

ACTION
FOR HEALTHY KIDS

Kellanova
Away From Home



Family Meal Toolkit

A ROADMAP FOR PLANNING AND EXECUTING
SUCCESSFUL FAMILY MEAL EVENTS



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About This Toolkit

Action for Healthy Kids and Kellanova have partnered to create a toolkit designed to increase school meal participation while ensuring students receive the healthy and nutritious meals they need to thrive. Family Meal Events offer a unique opportunity to engage both students and families, showcasing the high quality and taste of school meals, and providing an interactive experience that highlights the importance of nutrition. These events serve as a platform to integrate hands-on nutrition education, offering families and students the chance to actively participate in activities that promote healthy eating habits and provide a deeper understanding of school meal programs.

This toolkit is crafted to be straightforward, practical, and easy to navigate, providing schools with a clear roadmap to successfully plan, execute, and follow up on their Family Meal Event. With resources such as **detailed checklists, activity ideas, taste test suggestions, and a variety of planning templates**, this toolkit ensures that schools are equipped with everything needed for a smooth and impactful event. This toolkit offers the support and guidance needed to create a multi-faceted event that accomplishes a variety of goals, including increasing meal participation, fostering nutrition education, engaging families in hands-on experiences, celebrating school meals, and recognizing the efforts of local school nutrition teams, all while strengthening community connections and promoting healthier eating habits.

Throughout this toolkit, you'll find integrated examples, tips, and callouts inspired by real-world success stories. Carrollton Exempted Village School District's "Taste of Carrollton" event, for example, brought together over 400 attendees and helped strengthen community engagement and increase meal participation. A full case study at the end of this toolkit highlights how these strategies come together in practice and offers additional insights for planning your own event. These insights are also woven throughout to provide practical ideas and proven strategies that schools can adapt to fit their unique needs.



Families can't appreciate what they don't see. A Family Meal Night puts your program on full display—and that can make all the difference.

CHECKLIST

Family Meal Event

1 Set the Foundation

Establish a planning team and define the goals for your event.

Identify an event planning team and delegate roles

Roles to consider delegating: event logistics (including planning and procurement), marketing and promotion of the event (including photography), communications oversight, relationship building and stakeholder recruitment, day-of-event execution and oversight, staff training prior to the event

Set clear objectives for the event and align them with your school nutrition program's mission

Determine desired event outcomes. (e.g. increased meal program participation, conduct nutrition education, introduce culturally diverse foods, increase family/student engagement)

Secure buy-in from nutrition staff, teachers, and school leaders

2 Select Event Date, Time, Theme, and Location

Choose the logistics and theme of the event.

Choose an event date and time that maximizes family participation

Decide on the location

Brainstorm and vote on a theme involving students

Align event theme with your school's nutritional focus

3 Set a Budget and Identify Funding Sources

Create a budget that includes all event expenses.

Determine a realistic budget based on expected attendees, supplies, and activities

Request funding or fundraising opportunities from the school board, PTA, or community partners

Suggest applying for local grants or ask for donations

Consider joining an existing event for shared costs and resources

Seek out a local company to sponsor the event

4 Develop the Menu

Create a menu that reflects the event's theme and goals.

Decide the format of the meal (e.g., family-style, taste test, lunch line)

Feature seasonal produce or culturally relevant dishes

Include scratch-cooked recipes or local ingredients

Select a menu that supports nutrition education

5 Order Supplies and Decorations

Ensure all items needed for the event are planned and ordered in advance.

Order food supplies based on the menu and number of attendees

Arrange for serving and cleanup supplies

Collaborate with student clubs or teachers to create event decorations

Order or create event-related signage and promotional materials

6 Plan Event Activities

Incorporate activities that engage families and meet your event goals.

Organize interactive nutrition education activities

Set up a community resource table

Plan a taste test of new menu items or seasonal foods with educational components

Coordinate with local partners for interactive activities

Schedule time for a school nutrition program overview, success stories, or student testimonials

7 Market the Event

Ensure families and the community are informed and excited about the event.

Post event details on school and district websites, newsletters, and social media

Create an RSVP link for online registration or use physical RSVP options

Promote the event through local media (newspapers, radio, TV) and student clubs (e.g., yearbook, media)

Use posters, digital signage, and student-created artwork to advertise the event

Send invitations and updates through email, school announcements, and social media accounts

8 Recruit Volunteers

Engage the community to help with event preparation and execution.

