

A Chef's Guide



Welcome



Dear Chef,

Welcome!

Congratulations on joining *Chefs Move to Schools*. The *Chefs Move to Schools* program is an important component of First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* initiative, which helps chefs partner with interested schools in their communities so together they can create healthy meals that meet the schools' dietary guidelines and budgets, while teaching young people about nutrition and making balanced and healthy choices.

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled, and today, nearly one in three children in America are overweight or obese. To help combat this epidemic, the First Lady launched *Let's Move!* in February 2010. *Let's Move!* centers on one ambitious goal: to solve the problem of childhood obesity within a generation, so that kids born today have a bright and healthy adulthood.

With more than 31 million children participating in the National School Lunch Program and more than 11 million participating in the National School Breakfast Program, good nutrition at school is more important than ever. After advocating for a year to improve school lunches, First Lady Michelle Obama got her wish on December 2, 2010 when Congress passed the The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. This groundbreaking piece of bipartisan legislation will significantly improve the quality of meals that children receive at school and will play an integral role in our efforts to combat childhood obesity.

Still, we need your help to turn the tide against childhood obesity. Chefs like you all over the country are answering Mrs. Obama's call to get involved with their local schools as part of the *Chefs Move to Schools* program. We understand that chefs can have a tremendous impact on the health and well-being of children by partnering with a school to help educate kids about making healthful food choices. Chefs have a unique ability to deliver messages of health and nutrition in a fun and appealing way to kids. The *Chefs Move to Schools* program seeks to tap into their creative energy and deep knowledge of food to help ensure America's youngest generation grows up healthy.

As part of *Chefs Move to Schools*, you have the opportunity to help create healthier school menus, but also the talent to educate and engage the entire school community in the process. Chefs across the country are working to improve nutrition for children in schools across America, and we hope this effort continues to grow in the years to come.

Thank you for supporting our goal of improving nutrition for the youngest generation, and for helping make this program a success.

Now, Let's Move!

Sincerely,

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The Facts

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled. Today, almost one in every three children in our nation is overweight or obese. The numbers are even higher in African American and Hispanic communities, where nearly 40% of children are overweight or obese. If we don't solve this problem, one third of all children born in 2000 or later will suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives. Many others will face chronic obesity-related health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer and asthma.

Chefs can have a significant influence on improving the health and well-being of children through their support of the school lunch program and their ability to generate excitement about food and healthy food choices. As school food programs are often the place where kids consume many of their meals and take in most of their calories, chefs are in a valuable position to help support efforts happening in schools across the country to improve health and nutrition.

The Solution

As a way to combat the problem of childhood obesity together as a nation, the First Lady launched, *Let's Move!* — a comprehensive initiative dedicated to solving the problem of obesity within a generation so that kids born today will have a healthy and bright future. Combining comprehensive strategies with common sense, *Let's Move!* is about putting children on the path to a healthy future during their earliest months and years, giving parents the information they need to make healthy choices for their families; providing healthier foods in our schools; ensuring that every family has access to healthy, affordable food; and helping kids become more physically active.

Good nutrition at school is more important than ever and everyone has an important role to play. As communities and organizations get behind the First Lady's *Let's Move!* initiative to solve the problem of childhood obesity, one group that could help affect the health and well-being of children is the nation's chefs. As part of her effort to turn policies into practical solutions for America's families, Mrs. Obama is calling on chefs to get involved by partnering with a school through the *Chefs Move to Schools* program to help educate kids about making healthy food choices. Chefs have a unique ability to deliver messages about healthy eating in a fun and appealing way.

Getting Started

Here are four steps to help you get started with the *Chefs Move to Schools* program:

Step 1 — Sign up.

Thanks for your interest in becoming a part of the *Chefs Move to Schools* program. To join the program simply go to www.letsmove. gov/chefs-step-1.php and complete the chef's sign up form. Within a week after registering, you will receive an email on how to connect with a participating school in your community. Once you've been matched with a school, don't forget to update your chef's profile on www.letsmove.gov so that we know you've made a match. That's the only way we'll be able to provide you with the support you need. Thank you for playing a key role in helping improve nutrition in your local school!

Step 2 — Meet with the Principal

An initial meeting with the Principal or individual they designate as the point person for your involvement in the school is the best way to begin your partnership. Each school is different, so your point person might be a **physical education teacher**, food service manager, nutrition leader, or parent representative. Your school may even have a nutrition/wellness team in place. If so, you should meet with the full team. In your first meeting, the key is to ask questions to find out what efforts are already underway and how you can help.

Here are some important questions to ask when you begin meeting with the principal and/or the nutrition/wellness team at your school:

- What work is the school currently doing around health and nutrition?
- Who are the teachers that have been working on these programs?
- Is there a formal nutrition education curriculum used in classes?
- Does the school have a garden?
- What goals does the school have for improved health and wellness?
- Who runs the cafeteria?





