



# FoodCorps School Nutrition Program Guide





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## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

# What is the FoodCorps School Nutrition Program Guide?

This guide is a supplemental set of resources for FoodCorps School Nutrition Specialists, designed to support effective programming with district partners in schools. Specialists should use this guide alongside the full-length program guide, in addition to FoodCorps' in-person training, to deepen their knowledge of partnership goals and work within their community. While the position title is the same as a credential provided for the School Nutrition Association, FoodCorps Specialists' are not being trained on the comprehensive set of requirements to take the test for this credentialing exam. In this guide, you will find the following:

- **Six training competencies that encompass school nutrition introductory training at FoodCorps**
- **Strategies and activities that district partners identify as areas of support, capacity, and collaboration**
- **Resources for supporting nourishing school meals in your community**

*Cover: Sra Feigelman encourages a student to try roasted butternut squash.*

*Above: FoodCorps members prepare a nutritious recipe in the Rio School District's test kitchen.*

## How Do I Use It?

We recommend that everyone start by reading the following sections: “Philosophy of Nourishing School Meals” and “Planning and Evaluating Your Program Year.” These sections cover the basics about how FoodCorps partners with schools and include required documents and resources that you will use often in your work.

After that, you can continue reading or check out the Table of Contents throughout the year to find exactly what you need. Take the FoodCorps School Nutrition Program Guide to your district, share it with your site supervisor and other support school nutrition professionals, and bookmark your go-to pages!

## A Work in Progress!

This guide is a collection of lessons learned during a two-year pilot and from existing FoodCorps tools, but other parts are still being developed. We will be adding to and adapting the material over time, based on feedback from you and our partner communities. If you have ideas, please reach out to the School Nutrition Leadership team.



*FoodCorps Member Charlotte Sampson chats with students at lunchtime.*



# School Nutrition Specialist Program Overview

# History of FoodCorps' School Nutrition Specialist Program

FoodCorps has long been committed to nourishing school meals through partnerships across our geographic footprint. Partners and FoodCorps members have supported school meals initiatives in various ways over the last decade. Previously, members were placed at the school level and focused on teaching food education in classrooms, cafeterias, and gardens. Food Educators focused on food education had limited opportunities to support district-level meal initiatives, despite expressed interest from our partners.

The School Nutrition Specialist Program started in August 2021 as a pilot with five states: California, Georgia, Massachusetts, Michigan, and New Jersey. The goal was to understand the impact of resourcing partners with the capacity and support needed to enhance school meals. After the success of the first program year, the Year Two evaluation sought to understand:

- **Institutionalization**—Design and implement a program model that helps school districts institutionalize food education and nourishing school meals.
- **Program value**—Understand how the implementation of and outcomes of the SN program model differs from the Food Education model.
- **Resources**—Understand the resources needed to successfully implement the SN program model.

After two informative years of a pilot program, the School Nutrition Program was institutionalized in August 2023 and currently partners in 5 of the 8 states, where FoodCorps operates. While this program has seen much success since its inception, an orientation toward progress and innovation will be central as the program continues to grow and meet the needs of partner communities.

# Nourishing School Meals Philosophy During the Program Year and Beyond

FoodCorps believes school meals are a powerful tool to support child well-being. Through partnership with local communities, school meals have the potential to shape how kids experience food during their school years and for the rest of their lives. School Nutrition Specialists actively contribute to other initiatives and projects that support district goals for school menus that are student driven, locally sourced, and/or scratch cooked. Alongside partner communities, impact is measured through menu change, defined as the process from idea generation to tasting and menu adoptions for a single item on the school breakfast, lunch, or supper menu.

FoodCorps advocates for school meals that reflect the traditions and histories of the communities where we partner. We see community-rooted school meals as an important part of creating positive school food environments that say there's room to celebrate all students' backgrounds and family food traditions at the lunch table.

Through an in-depth training program that integrates school nutrition professional standards and FoodCorps' core leadership frameworks, after their 11-month term, Specialists are prepared to be advocates for innovation in school meals.

We are hopeful for a world in which schools share this value and equip students to lead their own food journeys—through their childhoods and for the rest of their lives.



## Core Metrics and School Nutrition Leadership

In addition to the programmatic requirement of menu change, FoodCorps uses core metrics to aid in determining program success. It is a clear way to evaluate progress towards our North Star of ensuring all kids have access to food education and free nourishing school meals. These core metrics are organized based on how change happens within complex systems: individual, institutional and societal and are as follows:

- **Individual:** Student fruit and vegetable consumption
- **Institutional:** Nourishing School Meal Index scores
- **Societal:** Number of digital and in-person advocacy actions

As a School Nutrition Specialist, you will support districts and community partners in reaching these goals through various strategies that you will be introduced to throughout this guide. As an example, Specialists will facilitate taste tests amongst groups of students with the intent of driving fruit and vegetable consumption. While it is important to understand this program is essential in driving change, the core metrics are not something Specialists need to track or report on.

