

2024

FoodCorps Voter Guide

FoodCorps has an ambitious goal:

by 2030, all our nation's children have access to food education and nourishing, free meals in school.

To reach that goal, we need elected officials at all levels of government—from the president to your local city council members—who will prioritize students' health, education, and sense of belonging at school. Who you vote for and the policies that they champion have the power to shape the well being of children and the outcomes of your community.

Use this **Voter Guide** to explore issues that align with our 2030 goal and make a plan to vote. When you've finished, encourage others in your life to do the same by sharing this guide, and remind them we all have a role to play in creating a more just future for our nation's kids.

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How to Use This Guide



Learn about school nutrition issues that impact child well-being.



Research candidates' positions or plans on those issues.



Make a plan to vote.





Issues Impacting Child Well-Being

Here are five issues impacting child well-being, especially at school. As you learn more about these issues, use that knowledge to inform your

decisions on ballot measures, help guide your research on candidates' positions, and explore how candidates may choose to lead if elected.

Nourishing School Meals For All

Access to free school meals ensures all kids get the nourishment they need to fuel their brains and bodies during the school day.

Offering free school meals to every student—regardless of their family income—improves health, focus, and academic outcomes. When all children have access to free school meals, school nutrition professionals can more easily access,

plan, and prepare meals, and have a greater capacity to source nutritious ingredients and incorporate culturally relevant food options.

Perhaps most importantly, school meals for all can help foster a sense of community and inclusion in the cafeteria, creating an environment where all students are welcome and have opportunities to learn and grow by sharing nourishing food.



Questions to Ask Candidates

- › What are their positions on providing all students with free meals at school?
- › How have they addressed child nutrition or food security? (For example: in previous elected positions, professional roles, community work, or their policy platforms)

Food and Nutrition Education

Food and nutrition education changes students' relationship with food.

Food educators play a critical role in schools by teaching children about where food comes from, how to grow and prepare a variety of foods, the benefits of trying new foods, and the importance of food in our history and cultures.

Research shows that food educators can increase children's consumption of nourishing foods like fruits and vegetables.¹ And hands-on food education can improve academic outcomes, support children's social and emotional wellness, and set kids up for a lifetime of healthy habits.



Questions to Ask Candidates

- › How have they voted or spoken publicly about measures to fund food educators in schools?
- › Which policies around food education are a priority for them?

School Kitchen Modernization

Almost 30 million children eat a school meal every day. Yet many schools and districts prepare those meals using decades-old equipment.

One survey found that many schools are relying on workarounds—such as more frequent deliveries of perishable items due to lack of cold storage—that are expensive, inefficient, and unsustainable.² Other schools can only offer heat-and-serve meals that lack the nutritional benefits of fresh food.

And at schools without the capacity to maintain gardens, kids miss out on opportunities to taste fresh ingredients they get to grow themselves.

School cafeterias are an often overlooked part of our education infrastructure. Policies and funding for schools to upgrade, modernize, and maintain their kitchens, gardens, and cafeterias make it possible to sustainably serve nutritious, delicious meals for our kids.



Questions to Ask Candidates

- › What are their positions on investments in scratch cooking resources, school gardens, and school kitchen equipment upgrades?
- › How would they prioritize school nutrition and address disparities in school resources?

¹Koch P, Wolf R, Graziose M, Gray HL, Trent R, and Uno C. *FoodCorps: Creating Healthy School Environments*. Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Program in Nutrition, Teachers College, Columbia University. February, 2017
²<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2014/03/26/states-need-updated-school-kitchen-equipment-b>





Diverse School Nutrition Leadership

School nutrition professionals shape so many student experiences, from tasting new foods to reflecting cultural preferences to creating a welcoming cafeteria environment.

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) leaders who reflect the communities they serve bring community values, different cultural backgrounds, and diverse foodways into their roles, resulting in more varied perspectives on what good food is and should be in schools. Finding meaningful ways to recognize and

celebrate these different definitions of “healthy food” is a major opportunity in schools.

