

## **Chefs Take Action**

### **5 simple steps to success for Chefs**

Chefs can have a tremendous impact on the health and well-being of children by adopting a school and working with teachers, parents, school nutrition professionals and administrators to help educate kids about food and nutrition. By creating healthy dishes that taste good, chefs have a unique ability to deliver these messages in a fun and appealing way to the larger audience, particularly children.

#### **1. Chefs Move to Schools**

"We are going to need everyone's time and talent to solve the childhood obesity epidemic and our Nation's chefs have tremendous power as leaders on this issue because of their deep knowledge of food and nutrition and their standing in the community. I want to thank them for joining the Let's Move! Campaign" - First Lady Michelle Obama

Chefs across the country are answering Mrs. Obama's call to get involved with their local schools as part of the Chefs Move to Schools initiative, run through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The First Lady is calling on chefs to get involved by adopting a school and working with teachers, parents, school nutritionists and administrators to help educate kids about food and nutrition.

Register to participate in the "Chefs Move to Schools" Program online at <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/schoolmeals/Chef/ChefsForm.php>

#### **2. The HealthierUS School Challenge**

More than 31 million children participate in the National School Lunch Program. More than 11 million participate in the National School Breakfast Program. And many children are consuming up to half of their daily calories at school. As families work to ensure that kids eat right and have active play at home, we also need to ensure our kids have access to healthy meals in their schools.

The Healthier US School Challenge (HUSSC) is a cornerstone of the Let's Move! campaign. The Challenge is a voluntary certification that recognizes schools participating in the National

School Lunch Program that have created healthier school environments. Award winning schools provide nutrition education, nutritious food and beverage choices, physical education and opportunities for physical activity for their students. These schools have gone above and beyond minimum school meal program requirements and have met specific criteria established for Bronze, Silver, or Gold, or Gold of Distinction awards.

Over the next school year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, working with partners in schools and the private sector, will double the number of schools that meet the Healthier US Schools Challenge and add 1,000 schools per year for two years after that.

In order to do this, we need everyone working together to make our schools healthier. The expertise that chefs can bring to a school setting will be invaluable as schools work to improve the nutritional content of school meals. Chefs who have adopted a school in their local community to help them become a Healthier US School can visit the Healthier US School Challenge website (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/HealthierUS/index.html>) for more information.

### **3. Child Nutrition Programs**

More than 31 million children participate in the National School Lunch Program. More than 11 million participate in the National School Breakfast Program. And many children are consuming up to half of their daily calories at school.

Schools participating in the National School Lunch and National School Breakfast programs receive a reimbursement for each meal served. Reimbursement rates are based on the number of free and reduced priced lunches served in the school. The current basic cash reimbursement rates are \$2.65 for free lunches, \$2.28 for reduced priced lunches and \$0.25 for paid lunches. On average, school districts spend roughly half of this reimbursement on non-food costs like labor and equipment. For the latest reimbursement rates visit FNS website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/notices/naps/NAPs.htm>.

The **National School Lunch Program** provides nutritionally balanced lunches to children each school day in 101,650 public and nonprofit private schools and residential childcare facilities. The program reaches more than half of all children enrolled in America's schools.

The program reimburses schools for lunches and snacks served to children in after-school educational and enrichment programs. Children from low-income families (at or below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, or \$28,665 for a family of four in 2009-2010) are eligible for free meals. Those with higher incomes may be eligible for reduced price meals.

Lunches must meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and provide at least minimum calorie levels, and one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances of protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron and calcium.

The Food and Nutrition Service, part of USDA, administers the program at the federal level, while state education agencies operate the program through agreements with local school food

authorities. More detailed information on the National School Lunch Program and its history at <http://www.fns.usda.gov>.

The **School Breakfast Program (SBP)** provides nutritious breakfasts to almost 11 million children in over 87,000 public and non-profit private schools and residential child care institutions each school day. About 87% of the schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) also participate in the SBP. The SBP provides school children of all economic backgrounds with a well-balanced, healthy meal at the beginning of the school day. The School Breakfast Program website has information on the program, menu planning, and recent success stories.

The **Summer Food Service Program** is the single largest Federal resource available for local sponsors who want to combine a feeding program with a summer activity program. Summer meals help more than 2.1 million children eat healthy and stay active during the summer months. Children participating in summer programs are served the nutritious meals and snacks they need to maintain a healthful diet when school is out. The SFSP is reaching only a fraction of the children who rely on free or reduced-price meals during the school year. With the help of more community and faith-based organizations, the program can reach more needy children.

The School Food Service Program website has information on sponsoring a site, managing the program, and reaching out to kids in need.

#### **4. Getting Started**

As the new Sous-Chef in the school environment, it's important to learn the rules in the new kitchen. Here are some important questions to ask once you have been paired with a school:

- Who runs the cafeteria?
- Does the school run its own food service or do they use a food service provider?
- What goals does the school have for improved health and wellness?
- Is it simply to add a salad bar and/or more fresh fruits and vegetables or do they need a major overhaul of menus?
- Would they like to procure more locally and sustainably grown foods?
- Who cooks the food?
- What kind of staffing is in place in the kitchen?
- What equipment is available?
- Does the staff know how to use the equipment?

- What kind of relationship do the cooks have with the school?
- Is there adequate storage for fresh ingredients?
- Can additional equipment be donated or acquired through grants or other funds?

## **5. Recipes for Success**

The following is a list of ways a chef can improve the health of students and add to the overall culture of a school.

- **Meet-the Farmer/Meet-the-Chef:** Invite local farmers and chefs to school to participate in seasonal tastings and celebrate where, when, and how our food grows.
- **Open Houses:** Provide healthy snacks at every school function as opposed to sugary desserts or drinks to show families how delicious and easy eating fresh foods can be. Educate families on how increased nutrition and better eating habits can result in improvements in classroom performance.
- **Hands-On Cooking Classes:** Teach students to cook and taste fresh, healthy foods that are locally and sustainably grown. Get their input on what kinds of foods they'd like to eat in the cafeteria. Create healthy alternatives and cook those foods together. Pilot new menu items before rolling them out in the cafeteria.
- **Plant a garden:** Show kids where their food comes from by planting a garden. Teachers can incorporate the garden into lesson plans. Hold a school-wide harvest party and prepare recipes using fruits and vegetables from the school garden.
- **School Cookbook:** Invite students, school staff members, and families to submit their favorite healthy recipes and create a school-wide cookbook of healthy recipes.
- **Organize A Family Food and Fun Night:** Provide samples for parents and students to taste and rate new food items that are being considered for the school lunch or breakfast programs.
- **Student Council:** Work with a student organization to identify opportunities for change to the existing school food program. Brainstorm alternative menus, hold tastings, to get students involved.
- **Cooking Club:** lead an afterschool cooking program for interested students. Students can learn more about their own food culture or investigate other cultures around the globe.
- **Concessions Stand:** Encourage a healthy lifestyle by partnering athletics with healthy snacks. Give your concession stand an upgrade: serve fresh fruit, all-natural popcorn, fat-free milk and 100% fruit juice.