# Competencies and District Goals

As an emerging leader in school nutrition, the competencies support FoodCorps' approach to leadership through our School Food Leadership framework. School food leadership is the skillful practice of guiding people, programs, and systems to ensure students have access to nourishing, enjoyable, family-driven school meals, while partnering with schools and families to support student well-being.

These competencies are in alignment with industry standards and reflect the necessary skills to move change forward. Specialists are not expected to excel in every area, but a foundational understanding will be supportive of their own growth and development within the school nutrition community.

Introduction to School Nutrition Operations (p. 8)	Menu and Nutrition Management (p. 12)	Procurement (p. 18)
<b>District Goal:</b> Staff training and professional development	<b>District Goal:</b> Community-rooted menu items  Scratch cooking and speed-scratch	<b>District Goal:</b> Local procurement
School Nutrition Perception (p. 23)	Stakeholder Management (p. 29)	Supporting Student-Centered Meal Practices (p.34)
<b>District Goal (supplemental):</b>  Cafeteria environment  Food education	<b>District Goal:</b> Family and community engagement	<b>District Goal:</b> Student feedback and engagement

*Thailiya Thomas and  
Genesis Mena test  
a recipe and cook a  
savory Korean pancake*



CORE COMPETENCY

# Introduction to School Nutrition Operations

## Description:

### Introduction to School Nutrition Operations

Administration, operations, and finance are the central elements of any school nutrition department. This learning path is designed to help FoodCorps Specialists understand the foundations of school nutrition operations, including the role of the local, state, and federal agencies that provide nourishing school meals. Administration refers to the record keeping involved in keeping the school nutrition program compliant and finance is maintaining the proper accounting for revenues and expenditures. While these are essential elements, Specialists will not have in-depth learning on these aspects during their term. The School Nutrition Specialist will increase their knowledge of the department in order to better support staff training and development.

## Objective:

### Introduction to School Nutrition Operations

The School Nutrition Specialist will learn the history of how school nutrition programs were established in the United States; the various funding structures that support personnel, equipment, and procurement; and the operational models that can exist within the school nutrition program. FoodCorps Specialists will also expand their learning through a self-guided safety and sanitation training that will support operations within the kitchen. The knowledge and skills learned will further menu change efforts within the district.

At FoodCorps, menu change is defined as the process from idea generation to tasting and menu adoptions for a single item on the school breakfast, lunch, or supper menu.

## Learning Outcomes:

### Introduction to School Nutrition Operations

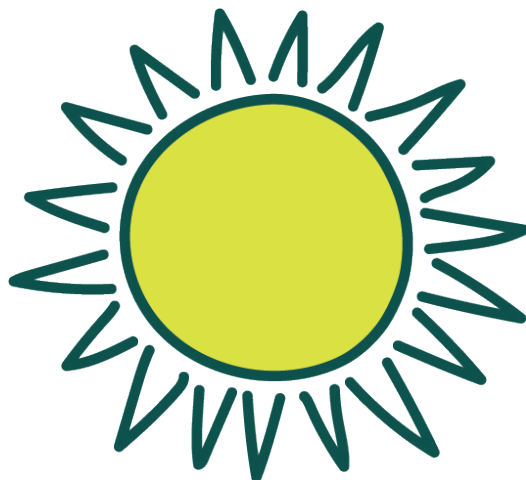
By the conclusion of this module, the Specialist will:

- **Understand** the federal, state, and local agencies that support school food operations.
- **Gain** knowledge of funding structures, including reimbursement and commodities.
- **Recognize** the various types of food service operation models unique to their school district.
- **Identify** the various organizational structures based on district size.
- **Learn** the appropriate safety and sanitation practices for their food service operation.



# District Goal: Staff Training and Professional Development

The foundation of staff training and professional development is positioning school food as a cornerstone in creating food experiences that connect to students and families. FoodCorps Specialists support their school nutrition department in trainings that allow staff to explore food that reflects the traditions and preferences of the community. Staff training and professional development positions school staff to better support student learning in the cafeteria and classroom settings. Whether it is providing resources about the school nutrition program to teachers or assisting with training that will support scratch cooking, FoodCorps Specialists catalyze change that has lasting impacts on the school community.



