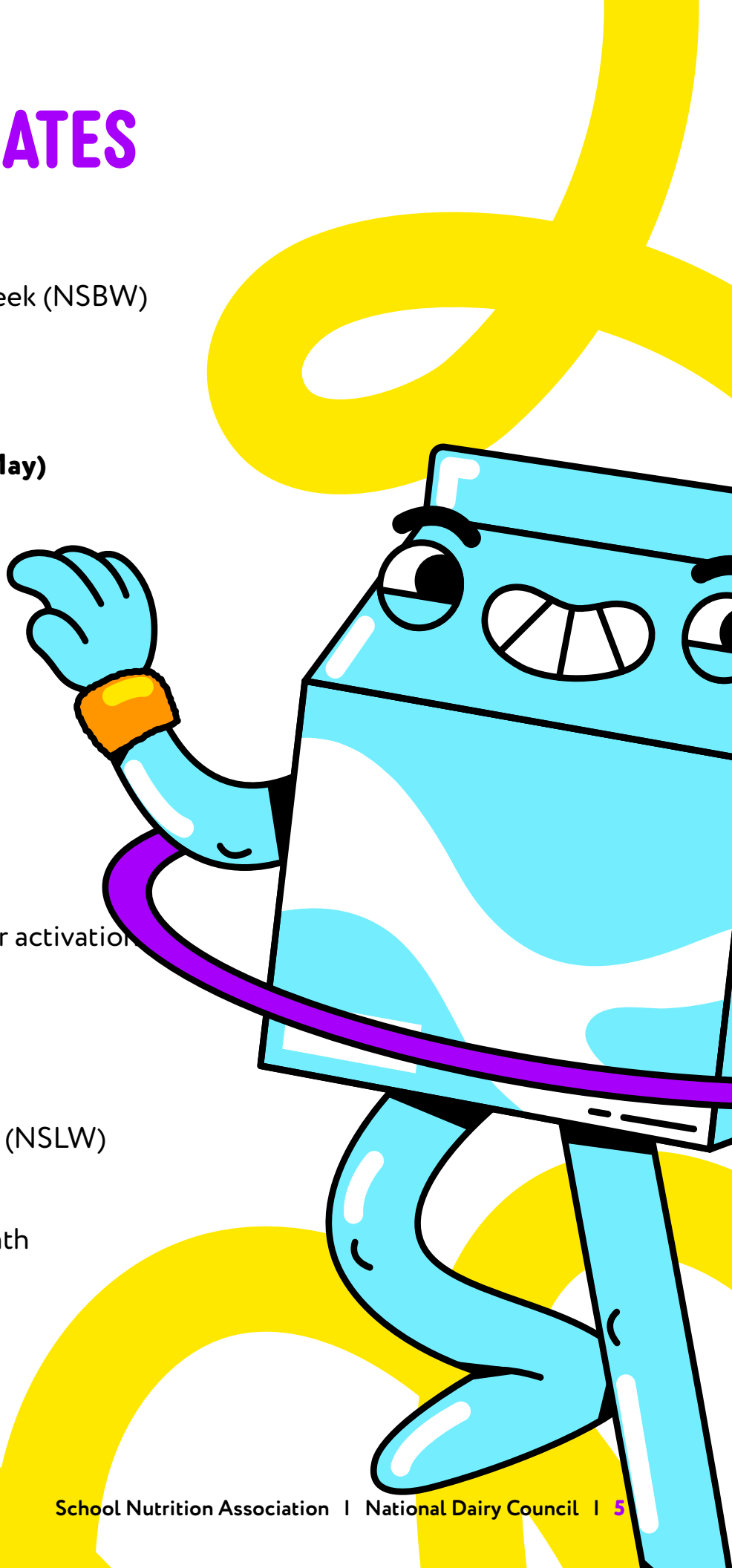
National School Lunch Week (NSLW)

October (All Month)

National Farm to School Month

November (All Month)

Family Engagement Month



MWSL NARRATIVE

OVERARCHING THEME

School meals are crucial for the future, offering the nutrition children need today to grow, learn, and reach their full potential. Let's celebrate the incredible impact of school meals by asking one powerful question: What will school lunch make you?