- Does the school run its own food service or do they use a food service provider?
- Where can you see me being of greatest support to the school in helping to elevate the role of food and nutrition in your school?

You don't have to have a vision for how you can help the school at this first meeting. Your goal is simply to learn as much as possible about the school's approach to nutrition and any efforts already underway. In the process, you are establishing a dialogue and building a lasting relationship with the principal, the team, and the school.

Ask if you can walk around and visit the kitchen and cafeteria during breakfast and lunch time. This gives you the opportunity to see first hand how food production and distribution happens, as well as letting you see the kids and their excitement about having a chef in their school. Hopefully their energy will convey how much impact you can have by applying your knowledge of food and nutrition to their school — and their meals!

Step 3 — Develop a Plan.

Select 3–4 activities or projects that you can commit to conducting with your school over the school year. As you learn to interact with the school and its resources as a part of the *Chefs Move to Schools* program, it is essential that you convey your passion about food and flavor to kids and help teach them about what various foods look and taste like. For instance, explore ways that you can help explain the nutritional value in foods, or where certain foods come from and how you can help plant a garden to further illustrate that concept. Discover if there are ways that you can create opportunities to cook with parents and kids to show how they can use basic, inexpensive techniques for nourishing and delicious meals at home.

To help you come up with ideas of what you can do, and what you can include in your plan, here are a few suggestions for ways a chef might add to the overall culture of a school and improve the health of students:

 Meet-the-Farmer/Meet-the-Chef: Invite local farmers and chefs to school to participate in seasonal tastings and celebrate where, when, and how our food grows.

- Open Houses: Provide healthy snacks at school functions, as opposed to sugary desserts or drinks to show families how delicious and easy eating fresh foods can be. Educate families on how increased nutrition and better eating habits can result in improvements in classroom performance.
- Hands-on Cooking Classes: Teach students to cook and taste fresh, healthy foods. Get their input on what kinds of foods they would like to eat in the cafeteria. Create healthy alternatives and cook those foods together.
- Plant a Garden: Show kids where their food comes from by planting a garden. Teachers can incorporate the garden into lesson plans. Hold a seasonal school-wide harvest party and prepare recipes using fruits and vegetables from the school garden.
- School Cookbook: Invite students, school staff members, and families to submit their favorite healthy recipes and create a school-wide cookbook of healthy recipes.
- Organize a Family Food and Fun Night: Provide samples for parents and students to taste and rate new food items that are being considered for the school lunch or breakfast programs.
- Student Council: Work with a student organization to identify opportunities for change to the existing school food program.
 Brainstorm alternative menus and hold tastings to get students involved.

- Cooking Club: Lead an after-school cooking program for interested students. Students can learn more about their own food culture or investigate other cultures around the country and globe.
- Concessions Stand: Encourage a healthy lifestyle by partnering athletics with healthy snacks. Give your concession stand an upgrade: serve fresh fruit, all-natural popcorn, fat-free milk, water, and 100% fruit juice in appropriate portion sizes.

Step 4 — Tell your story on *Let's Move!* Facebook page

Join the *Let's Move!* Facebook page and learn about the many chefs all over the country that are already committing to making great improvements in child nutrition in their schools and implementing new ideas that you may find useful. Share your stories with other schools and chefs about what you're doing to help generate ideas, facilitate healthier meals, and encourage others to get involved.



The Healthier US School Challenge

As part of *Let's Move!*, we need your help in getting more schools to participate in the HealthierUS School Challenge (HUSSC). The HUSSC is a voluntary initiative established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2004 to recognize those schools participating in the National School Lunch Program that have created healthier school environments through promotion of nutrition and physical activity.



This nationwide award program recognizes schools that create healthier school environments through their promotion of good nutrition and physical activity. Four levels of superior performance are awarded: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Gold Award of Distinction. One thousand schools have participated already and we need your help to enroll thousands more. We hope you will work with others to help your school take the Challenge! Visit www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/ to engage the community in your efforts.

You can help your school get involved with the HUSSC in a few different ways:

- Apply to be a HUSSC School: Take an active role to learn more about the HUSSC program and the application process.
 Speak with those responsible for food service at your school to find out if your school meets the eligibility requirements.
- Assist School Food Service Staff: Work with the food service staff to brainstorm ways to enhance menus and food presentation. Offer demonstrations and trainings on best practices and help reinforce food safety.
- Inspire Students: Talk to students about what it's like to be a
 professional chef and help them obtain a greater appreciation
 for food. Conduct tastings, cooking demonstrations, and teach
 students about food preparation. Assist with planting a garden,
 and then find ways to incorporate school gardens into lesson
 plans so that they're also learning about food in the classroom.