## Strategies

Strategies	Example Activities & Projects	Examples of Metrics (suggested for district collection)
<p>Coordinate or support skill-building and professional development (including teacher trainings) that connect the classroom and cafeteria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Train the Trainer sessions for teachers or staff to support district wellness goals</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Providing technical assistance in farm-to-school or nutrition education</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Introduce FoodCorps lessons district-wide</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create resources that incorporate food served in school meals in the classroom</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Alternative breakfast model trainings (e.g., Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab-n-Go, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of Smart Snacks Guidelines trainings to teachers or staff</li> <li>• Percentage increase in teachers or staff trained through “Train the Trainer” sessions (such as the wellness policy) to support district wellness goals</li> <li>• # schools implement FoodCorps lessons within [timeframe]</li> <li>• # of resources developed that incorporate food served in school meals into the classroom</li> <li>• Assess the effectiveness and reception of alternative breakfast model trainings through participants' feedback and observed changes in breakfast service</li> </ul>
<p>Coordinate or support skill-building and professional development for Food and Nutrition Service staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Staff training related to scratch cooking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Updated process for scratch cooking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Garden to cafeteria processes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Salad bar engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % increase in staff members trained in scratch-cooking techniques</li> <li>• # updated process for scratch cooking within [timeframe]</li> <li>• Assess staff feedback and experiences on the garden-to-cafeteria program to understand its impact on their work processes</li> <li>• Increase staff feedback on salad bar engagement training to gauge its effectiveness in improving their work practices</li> </ul>

*Students eating colorful,  
nourishing school meals  
in a cafeteria.*



CORE COMPETENCY

# Menu and Nutrition Management

## Description: Menu and Nutrition Management

This competency is designed to familiarize the School Nutrition Specialist with federal regulations and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition standards that qualify school meals for reimbursement under the National School Lunch Program, the National School Breakfast Program, and other nutrition programs at the school district where they will participate in national service as a FoodCorps Specialist. The School Nutrition Specialist will develop the skills and ability to support community-informed menu development that meets standards and understand the relationship of nutrition management to the overall integrity of the school nutrition program.

## Objective: Menu and Nutrition Management

The School Nutrition Specialist will learn how the menu and USDA meal pattern of the school nutrition programs affect student acceptance of foods served, student participation in the program, and how the menu impacts program operations and finances. The School Nutrition Specialist will demonstrate knowledge of navigating the processes and challenges that lead to menus shaped by students and family input, and will serve as a bridge to support menu changes in the district.

## Learning Outcomes: Menu and Nutrition Management

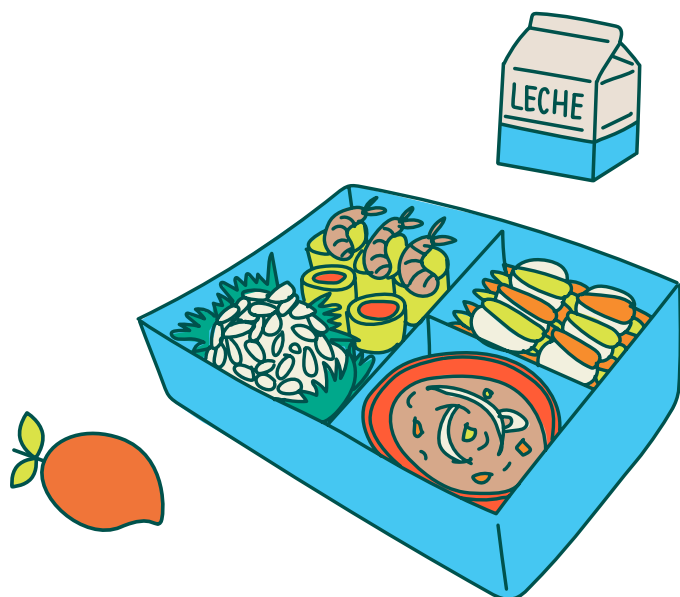
At the conclusion of this module, the Specialist will:

- **Gain** knowledge of federal and local guidance regarding menu and nutrition requirements in school nutrition programs.
- **Support** the development and implementation of menus based on federal regulations, nutrition standards, and student and community feedback.
- **Recognize and describe** meal components for different school nutrition programs.



# District Goal: Community-Rooted Menu Items

The goal of community-rooted menus and menu items is to incorporate diverse food options that reflect and respect the traditions and histories of students and their families. This approach welcomes family-driven culinary traditions into the cafeteria environment and the school menu. FoodCorps Specialists are key partners in helping the district move toward a menu that not only honors differences in dietary habits and foodways, but also create cafeterias that adapt, recognize, and celebrate students and families' experiences with food.



