

## Wisconsin School Meals Rock Spotlight

Schools across the state are implementing programs and strategies to make students' dining experiences more enjoyable. Talk with your school nutrition director to learn about local initiatives. Is your school looking for inspiration? Check out these stories!



### Meal Appeal

Schools can increase meal appeal as a way to nudge students to make more healthful food choices.

Pecatonica Elementary School made changes like developing themed menus, creatively naming menu items, using colorful bowls and containers, and starting Try-day Fridays. These actions make fruits and vegetables more appealing to students and get them excited about choosing these food items.

### Student Involvement

Plymouth School District strives to include agricultural and food science studies while providing delicious meals to their students. To do this, students play an active role in their meal program. Taste tests are offered multiple times during the year and students vote on what new foods to include on the lunch menu. Additionally, high school students in culinary arts classes compete to develop recipes that are then placed on the lunch menu.

## Farm to School

The School District of Holmen is one of the hundreds of Wisconsin schools that connect with local farms so fresh, locally grown foods can be served at school. Holmen's Harvest of the Month program showcases a local fruit or vegetable over the course of a month. The district provides nutrition education, taste tests, and a variety of recipes for students to enjoy. Holmen does not only connect students to farmers, Holmen's students are farmers. Students are active participants in the school garden and apple orchard, while some students raise poultry, pork, and beef for the district's nutrition department.

### Creative Service

Schools are finding new ways to serve lunch to their students to make their dining experience more enjoyable. In some Madison elementary schools, students are now enjoying lunch in the classroom. This allows students to eat in a quieter environment where they feel less rushed. The Madison Metropolitan School District have also taken their lunches mobile. Madison high schools started using a mobile food truck featuring local ingredients to offer an additional lunch option to students. Students are able to purchase a complete meal while enjoying a break from the classroom atmosphere. Students have been very excited about this new meal service and some of the new menu items have worked their way into the regular cafeteria menu.



## References

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## Let's Do Lunch!

Check out your school's meal programs and see for yourself that **Wisconsin School Meals ROCK!**



# Wisconsin School Meals Rock!



## Positive Impact of the National School Lunch Program

All children in Wisconsin deserve the chance to fuel their bodies with nutritious food. The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) ensures school children have access to a well-balanced meal every school day. The NSLP allows Wisconsin schools to serve around 500,000 lunches to students daily (USDA 2019)!

The lunches served as part of the NSLP are full of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and low-fat dairy.

These balanced meals provide one-third of the nutrition needs of most children for the day. The nutrient-packed lunches provide fiber and essential vitamins and minerals while remaining lower in sugar, fat, and sodium than most lunches packed at home (Vernarelli 2017). This is especially

important as research shows students with healthier eating patterns have improved academic performance (USDA 2016).

## Making the Case for School Lunch

School meals can be a time saver for busy families. Think about how much time you or your family spend packing lunch each day and consider that time over the course of a school year (roughly 180 days).

Participating in the school lunch program could save you 30-45 hours each year.

10 min/day x 180 days = 1,800 minutes/year

15 min/day x 180 days = 2,700 minutes/year

Having your children eat school lunch may make sense for you financially. While each school sets their own lunch prices and food costs vary across the state, consider the following average costs:

- Elementary school lunch = \$2.69\*
- Fast food kid's meal = \$4.46\*\*
- Packed lunch = \$2.83^

\*Based on the 2018-2019 Wisconsin Paid Lunch Price Data report.

\*\*Based on menu costs posted at leading chain restaurants.

^Calculated based on grocery store sale prices for a meal consisting of a ham and cheese sandwich, fruit cup, baby carrots with ranch dressing, yogurt drink, and 1 ounce of chips.

## Parents Can Get Involved

See what school lunches look like:

- Have lunch with your child. Most schools will happily accommodate parental visits at lunchtime.
- Review the school menu.
- Discuss school lunch choices with your children.

Offer nutritious foods at home:

- Include fruits and vegetables at meals and snacks.
- Prepare whole grain-rich foods.
- Be a role model for your child by eating meals together.

Contact your district to find out how you can help:

- Join your school's wellness policy committee and advocate for strategies that boost nutrition at school (e.g., minimum minutes for meals, recess before lunch, and farm to school programs).
- Volunteer with current nutrition-related initiatives (e.g., school garden).
- Organize a taste test to allow your school to expand menu options.

## What Makes a School Meal?

Schools participating in the NSLP must offer students minimum quantities of all components found on MyPlate: protein, grains, milk, fruit, and vegetables. While many students choose to turn down some food, they are always offered complete meals that provide an average of 550-650 calories (K-5), 600-700 calories (6-8), and 750-850 calories (9-12).

<b>Protein</b> at least: 1 oz eq (K-8) 2 oz eq (9-12)	<b>Grains</b> at least: 1 oz eq (K-8) 2 oz eq (9-12)	<b>Milk</b> 1 cup (K-12)
<b>Fruit</b> at least: 1/2 cup (K-8) 1 cup (9-12)	<b>Vegetables</b> at least: 3/4 cup (K-8) 1 cup (9-12)	

## What is an ounce equivalent (oz eq)?

### Protein

- 1 oz lean meat or poultry
- 1 oz cheese
- 2 Tbsp nut or seed butter
- 1/2 c yogurt

### Grains

- 1 slice of bread
- 1 c cereal (flakes)
- 1/2 c cooked pasta



Join the conversation at #WISchoolMealsRock