Every child who steps into the cafeteria carries with them a unique story, a growing imagination, and endless possibilities. And every school meal served is more than just nutrition: it's a daily reminder that they matter. That no dream is too big when you're fueled by care, consistency, and a good meal.

This is the heart of the Made With School Lunch campaign: to show that the cafeteria isn't just where you eat—it's where you're seen, where you're supported, and where you start building who you're meant to become.

School meals welcome everyone to the table, no matter where you come from or what your lunch tray looks like. It's a space where new flavors are discovered, friendships are made, and kids are reminded that they're never alone.

Whether they want to be a pilot, a teacher, an artist, or an inventor, school meals give children the energy to imagine, the focus to learn, and the strength to grow. And behind every tray is a dedicated team of caring professionals committed to ensuring every student has the opportunity to thrive.

Because when school meals are made with kindness, creativity, and intention, there's no limit to what school lunches can make possible.



MWSL NARRATIVE

KEY MESSAGES

1. What Will School Lunch Make You?

School meals are more than food on a tray—they're the fuel behind the dreamers, doers, and leaders of tomorrow. Whether a child wants to explore space, play sports, or invent the next big thing, every bite gives them the energy to imagine, learn, and grow into who they're meant to be.

- Meals support focus in the classroom, strength on the playground, and curiosity everywhere in between.

2. School Meals Are for Everyone

School meals create a space where every student is welcome, no matter who they are or where they come from. The cafeteria bridges differences, providing an essential and nutritious foundation to all children who eat there every day.

- School meals help remove the pressure of “bringing lunch” and level the playing field.
- They bring kids together through shared experiences, not differences.
- They remind every student: you belong here.

3. Every Day Brings Something Tasty

From familiar favorites to exciting new flavors, school meals offer variety that keeps students coming back. School lunches help broaden their horizons by varying their offerings and ingredients and introducing kids to new cuisines and taste profiles.

- Menus are built with creativity, a variety of options, and kid-friendly fun.
- Introducing students to new ingredients helps build curiosity and openness.

4. Healthy Meals Are Possible with School Nutrition Professionals

Part of cultivating great health is preparing and providing food that brings joy, excitement, and anticipation to those who eat it. School Nutrition Professionals work tirelessly to not only provide healthy meals to students but also provide a variety of food that aligns with their taste and excitement.

- They work hard to make food that's both nutritious and exciting.
- Their commitment goes beyond cooking—it's about connection.
- Students look forward to what's on their tray because someone took the time to make it just right.



MWSL NARRATIVE

STATISTICS AND RESEARCH

1. School Meals Are Nutritious and Continually Improving

a. School Meals Are Among the Healthiest Meals Students Consume

- School meals scored 79–81 on the Healthy Eating Index (HEI), compared to 55–57 for non-school meals. ([USDA ERS](#))
- Children who participate in school meals consume more dairy milk, fruits, and vegetables than non-participants, and they consume fewer desserts, snacks, and non-milk beverages. ([USDA](#))
- A comparison of school meals and packed lunches revealed that school meals contain more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, while home-packed meals often include more snacks, sugary items, and processed foods. ([School Nutrition Association](#))
- Schools following updated USDA nutrition guidelines, which were implemented nationwide after the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, have seen significant improvements in meal quality. By 2014-2015, 98% of public schools met these updated standards. ([Healthy Eating Research](#))

b. The Nutritional Quality of School Meals Has Significantly Improved

- The nutritional quality of school meals improved significantly between 2003 and 2018, providing the most significant contribution to children's diet quality without population disparity. ([Trends in Food Sources and Diet Quality Among US Children and Adults](#))

c. Dairy Access Through School Meals Supports Student Nutrition

- Starting as early as 4 years of age, children do not meet daily dairy recommendations, with communities of color consuming the least. The milk and dairy foods (i.e., cheese and yogurt) provided in school meals are a critical pathway to help ensure children have a chance to meet their daily dairy servings and benefit from dairy's nutrients. ([Dairy Foods for Infant Brain Development & Cognition](#))
- Foods provided as part of school meals are the richest source of dairy in children's diets. ([USDA](#))