Recruit volunteers from the school community

Coordinate with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or local groups for volunteer support

Arrange for student volunteers to assist with serving, cleanup, and activities

Assign specific roles

9 Set Up Event Logistics

Prepare for smooth event operation on the day.

Work with facilities staff to ensure the space is set up

Have a plan for food safety and sanitation

Ensure you have adequate staff and volunteers to manage the event and respond to any issues

Create a timeline for event activities and meal service

10 Host the Event

Ensure everything runs smoothly on the day of the event.

Set up decorations, signage, and activity stations

Serve food and manage meal service

Engage attendees with nutrition education, taste tests, and interactive activities

Capture photos and videos for social media and event recaps

11 Clean Up and Manage Leftovers

Plan for post-event logistics.

Recruit volunteers for cleanup tasks

Have a plan for storing or donating any leftover food

Return event space to its original condition

Dispose of waste according to school policies

12 Post-Event Follow-Up

Engage the community and assess the event's impact.

Post thank-you messages and event highlights on social media and the school website

Share event photos and updates with local media, PTA, and community partners

Send follow-up emails to participants, including event photos and upcoming events

Conduct a survey or gather feedback on the event

Reflect on event successes and areas for improvement for future events

13 Evaluate and Plan for Future Events

Make improvements for your next family meal event.

Analyze feedback from attendees and volunteers

Discuss what worked well and what could be improved

Use the insights to plan your next family meal event or other community engagement activities

Consider ongoing strategies for engaging families and increasing meal program participation year-round

Pre-Event Planning

Planning a successful Family Meal Event starts with clear goal setting and thoughtful preparation. This section will guide you through essential steps, from defining your event objectives to selecting a date, time, theme, and location. By setting specific goals aligned with your school's mission, you can create an engaging and impactful event that increases student participation and fosters strong family connections with the school meal program. The pre-event planning section offers a detailed checklist and helpful resources to ensure you're on the right track for a well-organized and memorable event.

HOW TO PLAN A FAMILY MEAL EVENT AT YOUR SCHOOL

Follow the steps below and utilize the linked resources to plan a successful event!

1 Brainstorm and Set Your Goals for the Event

Goal ideas

- Increase student school meal program participation.
- Increase student and family engagement with your school meal program.
- Share your school nutrition program goals, philosophy, and daily impact on students with the community.
- Show off your best school meals to families and the community to demonstrate how school meals have changed since parents and guardians were in school.
- Engage families and students in nutrition education and the community food system.

2 Choose the date, time, theme, and location within the school (cafeteria, gym) for the event.

Ideas for selecting an event theme:

- Ask students to submit and vote on theme ideas in the lunch line.
- Highlight a local, seasonal produce item, such as apples in the fall at a [Crunchoff](#), with recipes, nutrition facts, activities, and a local farmer spotlight.
- Ask students or a teacher what their [favorite lesson](#) is and create an event focused on that lesson's teachings. For example, share the Three Sisters' history and cultural significance while serving a [Three Sisters Stew](#) and hosting interactive activities.
- Work with a local community partner, such as a community garden, farmers market, local library, or Boys and Girls Club, to [host interactive activities](#) and teach attendees [quick culinary](#) or grocery shopping skills.
- [Host a site visit of your Farm to School or school garden program](#) including a tour and taste test.

QUICK TIP

Set a few simple, realistic goals that allow your team to get behind a shared vision.

QUICK TIP

Don't overcomplicate it. Start with a program, class project, or initiative you already have and build your event around it.

3 Set an event budget.

- Meet with your school board, administration, [Parent Teacher Alliance](#), or a community partner to request funding or fundraising opportunities for School Nutrition events.
- Join another event already happening at the school, such as a health fair, open house, back to school night, student concert, or PTA event.
- [Apply for local grants](#) or request donations from community stakeholders. School Nutrition events can be part of [farm to school](#) and nutrition education programs to connect with the school community.
- Seek [sponsorship](#) opportunities from local businesses, organizations, or community partners to help support event costs and activities.

QUICK TIP

If you don't ask for support, you won't get it. Reach out to local partners and foundations.