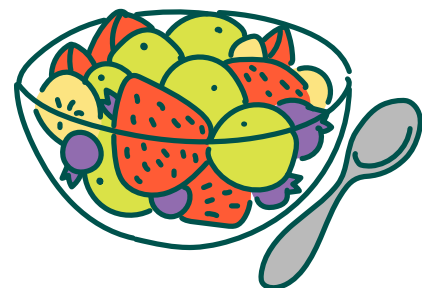
# Strategies

Strategies	Example Activities & Projects	Examples of Metrics (suggested for district collection)
Collaborate with community members (including students) on defining community-rooted menu items	<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in district meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate taste tests for community-rooted menu items <input type="checkbox"/> Support community coalitions <input type="checkbox"/> Gather school nutrition staff and community input on spices or ingredients that can be added to menu items to become more community-rooted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of new community-rooted menu item suggestions generated through the collaborative meetings with community members and students</li> <li>• # of community-rooted menu items successfully implemented on the menu based on student feedback from taste tests</li> <li>• __% increase in student satisfaction ratings for community-rooted menu items</li> <li>• # of community coalitions formed for advancing community-rooted school menu items</li> </ul>
Support ongoing sustainability of community-rooted menu change	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide school nutrition staff training on community-rooted menu items <input type="checkbox"/> Support the district menu committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• __% increase in staff knowledge of community-rooted menu items</li> <li>• Support # staff trainings on how to prepare a traditional meal</li> <li>• # of menu items successfully implemented based on collaborative input from the menu committee</li> </ul>
Assist with the marketing and promotion of community-rooted items  <b>NOTE:</b> This is a supportive goal. Specialists can engage in this goal, but it cannot be the main goal during their 11-month program year.	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop resources (e.g., posters, signage, fact sheets, social media) <input type="checkbox"/> Develop an engagement strategy to share the menu changes with various audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create # posters, # different signages for various schools, # fact sheets for guardians and teachers, and # social media posts</li> <li>• Aim to inform __% of students and school district community about menu changes within [timeframe], measured via social media metrics, feedback forms, and/or event attendance</li> </ul>

# District Goal: Increase Scratch and Speed-Scratch Cooking

Scratch cooking emphasizes menu items crafted from the ground up by using fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and raw and plant-based proteins. Speed-scratch cooking skillfully blends the freshness of these ingredients with the convenience of pre-made items, for example, assembling a pizza with a pre-made whole grain crust, topped with locally-sourced bell peppers. By implementing these cooking preparations with feedback informed by students, the community, and school nutrition staff, FoodCorps Specialists support the school district in moving toward more nourishing food options that foster students' sense of community.

Sources used: [\*The Lunch Box\*](#), [\*USDA CICN: Speed-Scratch Cooking\*](#)



## Strategies

Strategies	Example Activities & Projects	Examples of Metrics (suggested for district collection)
Collaborate with menu planner on menu development focused on scratch or speed-scratch cooking	<input type="checkbox"/> Recipe development with support of district staff <input type="checkbox"/> Scratch-cooked recipe taste testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of new or updated scratch-cooked recipes within a year</li> <li>• __% increase in scratch-cooked recipe taste tests</li> </ul>
Support operationalization of scratch or speed-scratch cooking	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff training related to scratch cooking <input type="checkbox"/> Research equipment needed for scratch cooking <input type="checkbox"/> Explore grant opportunities*  <i>*Researching and working on a grant is allowed, but it is not a requirement for Specialists.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support # staff trainings related to scratch-cooked recipes</li> <li>• Tracking systems to identify equipment needed for effective scratch cooking</li> <li>• # of grant opportunities identified by Specialists and pursued by district</li> </ul>
Assist with the marketing and promotion of scratch-cooked items  <b>NOTE:</b> This is a supportive goal. Specialists can engage in this goal, but it cannot be the main goal during their 11-month program year.	<input type="checkbox"/> Resource development (e.g., posters, signage, fact sheets, social media) <input type="checkbox"/> Communications strategy to share the menu changes to various audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create # posters, # different signages for various schools, # fact sheets for guardians and teachers, and # social media posts</li> <li>• Aim to inform __% of students and school district community about menu changes within [timeframe], measured via social media metrics, feedback forms, and/or event attendance</li> </ul>



*A cafeteria staff member preps local-sourced carrots for the school's salad bar.*



CORE COMPETENCY

# Procurement

## Description: Procurement

This competency aims to introduce School Nutrition Specialists to the essentials of school food procurement with the goal of supporting current school food operations within the district. The definition of local procurement differs across communities in school nutrition; it is influenced by a variety of factors, such as district size, proximity to growers, producers, ranchers, agricultural areas, growing seasons, climate, and demographics. With this in mind, FoodCorps Specialists will be introduced to the importance of creating long-lasting, values-based partnerships with stakeholders who support district and community goals, as well as the concept of value-chain coordination. The knowledge and skills learned will provide the foundation to aid menu change efforts within the district.

## Objective: Procurement

The School Nutrition Specialist will gain an introductory knowledge of the USDA guidelines and regulations that inform school food procurement. Through this competency, FoodCorps Specialists will learn value-chain strategies, the importance of relationship-driven partnerships, shared decision-making, and how to support the movement toward a highly collaborative, cooperative system through direct training provided by FoodCorps or values-aligned partners. Value-chain coordination in school nutrition involves aligning the values, goals, and efforts of all stakeholders, such as local farmers, distributors, the community, and the district.