2. School Meals Break Barriers and Support Participation

a. School Meals Create a Welcoming, Stigma-Free Space

- A 2023 survey by the School Nutrition Association revealed that 66.8% of nutrition directors reported an increase in stigma for low-income students who rely on free or reduced-price school meals. This stigma can lead to students opting out of school meals due to embarrassment, which undermines the goal of providing nutritious meals to all students. ([School Nutrition Association](#))
- Offering universal free school meals has been shown to reduce stigma, increase participation in meal programs, and remove the barriers of application processes and eligibility cut-offs. Schools that provided free meals to all students saw improved access, diet quality, and reduced food insecurity. ([FRAC](#))
- A large portion of the stigma comes from the fact that many students who qualify for free or reduced meals are often singled out. Universal free meals during the pandemic helped eliminate this issue, but with the reintroduction of meal charges, families are again facing financial challenges, and unpaid meal debt has risen. This has a negative impact on both students and school budgets, further compounding the issue. ([Harvard Public Health](#))

3. School Meals Directly Impact Academic Success and Well-Being

a. Nutrition Improves Learning and Attendance

- Data supports that improving the nutritional quality of school meals not only helps reduce stigma but also boosts academic performance and attendance. Offering meals at no cost to all students helps eliminate lunch shaming, improves overall participation, and addresses food insecurity. ([Healthy Eating Research](#))

b. Parents Often Underestimate the Quality of School Meals

- Parents often struggle to recognize that school meals can have a higher Healthy Eating Index (HEI) score compared to meals brought from home, showcasing their higher overall nutritional value ([MDPI](#)). This disconnect could stem from the fact that some foods offered in schools, such as pizza or chicken nuggets, are reformulated to be healthier but look similar to their commercial counterparts. This has contributed to the ongoing misconception that school meals are of lower nutritional quality. ([MDPI](#))
- Parents' concerns about the quality and appeal of school meals directly impact participation rates. For instance, many parents cited that meals appear unappealing or are perceived as high in sugar or highly processed.
- Another challenge is the misconception that home-packed lunches are always healthier. Many parents believe that meals prepared at home are superior to school-provided meals, even though studies show that home-packed lunches are often less nutritious, containing more sugary snacks and highly processed foods. This perception leads to reduced participation in school meal programs, even among middle-class families. ([School Nutrition Association](#))



WAYS TO ACTIVATE

INTERNAL ACTIVATIONS

- Host staff training sessions on the value of school meals and how to communicate positively about them to students and families
- Create an internal newsletter featuring success stories and “meal heroes” among nutrition staff
- Distribute Made With School Lunch materials throughout school buildings
- Organize taste tests for teachers and staff to experience new menu items
- Develop recognition programs for nutrition staff who go above and beyond
- Schedule regular nutrition staff visits to classrooms to talk about what goes into creating healthy school meals
- Create information packets for new staff about the school nutrition program

EXTERNAL ACTIVATIONS

- Launch social media campaigns highlighting school meal success stories
- Host family meal nights where parents can experience school meals alongside their children
- Create “What’s on the Menu” videos featuring student reviews of meals
- Partner with local media for features on school nutrition programs
- Develop partnerships with local chefs for special menu days
- Create visually appealing cafeteria signage that reinforces campaign messages
- Organize student ambassador programs to promote meals among peers
- Host nutrition education events that connect classroom learning with cafeteria offerings
- Create “Behind the Scenes” tours of kitchen facilities for parents and community members

ADOPT THE LOOK

- Use consistent Made With School Lunch branding across all communications
- Incorporate campaign colors and fonts in cafeteria signage
- Create branded meal trays or placemats
- Design staff uniforms or pins that feature campaign messaging
- Develop social media frame filters for school accounts
- Create digital backgrounds for virtual meetings
- Design classroom posters that highlight campaign themes
- Produce branded items for students (stickers, bookmarks, etc.)
- Develop menu templates that incorporate campaign branding



EXAMPLES OF ACTIVATION

POSTER MOCKUPS



RECOMMENDED HASHTAGS

#MadeWithSchoolLunch #SchoolMeals
#NourishPotential #SchoolLunchMatters
#FuelingFutures



