

Marketing for SCHOOL NUTRITION PROFESSIONALS



Smarter Lunchrooms Marketing Strategies for School Nutrition Professionals & School Staff. Brand your expanded breakfast program with the **3 principles of behavioral economics**. Increase **awareness**, get administrative and teacher **support**, boost student participation.

Visibility: Get noticed!

Signage: colorful, age-appropriate, short and clear messages (0-6 words); include mascot when possible

- B.E.N. Center & Team Nutrition designs: print in school print shop or with AlphaGraphics (see poster ideas on last page)
- Student-generated designs: ask art, photography, or computer teachers to sponsor in-class contests for students to create posters promoting breakfast. Celebrate winners.
- Post on highly trafficked areas and where students gather and wait: Near school entrances, lunch line, unused bulletin boards, stairways, even hanging from ceilings!
- Be aware of lines of sight, especially in elementary schools where students are short! Crouch down to their level to make sure you can see signs clearly.

School media: feature breakfast, encourage signups, raise interest with interactive quizzes/polls

- Traditional: school website, newspaper, parent newsletter, closed-circuit TV
- Share at parent meetings (PTA, Boosters, Back to School, Conferences)
- Get on social media (create Facebook page, Twitter account, Pinterest or Instagram)
- Hugely popular with students' age group, very tech-savvy
- Students can create and manage accounts/sites, with staff supervision
- Encourage students to "Like" and "follow" site
- Incentives: send out menus, especially featuring kids' favorite foods
- Let students vote for their favorite foods, alert them when upcoming

Flyers:

- Post, mail, send home with students, or email to stakeholders
- By breakfast concept (Bus, Delivered to the Classroom, Vending, Brab 'N' Go/Breakfast Carts, Second Chance)
- Encourage families to sign up for free and reduced meals, digital/online accounts, etc.

Presence in the lunchroom or alternative breakfast sites

- Taste test and poll/contest
- Encourage students to try breakfast foods, vote on favorites
- Increases awareness, decreases uncertainty or wariness
- Incentivize: prize drawing from among participants, or for class/grade with greatest percent participation
- Kids love to be asked their opinions: foods, delivery locations/methods, etc.
- Use responses to craft appealing, popular menus and targeted marketing
- Post in alternate serving locations and gauge which has best traffic flow and popularity

Involve students: see [resources for starting a SNAC](#) (Student Nutrition Action Committee)

Convenience: Fast & easy

Location: alternate settings have lots of traffic flow but no bottlenecks, easy hand-offs and payment

- Ex.: gym, classrooms, carts at entrances/bus drop-off/hallway intersection, front of bus
- Consider appeal (smells, sounds, temperature/weather if near a door)
- Great opportunity to use student feedback – polls or students

Payment: method must be quick and easy for staff and students

- Practice handoff & payment (**staff training**) so process is smooth and swift
- Who? One staff member or two? Where to stand, what to say, who does what?
- Which **payment method**? POS touchscreen/card swipe/checklist/other?
- Students can help role play; see student resources

Clean up: very important it's easy for custodians/drivers/teachers

- Offer neat foods and emphasize when presenting idea to drivers/teachers
- Include napkins/wipes in bagged meals or classrooms
- Provide enough trash cans, liquid collection buckets, etc.
- **Provide guidelines** for managing the process, minimize resistance and negative episodes

Appeal (taste expectations): Look good, taste good

Food presentation: items must be attractive, neat, uniform; look and smell good

- Neat packaging and placement in bags/vending
- Neat and plain is good; incorporating branding (printing on bags/items, mascot sticker holding bag closed, positive breakfast messaging – see signage examples on last page), even better – **even if possible only at kickoff or occasionally**
- Not squished – practice (**staff training**) proper arrangement of items in bag, arrangement of items/bags in boxes for delivery to carts/classrooms/buses
- Delivery: serving staff (include bus driver/teacher) is smiling and friendly, talks up the food

Service and dining spaces are clean, welcoming, smell good

Create catchy names for foods

- Fun, easy [workshop](#) for staff or students to create catchy names
- See [sample catchy names](#) for early childhood, elementary, middle school and high school
- Fun idea: incorporate mascot/school motto
- Highlight popular items: “Waffles Wednesday,” “Mascot Muffin” on Spirit Days
- Post on cards/posters on service areas (lunchroom, cards, front of bus)
- Pictures are a nice bonus
- Use color on text/pics (see recommendations for catchy, effective signage)
- Make sure they are visible and attract attention – get on kids’ eye level

Wet their appetites

- Signage and menus show attractive photos of breakfast items
- Place sample meal at service stations so students can see what is available, get hungry
- Post menus, pictures the day/week before so students plan ahead to eat breakfast

Portions: Just right (& nutritious!)