Systemic racism in school food systems and decades of divestment from communities of color have resulted in the highest rates of hunger for BIPOC children. BIPOC leaders working in school nutrition and food education can have an enormous impact on these kids. Food education and child nutrition efforts can be transformative when students can see themselves represented by the people teaching them about nutrition.



Questions to Ask Candidates

- › What are their positions on policies that would incentivize careers in school nutrition for BIPOC leaders?
- › What steps have they taken, or will they take, around providing culturally responsive school meals?

School Food as Racial Justice

Like virtually every institution in America, the school food system is deeply impacted by systemic racism.

Structural inequities based on race, geography, and family income have led to health disparities that take an unjust toll on BIPOC children. Violence and discrimination aimed at BIPOC children are traumatizing, severely damaging kids' health and wellness and their ability to thrive in

and out of school. Food apartheid—deliberate, racist practices like redlining that have created entire neighborhoods without access to fresh foods—systemically blocks communities of color from the nourishment they need.

Intentional investments in equitable school food can help address these issues, transforming outcomes for our kids and ensuring that every child can truly be well.



Questions to Ask Candidates

- › What steps have they previously taken, or do they plan to take, to center BIPOC voices and experiences when shaping public policy?
- › How have the candidates addressed the need to end racial inequities in our food and education systems?



Research the Candidates

While asking questions in person at a town hall, public event, or scheduled visit to their office is a great way to engage with candidates and learn their plans, there are many other tools you can use remotely to research their positions before you head to the polls.

Check the News

Look for articles that shed light on how the candidate has spoken publicly or been quoted regarding specific issues. Searching for stories or press releases on how they've voted in the past can offer great insight into what their priorities will be if elected into office.

Use Social Media

Asking candidates questions through social media is a great way to raise the issues that matter to you. Even if they don't respond, you can learn a lot about them by observing how they interact with the public and the issues they communicate most about.

Visit Their Websites

Although the information will be biased, a candidate's website will offer insight into their policy priorities and the issues they champion. By comparing different sites, you can learn about their background, experience, and priorities.

Send Them a Message

Engaging with the public is part of their job! You can often message their campaign staff, or if they are running for reelection, you can email their office. We often encourage advocates to send messages to their legislators. Contacting them during their campaigns during an election is just as important.

Explore Nonpartisan Resources

Always consider if the information you read online is accurate. Look for nonpartisan resources (like ours) that aim to inform the public about issues and candidates on the ballot.

› [Ballotpedia.org](https://www.ballotpedia.org)

Preview what's on your ballot, and browse a collection of articles and information about elections nationwide.

› [Vote411.org](https://www.vote411.org)