JOIN OUR MOVEMENT

The Made With School Lunch campaign invites everyone to take part in transforming how we think about, talk about, and experience school meals. Here are ways you can support this important mission:

FOR TEACHERS:

- Talk positively about school meals with students
- Connect classroom learning to cafeteria offerings
- Consider eating with students occasionally
- Incorporate nutrition education into lessons when relevant
- Celebrate the cultural differences represented in school meals

FOR STUDENTS:

- Try new foods when they appear on the menu
- Share positive experiences with friends
- Provide constructive feedback to nutrition staff
- Respect the cafeteria environment
- Consider becoming a student ambassador for school meals

FOR SCHOOL NUTRITION PROFESSIONALS:

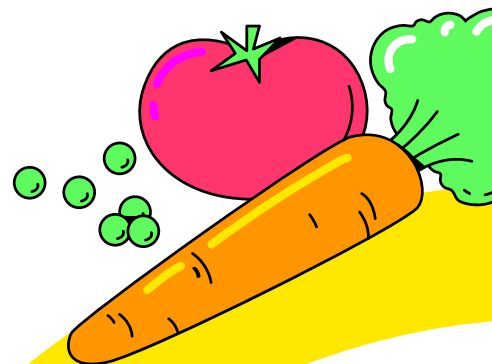
- Share your story and expertise with pride
- Continue innovating to create nutritious, delicious meals
- Connect with students to understand their preferences
- Document and share your successes with your community
- Advocate for the vital role you play in student success

FOR PARENTS:

- Encourage your children to participate in school meals
- Talk positively about school nutrition at home
- Get to know your school's nutrition team
- Share feedback constructively to help improve programs
- Participate in school meal events and opportunities
- School's that implement National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program are required to develop and implement a local [school wellness policy](#). We highly recommend exploring their school's wellness policy and engage.

FOR SCHOOL ADMINS:

- Recognize and celebrate your nutrition team
- Integrate nutrition education across the curriculum
- Make mealtime a positive, unhurried experience
- Share the success of your meal program with families
- Ensure cafeterias are welcoming, comfortable spaces



OUR APPROACH

THIS CAMPAIGN IS ABOUT STUDENTS, NOT CHOOSING SIDES

The Made With School Lunch campaign is grounded in a simple goal: to celebrate and elevate value of school meals.

Everything we create is rooted in **education, awareness, and community connection**. We're here to share facts, stories, and resources that help families, school staff, and communities understand the vital role school meals play in shaping healthy, successful students.

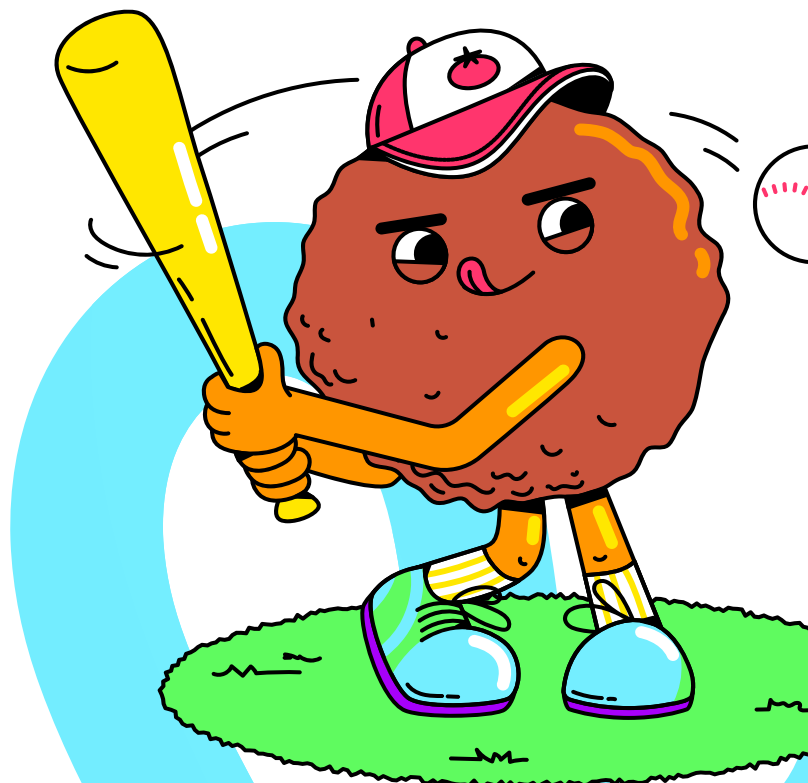
While conversations around food access can sometimes drift into policy territory, our campaign is designed to **stay centered on people**.