Nutritional information: pre-bagged/packaged items are right portion size – brag about it!

- Signage: “this complete breakfast”
- Tell families: “nutritious, calorie count, contains whole grains, low-fat milk, fruits...”
- Compare to competitive foods which exceed nutritional standards: fast food, supermarket convenience foods, energy drinks, soda/chips have few nutrients and multiple portions

Pricing: The price is right

Compare prices to competitive foods (signage, school newspaper and newsletter articles)

Sell as complete reimbursable meal to get USDA reimbursement

- A la carte options? Discuss with school nutrition professional and administration – might decrease revenue
- Single price = faster checkout time (big bonus!) – POS button, card swipe, checklist, etc.

Maximize enrollment at start of school year

- In free and reduced meals
 - Offer tactful help to families
 - Table to help sign-ups at lunchroom, during Back-to-School night, etc.
 - Recruit PTA and Boosters to contact families, assist signups
- In online payment/selection:

- Families love ability to see their kids' purchases – emphasize it!
- **Don't assume students communicate to families** (some intentionally DON'T inform their families...) – up to school to reach out
- **Do everything possible to make it indistinguishable which students are free and reduced meals vs. not!**
- Consider offering [universal free breakfast](#)

Suggestive selling: Shiny happy people selling food

Testimonials & face time: Recruit positive role models to sell the program, get attention, make it cool

- Popular school staff and administration, student athletes and leaders, mascot, local celebrities/chefs/leaders
- Ask PTA/PTO, student government, Boosters, etc., for help
- To participate as guest stars
- To ask people they know (local celebs, etc.)
- Older kids (high school) are always popular role models for younger grades
- Students may earn service hours for participating
- Organize a Student Nutrition Action Committee
- Distribute breakfasts on special days (start of program, Mondays, special day each month, etc.), perhaps manning the cart/window/station or riding on a bus
- Ham it up: chef's hat, apron, etc.
- Take pictures to use on social media and marketing materials
- **Encourage kids to nominate and vote on** who will be the next celebrity (perhaps kids who get the breakfast get to vote?)
- Encourage families to sign up for free and reduced meals, online payment/ordering, etc.
- Guest speaker at PTA/Booster meetings, Back to School night, etc.

Sample poster/signage ideas

TEXT/CONCEPT	GRAPHICS	GRADE LEVEL(S)
Breakfast on the Bus: Breakfast – get on board!	happy kids eating on the bus	elementary/middle
Breakfast on the Bus: Breakfast – get your day rolling!	wheels/muffins/round waffles... maybe a bus with breakfast food wheels	any
Without breakfast, you're toast!	toast, maybe with mascot shape toasted onto bread	any
Show your school spirit with a Bobcat* Breakfast!	*or other mascot; graphic of mascot eating breakfast, school colors	any
Mascot Monday, Waffles Wednesday, favorite food on Spirit Day... any theme food day	any coordinating graphic	any
Floor decals leading to the cart/pickup zone	mascot paw theme, or feet/shoes, or shaped like foods (waffle, muffin, egg, milk, fruit...)	elementary/middle
Breakfast on the Bus: The New Drive-Thru	Show how fast and easy: on bus, cart, handheld food... match the message	middle/high
Breakfast: Fuel/Fuel Your Mind	car/fuel, plant/sun, brain/breakfast	middle/high
Get off on the right foot or Start Strong	runner's feet at the starting block; incorporate breakfast logo somehow (on sneaker, or depict shoe, track, sun, etc. made of breakfast foods?)	any
Start Smart	head outline with a breakfast for the the brain	any
Ask Me About School Breakfast... OR signing up for free and reduced meals, enrolling in on-line payment/etc.	school logo, breakfast graphic, question mark, etc.	PTA, Boosters, school staff, etc., to inform and help families
Graph comparing nutritional information (calories, sugar, fat, vitamins, healthy ingredients) of school breakfast vs. less healthy options (fast food meal, energy drink, coffee drinks, convenience foods, etc.)		high
Student-generated signs with pictures of school celebrities (popular teacher, administrator, student leader or athlete) serving or eating school breakfast a la the READ posters; bonus idea: let kids vote on their favorite "celebrities" to star in the posters to increase their interest in the final product		any; upper grades can make extra to distribute in lower schools
Student-generated signs with drawings of school breakfast themes, slogans – recruit teachers (art, photography, computer, health/wellness, nutrition/home economics) to run as an assignment or contest; bonus idea: choose best, let kids vote on top winners – it will get kids to read them! J		any; upper grades can make extra to distribute in lower schools
Reminders to keep it clean clean up		any
Free signage for Smarter Lunchrooms Makeovers: smarterlunchrooms.org/resource/alphagraphics-products		