4 Consider maximum participation based on supplies, location, and budget.

Set a realistic attendee goal for the event based on:

- Capacity of the event space.
- Number of staff and volunteers available to prepare for and run the event.
- Amount of ingredients and supplies available order ahead of the event.
- [Budget](#) for event and School Nutrition Team event staff hours.

5 Develop the [menu](#) based on your event goals!

Decide if your event will be a taste test, family style meal, lunch line style meal, or another format.

Ideas for selecting the menu item(s):

- [Seasonal menu item](#) – Feature a seasonal produce item in 3 different ways, such as roasted butternut squash on its own, in a fall veggie or meat/meat alternate taco, and in a chili.
- [Culturally relevant menu item](#) – Serve a culturally relevant item from your lunch or breakfast menu that students enjoy.
- [Scratch cooked recipe\(s\)](#) – Spotlight a scratch-prepared menu item your students love! This could be a main dish, side, or a salad dressing.
- [Serve the salad bar or fresh veggie bar](#) that is available to your students.
- Ask families to submit a recipe they would like to see on the menu and prepare one recipe as a taste test at the event.
- Try out a new recipe or two you're considering adding to the menu as taste tests.

You can create an engaging and impactful event that increases student participation and fosters strong family connections.

6 Order food supplies and make decorations for the event theme.

- Serve the meal, menu item, or taste tests on school lunch trays.
- Partner up with student clubs, art class teachers, or elementary school teachers to have students create art, decorations, table toppers, and fun nutrition fact posters or flash cards to display at the event.
- Order any recipe ingredients and additional serving or cleanup supplies ahead of time.

7 Plan event activities that support the event goals and will engage attendees.

Activity ideas:

- [Nutrition education](#)
- Host a taste test: Utilize the AFHK [Taste Test Guide](#) and [Ingredients For a Successful Taste Test Event workshop](#)
- [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child](#) (WSSC) model education
- [Community food system education](#)
- [Community resource share table](#)

8 Utilize social media, your district website, invitations, RSVPs, and local media outlets to [market the event](#).

Use a variety of marketing methods to engage all students and families in your school community. Create a simple invite to send home on paper and post online with essential information that can be digested with a quick glance. Translate all marketing materials into your school community's spoken languages.

- Post an [invitation](#) to your event on your school district website homepage or events calendar, school nutrition webpage, and social media accounts.
- Print an [event flyer](#) to send home with students in school backpacks or take-home folders. Leave a stack of flyers in the school front office, nurses' office, district office, and in other places families commonly pass through or gather.
- Create a specific [School Nutrition Team social media account](#) to share regular updates on the event and your school nutrition program.
- Include event information in your district, school, and/or school nutrition program [newsletters](#).
- Invite a local newspaper, news station, and any student writing, media, or yearbook clubs to take photos and write a story about the event.
- Include the event information in district or school email updates and morning announcements.
- Partner up with student clubs, art classes, home economics or culinary classes, and the student council to make signs, posters, and virtual invitations for the event.
- Post student-made signs and posters in common areas where students and families congregate, such as school or district offices, cafeterias, and in hallways during sporting or after school activities. Include a QR code to your school nutrition program website!

QUICK TIP

Student involvement helps naturally promote your event while building excitement, fostering leadership opportunities, and strengthening family engagement.

QUICK TIP

Use multiple channels—and don't underestimate the power of direct communication from district leadership.

9 **Engage your stakeholders!** Gather volunteers, school administrators, facilities staff, teachers, local partners, school clubs or sport teams, and students to assist with the event.

- Partner with a student club, class, or grade level to host the event together! Involve students in hosting interactive activities, serving taste tests, and gathering feedback or ideas for the school nutrition programs at the event.
- Contact the Parent Teacher Association and school board for volunteer support during the event and for clean-up.
- Offer volunteer hours to high school students for assisting with event set up, running activities, and clean up.
- Partner with a student sports team, drama club, or music class to incorporate a student performance into the event.
- Invite the Superintendent, school principals, [school board](#) and office staff, school counselors, and teachers to attend the event and connect with families.
- Ask a school or district celebrity or student group to MC the event, host an interactive activity, or serve the meal to attendees.
- Work with your school and district facilities staff to ensure your event space has tables, chairs, trash cans, and proper food safety guidelines are followed.