We focus on what's real and relatable:

- The student who learns better because they had breakfast.
- The parent who sees school meals as a meaningful way to support their child—and their school.
- The school nutrition staff who show up each day with heart and purpose.

Schools and districts using this toolkit are encouraged to share campaign messages as a way to inform, inspire, and build community support.

This is about
**access, care, and
opportunity—**
values we can all
get behind.



BRAND GUIDELINES

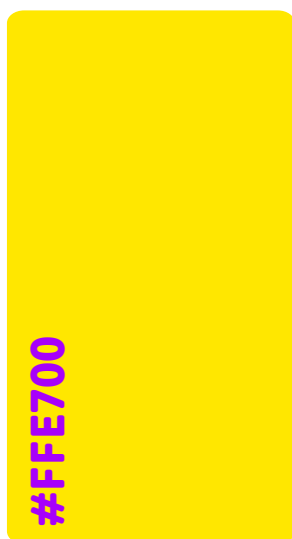
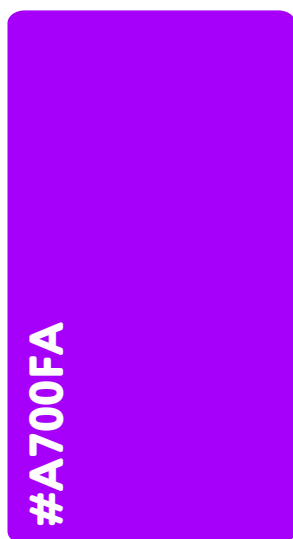
PRIMARY LOGO