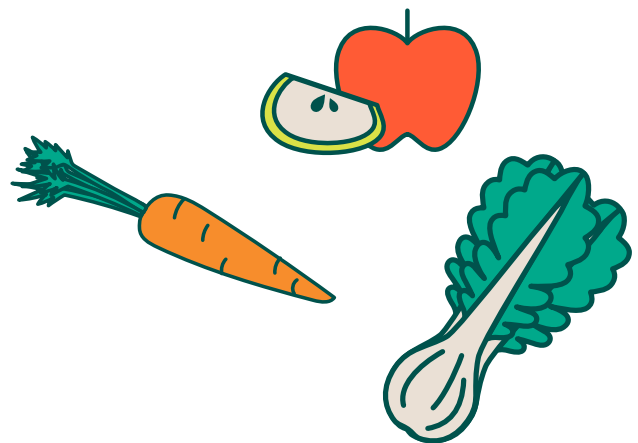
## Learning Outcomes: Procurement

By the conclusion of this module, the Specialist will:

- **Gain** foundational knowledge of USDA guidelines and regulations governing school food procurement.
- **Learn** the principles of value-chain strategies within the context of school food and how these strategies can positively impact the local food systems.
- **Learn** the different roles School Nutrition Specialists can play in value-chain coordination, such as facilitating effective procurement processes within the district and local food vendors.
- **Develop** skills to support current district efforts to create intentional, community-driven, and values-based partnerships between the district and local food vendors.

# District Goal: Local Procurement

The goal of local procurement is to strengthen the relationships between the district, local food vendors, and community stakeholders. By engaging local producers and implementing value-chain coordination strategies, the district can work toward supporting community-led food initiatives and celebrating locally sourced ingredients. FoodCorps Specialists can support districts on this initiative by facilitating communication efforts and relationship-building with stakeholders, as well as supporting the basic operational aspects of local procurement.



## Strategies

Strategies	Example Activities & Projects	Examples of Metrics (suggested for district collection)
Support the operational aspect of local procurement efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create/maintain a tracking system of local farmers and producers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">National Farm-to-Institution Metrics Collaborative</a></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Track systems of local produce</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Minneapolis Farm to School Toolkit</a></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Acquire quotes and product specifications such as broccoli crowns vs. florets; case/pack size</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Update standard operating processes/procedures (SOPs) for food service models that support scratch cooking, salad bars, or local procurement projects</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate procurement of local items for programs such as Harvest of the Month (HOTM) and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ___% increase in the use of locally sourced ingredients</li> <li>• ___% increase in student awareness of the benefits of locally sourced food</li> <li>• Track the number of SOPs created to support local procurement efforts</li> <li>• # of schools where HOTM and FFVP have been implemented</li> <li>• Create a HOTM calendar with locally sourced produce</li> </ul>

Local Procurement Strategies continues next page



## Strategies

Strategies	Example Activities & Projects	Examples of Metrics (suggested for district collection)
Build relationships with local farmers and producers	<input type="checkbox"/> Sit on local farm-to-school coalitions where local farmers are present <input type="checkbox"/> Research and outreach to local growers <input type="checkbox"/> Support district efforts in implementing value-chain coordination strategies <input type="checkbox"/> Aid in planning field trips or <i>Meet the Farmer</i> talks for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular interviews and satisfaction surveys, specifically looking for indicators of mutual trust and communication frequency</li> <li># of partnerships established with local farmers and producers</li> <li>Tracking system of local farmers and producers</li> </ul>
Assist with the marketing and promotion of locally sourced items  <b>NOTE:</b> This is a supportive goal. Specialists can engage in this goal, but it cannot be the main goal during their 11 month program year.	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop resources (e.g., posters, signage, fact sheets, social media) to share local efforts with various audiences <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a communications strategy to share locally sourced, student-driven menu changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create # posters, # different signages for various schools, # fact sheets for guardians and teachers, and # social media posts</li> <li>Aim to inform __% of students and school district community about menu changes within [timeframe], measured via social media metrics, feedback forms, and/or event attendance</li> </ul>

Sources used: [USDA Procuring Local Foods](#), [USDA Farm to School Procurement Guide](#), [VCC](#), [Wallace Center](#)

*A lunch tray featuring a  
delicious and nutritious  
school meal.*



**CORE COMPETENCY**

# School Nutrition Perception

## Description: School Nutrition Perception

School meals deserve to be celebrated and seen as a hub for creativity, child well-being, and locally grown foods. This module encourages Specialists to reflect on their own experiences with school food, then examine the school community context in order to shift toward a more positive view of school meals. Specialists will develop knowledge and understanding of how marketing and effective communication can elevate the status of school nutrition programs, increase student participation, and contribute to the overall efficacy of the program. They will support district partners in creating cafeteria environments that make this possible while aiding food educators on efforts that link the classroom to the cafeteria.

## Objective: School Nutrition Perception

The stigma and negative perception of school food and the cafeteria experience among students, caregivers, and broader school communities discourages student participation and holds the program back as a whole. In this module, Specialists will learn techniques for communicating and collaborating with various audiences to inform, persuade, or challenge current perceptions of school meals and provide alternative perspectives. Whether it is informing parents at a back-to-school night, drafting resources to share with the community, or leveraging online spaces to shift the narrative, Specialists will create positive school food environments.

