



## SCHOOLS AS NUTRITION HUBS

The Business Savvy Strategy to Reduce Childhood Hunger

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# SCHOOLS AS NUTRITION HUB

THE BUSINESS SAVVY STRATEGY TO REDUCE CHILDHOOD HUNGER

*"We have the food. We have hungry students. We just have to plan strategically to figure out the best ways to get it to them."*

-Michele Carroll, Minnesota

First and foremost, school nutrition professionals feed children. Many also run multi-million dollar food service operations. Across the country, many school nutrition programs are successfully doing both, while navigating tight budgets and rigorous regulations. Their key to combating child hunger and operating a financially solvent business is to become a Nutrition Hub.

Schools operating as Nutrition Hubs help children access the nutrition they need throughout the year by operating all available federal child nutrition programs—school breakfast, lunch, supper, and summer meals. This strategy also provides school food service departments with a financial management solution: increasing revenue, optimizing staff time, and maximizing operational efficiencies.

## SCHOOL NUTRITION HUBS PROVIDE VITAL INVESTMENTS IN KIDS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES INCLUDING:

- **Improved access:** Kids have access to wraparound nutrition including a healthy breakfast, lunch, and dinner as well as meals in the summertime when school is out.

- **Improved education:** Schools effectively feeding children and preventing hunger benefit from better attendance, reduced tardiness, fewer visits to the nurse's office, and overall better academic performance. Academic success improves the success for the community as a whole.



*"The administration now thinks of us as one of the tools in their tool box. They know the kids need more nutrition—and we can provide that."*

- Lora Gilbert, Florida

- **Improved school community:** Nutrition Hubs create new jobs and improve wages and hours for existing food service employees. Nutrition Hubs also bring school and community stakeholders together, from principals and school athletic directors to parks and recreation departments and community-based organizations, to provide children the meals they need.
- **Improved operational efficiency:** Schools that operate as Nutrition Hubs streamline menu planning and procurement across programs to maximize buying power, improve inventory management, and lessen administrative burdens.
- **Improved financial success:** Increased participation in a variety of programs increases federal reimbursements providing school nutrition programs with added revenue to innovate service models and reinvest in their programs and people through additional training and updated equipment.



"Speaking from a business sense, we were able to provide jobs for the community—we've added 22 new jobs! This is good for the community. Kids are eating and doing well and we're adding revenue for the district."

- Robert Lewis, California



"It's like a pebble in the pond. There is always so much more involved than you think. Everything grows exponentially, you have to allow yourself the flexibility to switch things around and utilize all your resources."

- Donna Martin, Georgia

### STEPS FOR SUCCESS:

- **Identify champions.** Nutrition Hubs require champions: champions of programs, champions of the vision, and champions for kids. Start small by identifying a few key stakeholders that can help get new programs off the ground. Share stories of success and watch them grow.
- **Maintain flexibility.** Look for customized solutions to meet the needs of each school, site, or stakeholder. Implementing new programs requires trust, support, and reflective, authentic partnerships. Stakeholders need to feel heard and know they have the full support of the food service program. If that means purchasing garbage cans with lids to prevent would-be pests or wet wipes to clean up messes, find money in the budget to meet these needs. These efforts will pay off in the long run.
- **Use data and engage staff.** Strategic planning and management based on key performance indicators drives smart decision-making and planning. Monitoring participation, staffing, and other key operational indicators at the school level can support program improvements, and help identify operational concerns in real time. Involving the entire department will lead to program success.
- **Find synergies.** Serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner year round creates overlap within programs that can increase kitchen efficiencies, improve inventory management, and enhance district purchasing power. Serving more meals over more hours also helps maximize staff potential.

### SCHOOL DISTRICT SNAP SHOTS:

- Orange County Public Schools (FL) implemented centralized decision-making at the district-level requiring school participation in all eligible nutrition programs. This administrative change helped increase breakfast participation by 14 percent and afterschool meals by 66 percent in the 2015-2016 school year.
- Implementing Breakfast in the Classroom in El Monte City (CA) Public School District helped improve attendance by 300 students per day—allowing the district to prevent the loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars of state funding throughout the school year.
- Montgomery County Public Schools (MD) used strategic planning to re-think summer feeding services. By offering hot meals in the school cafeteria, to replace cold sack lunches, they increased site participation from 100 students to 800 per day, in just two summers.
- A bold business plan helped create the vision for the revamp of Nutrition Services for Minneapolis Public Schools (MN) in 2012. Now, four years later they have made that vision a day-to-day reality with higher quality meals, salad bars in nearly every school, and a new state of the art central kitchen—all with a positive fund balance.

"The beauty of what we do is we share ideas. Being successful is defined by feeding children."

- Helen Phillips, Virginia



#### ABOUT NO KID HUNGRY

No child should go hungry in America, but 1 in 5 kids will face hunger this year. Using proven, practical solutions, No Kid Hungry is ending childhood hunger today by ensuring that kids start the day with a nutritious breakfast and families learn the skills they need to shop and cook on a budget. When we all work together, we can make sure kids get the healthy food they need. No Kid Hungry is a campaign of national anti-hunger organization Share Our Strength. [Join us at NoKidHungry.org](https://www.NoKidHungry.org).



#### ABOUT THE SCHOOL NUTRITION FOUNDATION

As the philanthropic sister organization of the School Nutrition Association, the School Nutrition Foundation is dedicated to securing financial resources for education, professional development, scholarships and research in school nutrition. The School Nutrition Foundation focuses on providing the resources that educate and empower SNA members to provide high-quality, low-cost meals to students across the nation to foster an environment where children achieve overall wellness and lifelong success.



#### ABOUT C&S WHOLESALE GROCERS

Part of the nearly 100 year legacy of C&S is the belief that companies can and should engage in their communities to create social good. Toward that end, the company's spirit of caring is demonstrated through grants, food donations and volunteerism where its employees live and work. Investing in and nourishing America's kids—with an emphasis on those who are experiencing or who are at-risk of hunger—is at the forefront of C&S' corporate citizenship and culture of giving back. The company proudly supports Share Our Strength's national Summer Meals Summit, and the widely used Hunger In Our Schools Report. In addition, C&S has invested in the Conference of Leaders, impact videos, targeted No Kid Hungry state and local projects and in the development of the online Best Practices Center.