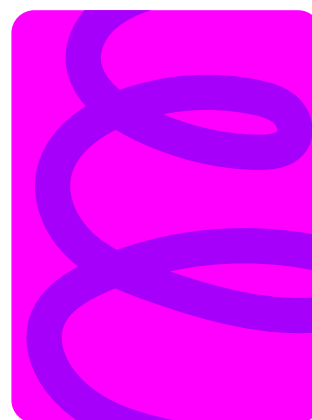
SECONDARY LOGOS



COLORS



SHAPES



FONTS & HIERARCHY

FOR HEADERS

**DIAZO MVB
BOLD EXTRA
CONDENSED**

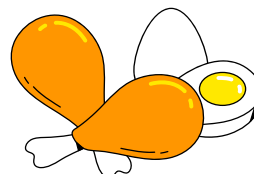
FOR SUBTITLES

Circe rounded extra bold

FOR BODY TEXT

Circe Rounded regular

ILLUSTRATIONS AND ICONS



ICONS



MWSL CONTENT

MESSAGING TO STUDENTS

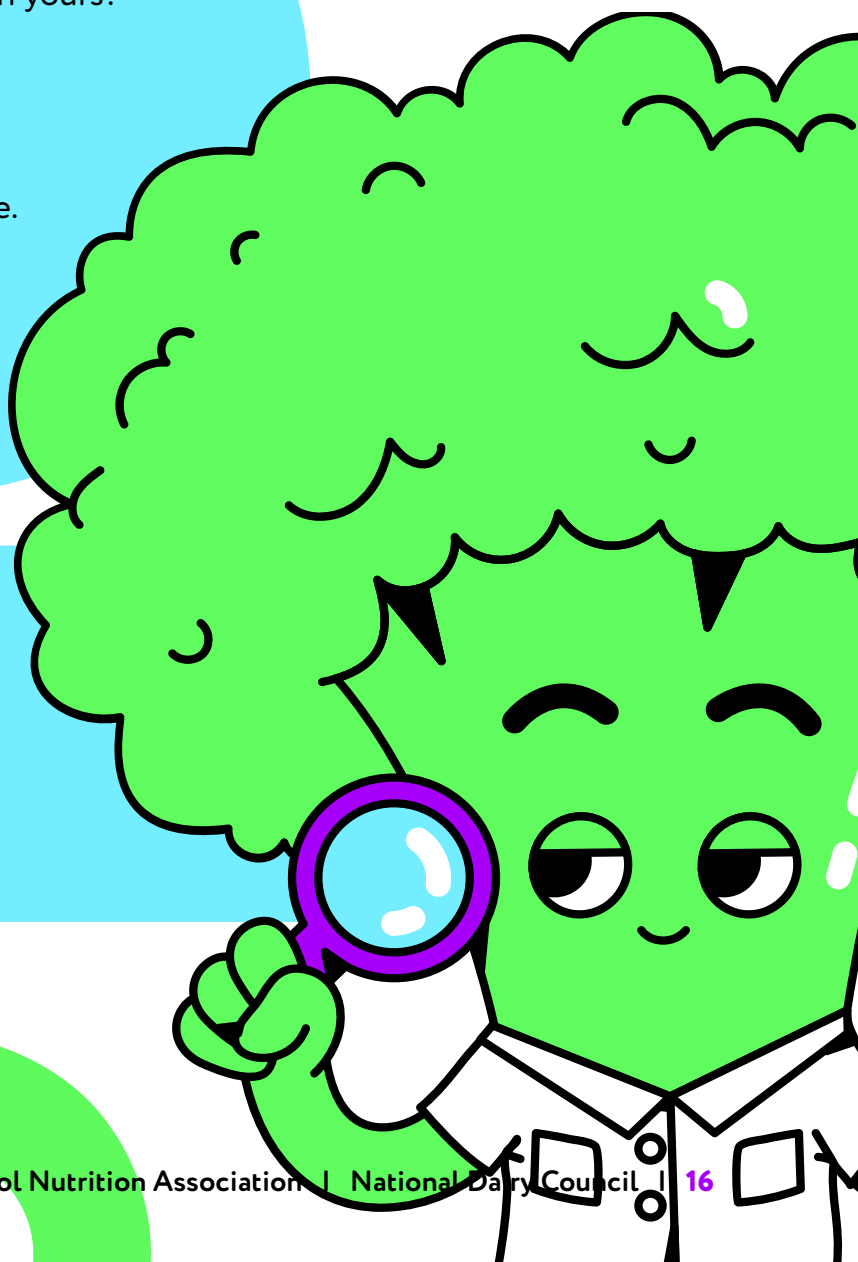
Short, expanded messaging that can be used as the top line copy on things like posters, banners, stickers, and other school materials.

Direct Headlines:

- Every day brings something tasty.
- Fuel Up. Dream Big!
- An adventure on every tray!
- Food is fuel. What will you do with yours?
- Eat smart, get smart.
- School Lunch takes you places.
- Every bite is a bright idea.
- You + school meals = unstoppable.
- Made with awesome, to make you awesome.
- Lunch today. Leading tomorrow.

Playful Headlines:

- Lunch is my love language
- Chocolate milk, you complete me
- Cafeteria? Seeyoutheria.
- Nom. Nom. Knowledge.



MWSL CONTENT

MESSAGING TO PARENTS

Short and longer-form expanded messaging that can be used as topline copy and supporting copy on things like social media posts, posters, one-pagers, and more.

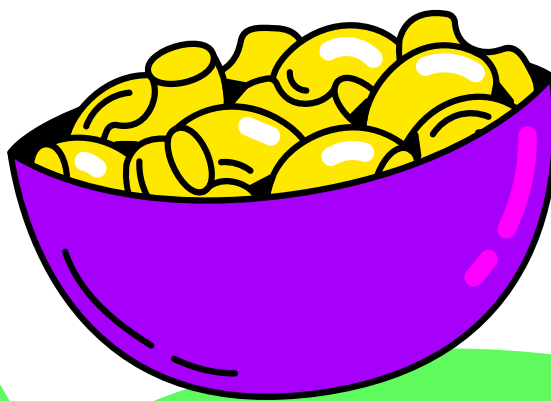
Headlines and Supporting Copy Examples:

- **Eating smarter to stay sharper.** School meals are made to meet strict nutrition standards so that your child eats, learns, plays, and grows healthy. Because being fed is just the start, and smarter meals can make stronger kids.
- **More than just a meal.** School meals provide more than just a delicious way for kids to refuel during the day. Every meal comes packed with key nutrients like calcium, fiber, and protein to support healthy growth and help fuel their incredible futures.
- **School meals provides a welcome table to all.** School meals aren't just about the food; they're about growing connections and forming friendships, too! Kids who participate in school lunch do what we hope they'll do when they grow up: sit around a table with others who come from vastly different experiences, backgrounds, and traditions—and share an experience together—one that nourishes them both physically and emotionally. School meals give every kid a seat at the table.
- **Smart Choices Made Simple.** Wondering what your child should eat to stay focused and energized throughout the school day? School meals take the guesswork out of nutrition. Each meal is thoughtfully planned by nutrition experts to include the perfect balance of proteins, whole grains, fresh fruits, vegetables, and dairy. It's convenient nutrition you can count on every single school day.
- **What's in a lunch?** Good nutrition comes to kids who eat school meals. Today, we're talking about veggies. Reds, greens, and every color in between—these crunchy, crispy, and cruciferous plants are fiber-packed cornerstones of every school lunch. When kids need essential vitamins, nutrients, and fiber, they'll find them in the veggies that accompany every school lunch. Which one's their favorite?
- **Made with love.** We know love is one of the most important ingredients in the food you make for your kids. It's the same for the dedicated nutrition staff at your child's



school. But don't just take our word for it. Here's Barbara Thompson, Food Manager at West Avenue School in New Jersey: "A lot of love! Tender caring goes into our food to make sure it's nutritious, it's got a good flavor, a good taste, so kids will try it." Care you can taste—sounds like school lunch to us!

- **Not yesterday's lunch.** You may remember school meals like they were when you were a kid: too much sugar, too much salt, not enough of the good stuff. But you grew up, and school meals did, too. Crafted to meet strict nutritional guidelines and made to meet the constantly changing tastes of kids everywhere, school meals have had a glow-up of their very own. Learn more about how school meals have changed today!
- **Fueling Their Future, One Meal at a Time.** School meals are carefully crafted to give your child exactly what they need to succeed. From essential proteins that build strong muscles to whole grains that fuel active minds, each meal is designed to support your child's growth, learning, and development. Because when kids are properly nourished, there's no limit to what they can achieve.
- **Growing Strong, Growing Together.** School meals nourish more than just bodies—they nourish connections. When children share meals together, they develop healthy relationships with food and with each other. From trying new vegetables to sharing different food traditions, every school meal is an opportunity for your child to grow, learn, and thrive in a supportive community.
- **Today's School Meals: Fresh, Nutritious, Delicious.** School nutrition has evolved to meet today's highest standards while keeping kids excited about healthy eating. Schools are incorporating more fresh ingredients, a variety of menu options, and kid-approved recipes come together to create meals that students love. When nutrition meets innovation, everyone wins—especially your child.




MESSAGING TO EDUCATORS & ADMINISTRATORS

Headlines and Supporting Copy Examples:

- **The Nutrition Story.** Today's school meals meet high nutrition standards while keeping students excited about healthy eating. Each meal is thoughtfully crafted to provide the perfect balance of nutrients your child needs to learn, grow, and thrive throughout the school day.
- **The Community Connection.** The school cafeteria is where friendships bloom and communities grow stronger. When students share meals together, they learn about different food traditions, develop social skills, and build lasting connections. Every table is a welcome table, and every meal is an opportunity to bring students together.
- **Building Better Days Through Better Nutrition.** School meals aren't just about filling hungry bellies—they're about building the foundation for successful days. When students start their morning with a nutritious breakfast and refuel with a balanced lunch, they're better equipped to tackle challenges, engage in learning, and participate fully in school life. Every meal is an investment in your child's daily success.
- **A Recipe for Lifetime Success.** School meals teach more than just good nutrition—they help students develop healthy relationships with food that last a lifetime. Through varied menus, fresh ingredients, and exposure to different cuisines, students learn to make smart food choices, appreciate a variety of flavors, and understand how good nutrition fuels their goals. We're not just serving lunch—we're serving life lessons.
- **The Convenience of Quality.** In today's busy world, knowing your child has access to nutritious, balanced meals at school provides invaluable peace of mind. Our dedicated nutrition staff takes care of menu planning, preparation, and proper portioning, so you can focus on





other aspects of your child's well-being. It's quality nutrition made convenient for modern families.