## Learning Outcomes: School Nutrition Perception

At the conclusion of this module, the Specialist will:

- **Understand** the common myths and misconceptions about school food.
- **Demonstrate** how to tailor and provide consistent messaging to different target audiences (employees, students, parents, principals, school district administration, and the general public).
- **Utilize** appropriate communication channels to share information with the school community.
- **Develop** resources to promote the school meals program.
- **Understand** the foundational principles of storytelling as a community engagement tool.
- **Support** the school nutrition department in marketing or promoting specific school nutrition programs or events.

# District Goal: Cafeteria Environment

The cafeteria environment is a critical learning space for students and the larger school community. Specialists work in schools to get kids excited about eating fruits and veggies, to support school nutrition staff in getting nourishing meals on the meal tray, and to create positive, welcoming school environments for kids of all backgrounds and traditions. By understanding the cafeteria environment, Specialists are better positioned to affect how students perceive and participate in school meals programming.

This supplementary goal is included so Specialists can work with school staff to support cafeteria initiatives that move the school meals program forward. Due to the primary goal of the School Nutrition Specialist position being to implement menu change, supporting change within the cafeteria environment is a supplementary activity and should compose no more than 20% of a Specialist's work.



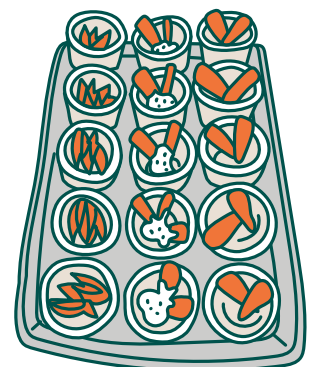
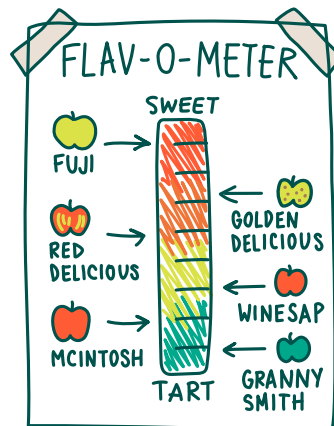
## Strategies

Strategies	Example Activities & Projects	Examples of Metrics (suggested for district collection)
Lead or support cafeteria environment improvement projects that can be replicated at multiple schools throughout the district	<input type="checkbox"/> Gather student input through project-based learning <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate with a principal and the school FNS manager on <i>Our Cafeteria Project</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Work with Food Educators to create programs and projects for a more supportive cafeteria environment <input type="checkbox"/> Work with student councils at various schools to facilitate programming to create a more welcoming cafeteria environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># student interviews to assess impressions of new cafeteria environment</li> <li>Survey to assess feedback and satisfaction levels from students and staff to understand the impact and effectiveness of the ambassador program on improving cafeteria experiences</li> </ul>
Develop resources, signage, or decorations to be used in school cafeterias	<input type="checkbox"/> Create seasonal serving-line decorations <input type="checkbox"/> Develop informational posters about cafeteria safety and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create # posters, # different signage for various schools, # fact sheets for guardians and teachers</li> </ul>
Support nationally recognized school nutrition events	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop materials and work with food service department for National School Lunch or School Breakfast Week <input type="checkbox"/> Partner with local vendors for Farm to School Month or similar events that position the cafeteria as a place of learning and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create # posters, # different signage for various schools, # fact sheets for guardians and teachers</li> <li>Tracking collaboration with local vendors for events</li> </ul>



# District Goal: Food Education

This supplementary activity is included so Specialists can support Food Educators who are partnering within the same district. Hands-on, experiential food education can get kids excited about growing, cooking, and tasting new foods, affecting these preferences for a lifetime. Schools hold enormous potential in shaping how kids experience food during their school years and for the rest of their lives. Specialists are encouraged to assist in hands-on learning activities that connect the cafeteria to the classroom. Due to the primary goal of this position being to impact menu change, food education is a supplementary activity and should compose no more than 20% of your workload.