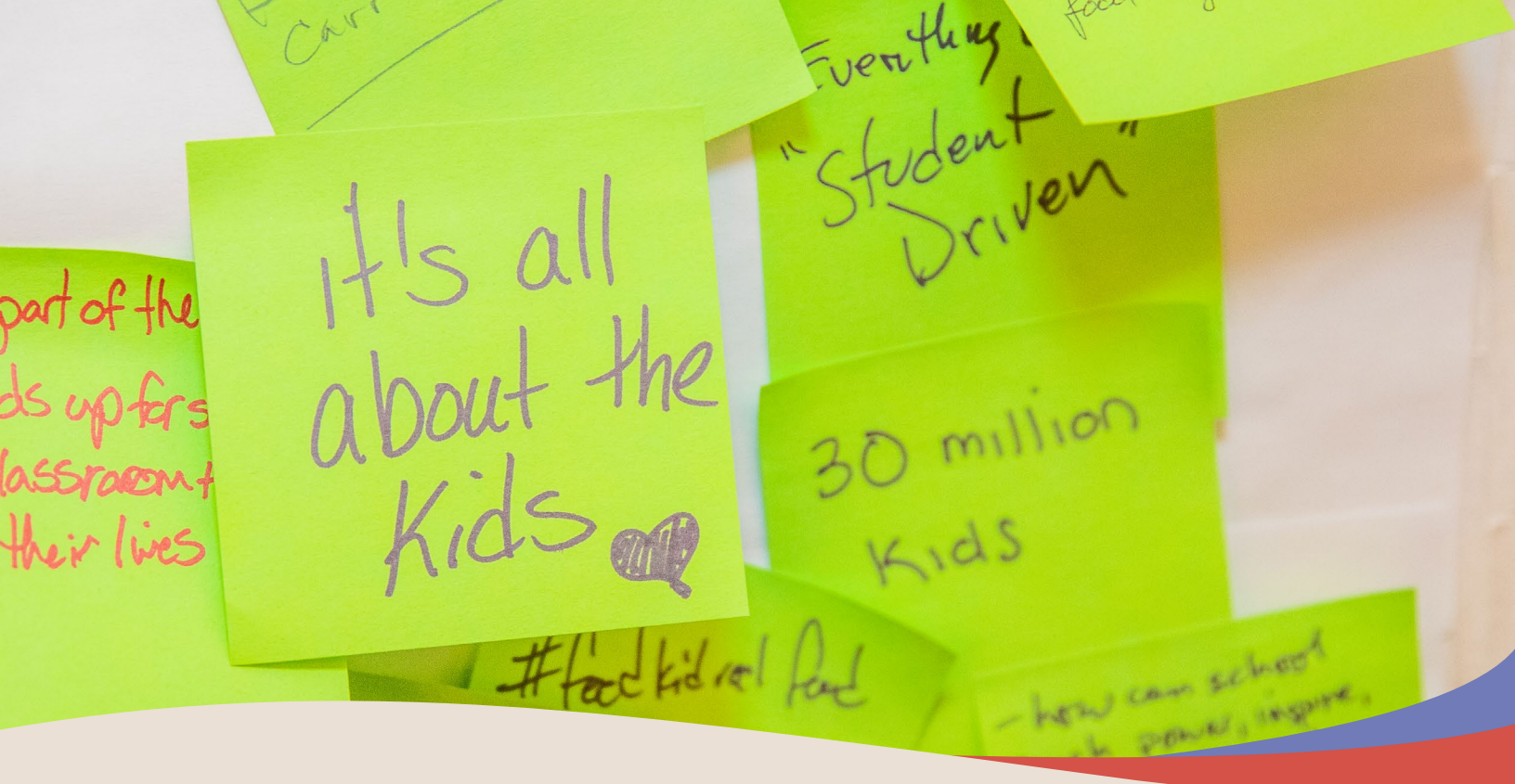
Preview your ballot with this resource via the League of Women Voters Education Fund, who are "committed to ensuring voters have the information they need to participate in every election."

› [Guides.vote](https://www.guides.vote)

View comparisons of elected officials "produced by veteran journalists with links to credible sources."

› [2024 Voter Handbook \(CNN\)](https://www.cnn.com/2024/voter-handbook)

Find out the rules and information specific to your location using this personalized interactive tool.



Make Your Voting Plan

☐ Check your registration or register to vote.

Some states allow you to register in person on Election Day or during early voting, while others require that you register in advance. You can check your registration at [vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov) or at [vote411.org](https://www.vote411.org).

☐ Decide how you'll vote.

In addition to voting in-person on Election Day, many states offer options for absentee voting, mail-in voting, and in-person early voting. You can see voting rules by state at [vote411.org](https://www.vote411.org), and find your polling location through [vote.org](https://www.vote.org).

☐ Know your voting rights.

You can use the ACLU's [Know Your Rights](#) tool to learn about your voting rights and how to exercise them.

☐ Share your plan.

Make sure the people around you have a plan. Share your plan, and this guide, to make sure they have everything they need to have a successful Election Day too.

☐ Vote!

Check voter ID laws before you head to the poll to make sure you have what you need to cast your vote through the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#).

Using your voice to advocate for child well being and health is important after Election Day, too!

Visit [foodcorps.org/act](https://www.foodcorps.org/act) and create an advocate profile to be notified of future opportunities to engage with your elected officials.



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