- **Where Nutrition Meets Innovation.** Today's school meals program combines nutrition science with modern food trends and preferences. We're constantly evolving our menus to include new, nutritious options that excite students while meeting strict dietary guidelines. From international cuisine to creative ways of serving vegetables, we're making healthy eating an adventure.

- **Partners in Student Success.** When you choose school meals, you're choosing more than just convenience—you're partnering with nutrition experts who care about your child's success. Our staff works tirelessly to create meals that support learning, growth, and health while building a positive food environment where every student can thrive. Together, we're nourishing the next generation.

- **The Academic Impact:** Well-nourished students are better prepared to learn! School meals provide the consistent nutrition students need to stay focused, engaged, and ready to achieve their full potential. From the morning bell to afternoon dismissal, we're fueling academic success.



STATISTIC SPECIFIC MESSAGING

Toplines:

- **School meals are setting your kids up for success in the classroom and beyond.** School lunches are proven to be healthier than typical packed lunches, with fewer calories, less fat, less saturated fat, and less sugar—while still being delicious and satisfying.
- **Children who eat school lunches are getting the good stuff.** More dairy milk, fruits, vegetables, and fiber than their peers. They're also more likely to get the right amounts of essential nutrients like calcium, vitamin A, and zinc.
- **The numbers speak for themselves.** Students who eat school breakfast score 17.5% higher on standardized math tests and attend 1.5 more days of school per year.
- **Flavored milk at school is a smart choice.** When your kids choose flavored milk at school, they get the same 13 essential nutrients as unflavored milk. Research shows that flavored milk is associated with higher total milk consumption and better overall diet quality without any adverse impact on weight.
- **School meals help maintain a healthy weight.** Studies show that participating in school lunch is associated with indicators of greater health, like maintaining a lower body mass index (BMI). Not only that, school meal programs are backed by scientific research showing they support obesity prevention, improve overall student health, and boost academic achievement by improving children's diets and fighting hunger.

Sources:

- [USDA School Meals Support Food Security and Good Nutrition](#)
- [School Meals are Essential for Student Health and Learning](#)
- [Do Parental Perceptions of the Nutritional Quality of School Meals Reflect the Food Environment in Public Schools?](#)



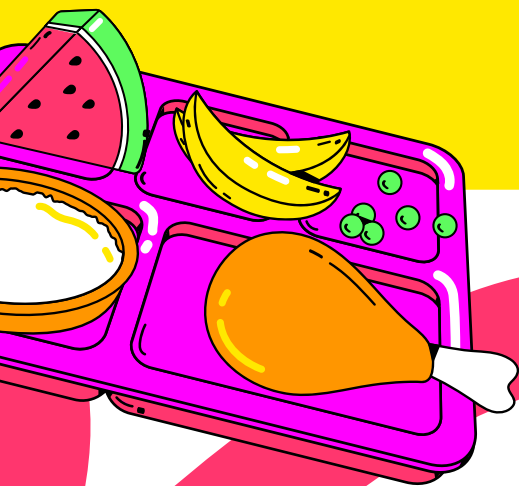
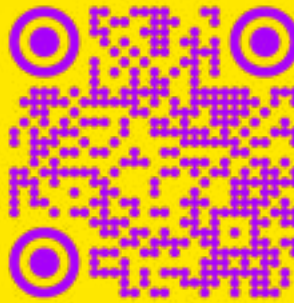
LEARN MORE & CONNECT WITH US

Whether you're a parent, educator, school nutrition professional (or just passionate about supporting school meals) we'd love to hear from you!

Want to bring Made With School Lunch to your school?
Interested in joining the MWSL '25 initiative?
Not sure how you can help support school meals?

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

Scan the QR code to visit
madewithschoollunch.com
for more information.



FILL OUT OUR CONTACT FORM

Scan this QR code to fill out our quick form to let us know how you'd like to support school meals in your community!