## Strategies

Strategies	Example Activities & Projects	Examples of Metrics (suggested for district collection)
Develop educational materials for federally assisted grant programs such as Harvest of the Month (HOTM) and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop content for social media platforms (such as Youtube, Instagram, and TikTok) <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">34 Social Media Content Ideas</a> <input type="checkbox"/> Use storytelling to help create excitement about food experiences and encourage students' participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ___% increase content engagement through social media analytics (likes, share, comments, views)</li> <li>• Increase student engagement on [social media platform] by ___% within [timeframe]</li> </ul>
Collaborate with the Food Educator on specific connections to school meals	<input type="checkbox"/> Support Sprout Scouts or similar programming and connect food grown in garden-to-school cafeteria <input type="checkbox"/> Co-lead culinary-focused classes with the Food Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement # foods grown in the garden (sourced from produce distributor) into the cafeteria menu</li> <li>• Assess the perceived improvement in meal quality and variety through surveys and feedback sessions from students and staff, following the integration of produce from Sprout Scouts or similar programs</li> <li>• Increase number of students attending culinary-focused classes</li> </ul>
Teach classes of students to support the consumption of nourishing meals	<input type="checkbox"/> Give a nutrition lesson for items on school menu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of classes taught to students within [timeframe]</li> </ul>
Create resources to support hands-on learning (taught by teachers or Food Educators)	<input type="checkbox"/> Support Harvest of the Month enrichment requirement in the classroom <input type="checkbox"/> Develop FFVP resources or guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create # posters, # different signages for various schools, # fact sheets for guardians and teachers</li> </ul>
Support cafeteria composting and food waste management	<input type="checkbox"/> Lead a plate waste study <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">SB 1383 resources</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Menu changed based on results from waste study</li> </ul>



*Students at Esperanza Elementary School enjoy a selection of tasty meal options in their cafeteria.*

CORE COMPETENCY

# Stakeholder Management

## Description: Stakeholder Management

In the school nutrition community, stakeholders encompass a broad array of individuals who have a vested interest in cultivating student well-being. Examples of this important group of people include students, family and community members, teachers, school board and school administrators, and school nutrition staff. Specialists will develop knowledge on how to effectively engage, support, and manage stakeholders at various levels while advancing community-rooted school meal practices.

## Objective: Stakeholder Management

Specialists will learn how to strategically engage stakeholders in various aspects of school nutrition management. From receiving student menu feedback to participating in family and community engagement events, Specialists will create strategies to engage, maintain, and explore new and existing relationships with stakeholders. Through their 11-month term, Specialists will feel increased confidence in supporting community engagements that reflect local traditions and values, thereby building long-lasting and sustainable relationships between the community stakeholders and the school nutrition department.

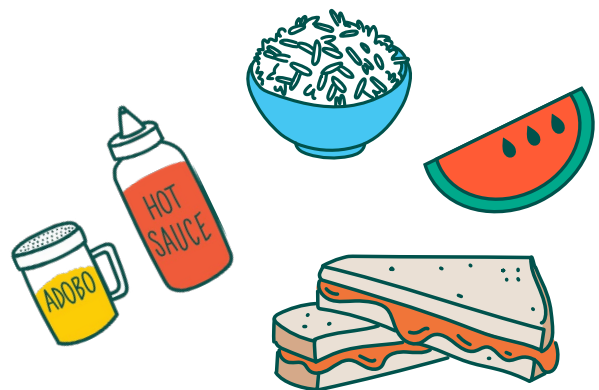
## Learning Outcomes: Stakeholder Management

At the conclusion of this module, the Specialist will:

- **Understand and summarize** the role and status of each stakeholder.
- **Gain** skills to engage with a diverse array of stakeholders to enhance student well-being initiatives.
- **Facilitate and support** community events that reflect the values and experiences of students and families.
- **Actively participate** in multiple stakeholder communities, as applicable.

# District Goal: Family & Community Engagement in School Nutrition

The goal of family and community engagement in school nutrition aims to foster meaningful interactions and partnerships between the school district and its families and community members. This goal is centered on understanding and addressing the collective needs, preferences, and aspirations related to providing nourishing and community-rooted meals that reflect local traditions and histories. This goal highlights the importance of collaborative communication and actions to enhance the school meal experience for students, their families, and the community.





## Strategies

Strategies	Example Activities & Projects	Examples of Metrics (suggested for district collection)
Coordinate a parent/ community advisory on school meals in your district	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete a baseline assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Launch an education and awareness campaign <input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate or support a school meals community advisory group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• __% increase in community engagement as a result of a baseline assessment on school meals</li> <li>• Track growth in # of parents and community members reached and actively participating due to the education and awareness campaign</li> </ul>
Coordinate or participate in events that engage families and community members  *Use <a href="#">Family Engagement: Planning Resource</a> as a starting point	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide an interactive booth at a Community/Family Night <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate a fruit or vegetable game wheel or food demonstration <input type="checkbox"/> Table at Back to School Night throughout the district <input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate in-person and virtual cooking nights that include participation from both students and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• __% increase in community and families engaged through the events</li> <li>• Calculate # of attendees during each event</li> <li>• # of informational materials distributed during the event to families and the community</li> </ul>
Build or contribute to community partnerships that support school meal initiatives	<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in a coalition with local partners <input type="checkbox"/> Provide feedback from district work to external partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the quality and effectiveness of partnerships through feedback surveys with local partners</li> <li>• Evaluate changes in external partner strategies or operations as a result of feedback provided by Specialists</li> </ul>