Work with parents and the entire school community: Organize
cooking demonstrations/classes for parents, students and
teachers. Provide food presentation techniques and help promote
the positive activities that are occurring in the school cafeteria.

Whatever ideas you have to help schools meet the HUSSC, it is important to build on what is already happening around the school. Creating healthier schools is a team effort, and delicious food is a great way to bring everyone to the table.



School Lunch 101 and More Information

As you are becoming more involved with your school's food service programs, it may help to also become more familiar with general information about the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) to understand the general landscape and functions of how school meal programs operate.

Overview of School Meal Programs

More than 31 million children participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and over 11 million participate in the School Breakfast Program (SBP). Today, many children are consuming most of their daily calories at school and for many children food served at school may be the only food they regularly eat. The NSLP provides nutritionally balanced lunches to children each school day in over 101,600 public and non-profit private schools and residential child care facilities. The program reaches more than half of all children enrolled in the nation's schools. The program also reimburses schools for snacks served to children in after-school educational and enrichment programs.

The Food and Nutrition Service, part of the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), administers the program at the Federal level, while state agencies, generally State Departments of Education, operate the program through agreements with local school food authorities. For more detailed information on the National School Lunch Program and its history, visit www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/.

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) provides nutritious breakfasts to more than 11 million children in over 87,000 public and non-profit private schools and residential child care institutions each school day. About 87% of the schools that participate in the NSLP also participate in the SBP. The SBP provides school children of all economic backgrounds with a well-balanced, healthy meal at the beginning of the school day. For more information on SBP, visit www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Breakfast/Default.htm.

General Landscape and Characteristics of School Meal Programs

Here is some important information about school meal programs as it relates to cost and funding, as well as nutritional requirements. It should help you understand the context in which school meal programs provide healthy and nutritious meals for children.

- Some school districts may rely on older or limited equipment to prepare meals. However, many school districts that participate in the School Meals Programs and administer schools in which at least 50 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals recently were provided funding for foodservice equipment through two sources: 1) the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided \$100,000,000; and (2) under Section 7(a)(2) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, Congress appropriated an additional \$25,000,000 for school districts where ARRA funds were not available.
- Team Nutrition offers free nutrition education curricula, posters, brochures and other resources to schools at www.teamnutrition. usda.gov. These materials for parents and students can help augment your cooking demonstration or other school activity.

- School districts that participate in federally funded school
 meal programs must have a school wellness policy that covers
 nutrition and physical activity. Some schools have active school
 wellness councils or teams.
- On average students have about 23 minutes to eat once they are seated, and lunch may begin as early as 10:00 am.
- Vending machines, school stores, fundraisers, and sporting event concessions may provide food outside of the school meals program and may not be under the control of the Food Service Department.



- There is a great variety in the types of food service in schools —
 from centralized commercial kitchens that prepare and send meals
 out to be reheated and/or assembled at the receiving schools, to
 small self-prep kitchens that prepare meals from scratch. As a
 result, the type of equipment available in school kitchens varies.
- USDA has made great improvements in the types of commodity food products (now called USDA foods) available to schools. Examples include lower fat cheese, fruit canned in juice or water, whole grain pasta, and more: www.fns.usda. gov/cga/FactSheets/Commodity_Foods.pdf.

Salad bars are only available in some schools.

Financial Fees/Cost Information

- The USDA reimburses school food service department's \$2.72 for a "free" lunch, which is designated to families living below the poverty line. A family of four would qualify if their combined income was \$28,665 per year or less.
- The cost of the food component of the typical school lunch averages \$1.09.
- Food costs account for about 45 percent of the reported costs to produce a reimbursable lunch for the typical school district. A la Carte items such as pizza, french fries, and nachos (foods offered outside of the reimbursable meal program) may be perceived as a necessity to break even in some school districts.



Nutritional / Food Requirements:

- Schools are required to serve lunches that meet the Dietary
 Guidelines for Americans and provide minimum calorie levels, and
 one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances of protein,
 vitamin A, vitamin C, iron and calcium. For more detailed information
 on the Dietary Guidelines, visit www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/.
- To provide local food service professionals with flexibility, there are four menu planning approaches to plan healthful and appealing meals. The choice of menu planning approach and what specific foods are served and how they are prepared and presented are made by local schools.
- Reimbursable meals are made up of four component requirements: Meat/Meat Alternate, Grains/Breads, Vegetable/ Fruit, and milk. Students must be offered five food items for lunch in the amounts specified for the age group served. For schools under Offer versus Serve, students may choose to take only 3 of the 5 food items offered to reduce waste.
- Information and resources on menu planning for schools can be found at www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/menu/menu.planning.NSLP.htm.

www.letsmove.gov/chefs.php