Family & Community Engagement in School Nutrition Strategies continues next page

## Strategies

Strategies	Example Activities & Projects	Examples of Metrics (suggested for district collection)
Align district school nutrition goals and community vision for nourishing school meals	<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate conversations (such as facilitating a focus group) <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Focus Group Guide for FoodCorps Members</a> <input type="checkbox"/> Gather data through a survey <input type="checkbox"/> Asset mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 focus group within [timeline] to discuss school meals</li> <li>• Increased #of data points gathered through surveys to measure the alignment between school nutrition and community vision</li> <li>• # of community assets identified and described (institutions, individuals, associations, etc.)</li> </ul>
Support communication between FNS and the school community  <b>NOTE:</b> This is a supportive goal. Specialists can engage in this goal, but it cannot be the main goal during their 11 month term.	<input type="checkbox"/> Draft a monthly/quarterly newsletter with a Parent/Community Corner  <input type="checkbox"/> This could include a point of contact (email, Google Form, etc.) to give suggestions or feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # newsletters within [timeframe], reflecting the languages spoken in the community</li> </ul>

*A variety of fresh fruit and vegetables offered to students in the lunch line.*



CORE COMPETENCY

# Supporting Student-Centered Meal Practices

## Description: Supporting Student-Centered Meal Practices

This competency encourages Specialists to reflect on their own backgrounds and how they can contribute to school meal programs that reflect the traditions and preferences of the communities they serve. It also explores how school nutrition meal programs can better reflect the traditions, preferences, and lived experiences of students and families. Providing school meals that are familiar and meaningful to students can strengthen their connection to food and school.

## Objective: Supporting Student-Centered Meal Practices

Specialists will use the SHIFTING framework to guide their work with school districts to expand access to meals that reflect local traditions and family food preferences. SHIFTING is a process that FoodCorps created to help guide us in our work, relationships, and decision-making. This tool was specifically adapted for school nutrition professionals to apply to programming and the administration of federally funded programs. School nutrition specialists will collaborate with school districts on increasing community-rooted meals, local foods, and scratch cooking by centering student voice and choice. As schools build practices that reflect communities, meal programs can offer more welcoming and familiar food experiences for students.

## Learning Outcomes: Supporting Student-Centered Meal Practices

At the conclusion of this module, the Specialist will:

- **Explore** the ways school meals can better reflect student and family preferences and traditions.
- **Participate** in community-informed projects that center student voice and choice.
- **Complete** a Capstone project (with SHIFTING in mind) during the program year, in consultation with their state and School Nutrition Leadership teams.
- **Support** systems that work to increase student-level feedback and engagement

# District Goal: Student Feedback and Engagement

Student feedback and engagement is fundamental in school meals, as it centers the experiences and amplifies the voices of those most impacted by the school food system. Specialists participate in activities that close the feedback loop between students and the cafeteria. The greatest impact can be seen when the Food Educator and School Nutrition Specialist collaborate on projects that reinforce education in the classroom with change in the cafeteria. Through this work, Specialists shape positive school food environments that reflect student needs and experiences.





## Strategies

Strategies	Example Activities & Projects	Examples of Metrics (suggested for district collection)
Support a student taste test, survey, or demonstration that supports school menu change	<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct taste test at school level—can be in collaboration with Food Educator  <input type="checkbox"/> Garden-to-Cafeteria Program: Specialists can support students and Food Educators on integrating garden produce into school meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Likert scale or rating system to measure __% increase of student satisfaction</li> <li>• # of menu items added based on taste test results</li> <li>• Consumption data: Analyze sales or consumption data to identify changes in the consumption patterns of different menu items before and after the menu changes</li> </ul>
Coordinate or facilitate a student-led advisory in school meals	<input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate with students to conduct a comprehensive landscape assessment and create a strategy (utilizing components from <i>Our Cafeteria Project</i> or similar project-based learning resources)  <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Our Cafeteria Project</a>  <input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate an ambassador program with students to promote the school meals program  <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">NOW Project</a> , San Francisco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• __% increase in student satisfaction ratings for specific menu items</li> <li>• __% increase in student participation in the school meals program (NSLP, SBP, etc.)</li> <li>• Survey to assess feedback and satisfaction levels from students and staff to understand the impact and effectiveness of the ambassador program on improving school meals</li> </ul>
Support self-sustaining efforts through menu data collection, data analysis, and/or data implementation	<input type="checkbox"/> Support or develop menu surveys to understand student experience with the menu and overall meal service  <input type="checkbox"/> Support data analysis of menu surveys (themes, ratings, levels of satisfaction)  <input type="checkbox"/> Help implement a data-driven menu design process where findings from the collected data are used to revise and improve future menu plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # menu surveys distributed and # returned, reflecting student engagement with the menu and meal service in # schools across the district</li> <li>• Themes identified from # menu surveys (such as satisfaction, dissatisfaction, food quality, etc.)</li> <li>• Percentage of menu items revised or improved based on data-driven feedback from student menu surveys</li> </ul>

*Julia Balsam watches a student place a vote during a cafeteria taste test.*



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