QUICK TIP

Don't try to do it alone. Pull in people from across your district and community—even those you don't usually work with.

10 **Make a plan for cleaning up the event space.**

- Recruit volunteers to clean up after the event!
- Plan for how to avoid food waste, such as sending home any leftovers with attendees, properly storing leftovers for serving the next day, or donating leftovers to a local food pantry.
- Ask the school facilities team how to dispose of trash and recycling and where to store tables and chairs.

11 **Create a detailed timeline to ensure the event runs smoothly.**

A [Run of Show](#) helps keep your event organized and ensures staff, volunteers, and partners understand the flow of activities throughout the event. Creating a detailed timeline ahead of the event can help prevent confusion, improve communication, and create a smoother experience for attendees.

The Run of Show should include:

- Event timing and transitions
- Staff and volunteer responsibilities
- Activity schedules
- Meal service flow
- Announcements and special moments

12 Make a plan to follow up with a thank you on social media including pictures and highlights of the event and the winner(s) of any contests.

- [Post photos of the event](#) on the school, district, and School Nutrition Team social media pages and thank the attendees, volunteers, students, and partners who supported the event.
- Share photos and highlights of the event in a school meals or district newsletter, on the school nutrition program webpage and district website, and as a poster in the cafeteria.
- Make a specific [social media congratulations post](#) with photos for any event contest winners.
- Share highlights of the event in the morning announcements and school or district informational emails the day after the event.
- Send a specific [highlight email](#) to school administrators, the school board, and the Parent Teacher Association to let them know how the school community benefited from the event.

13 Make a plan to evaluate the lessons learned and collect feedback from students and families on ideas for the next event.

- Have a suggestion or feedback box available at the event with a specific ask.

Example feedback box questions:

“What did you enjoy about our event?”

“What events would you suggest for the School Nutrition Team to hold in the future?”

“How do you prefer to stay updated on school meal program updates?”

“What did you learn about our school nutrition program at this event?”

- Create virtual and/or [paper surveys](#) for attendees to complete at the event with 1–3 brief questions on what attendees enjoyed about the event and what they would suggest for future events. Raffle off a prize for completing the survey!
- Get to know your school community by talking to students and families at the event about your school nutrition program! Ask what attendees like about the program, what they would change, and what questions they have about the program.



During the Event

During the Family Meal event, the goal is to increase meal participation by engaging kids and families in the meals themselves, showing the high quality and taste of foods served, providing an opportunity for nutrition education, and directly engaging parents and caregivers, who are both part of the decision-making process for when to purchase school meals and the primary buyers of the similar products at the grocery store.

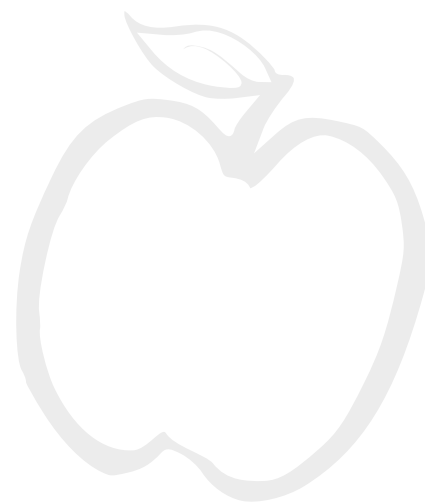
Once your event is underway, the focus shifts to creating an engaging and educational experience for families and students. This section provides suggestions for interactive activities, nutrition education, and taste tests to highlight the quality of school meals and increase awareness about the benefits of healthy eating. By integrating fun and informative activities, you'll not only showcase school meals but also foster meaningful conversations around nutrition, healthy food choices, and family engagement. The goal is to provide an opportunity for participants to enjoy, learn, and interact, leaving them excited about school meal programs and their benefits.

QUICK TIP

Think “experience,”
not just “meal.”
Interactive elements
keep families
engaged.

Nutrition Education

- [Share recipes to make at home](#) based on scratch school meals.
- [MyPlate](#) education, activities, and recipe cards.
- [Tips](#) on how to encourage families to [engage in healthy meal planning and prep](#)
- Share data on the importance of eating a healthy meal in fun and interactive ways that start conversations!
- [School Lunches](#)
- [School Meal Trays](#)
- Fun Facts about:
 - [National School Lunch Program](#)
 - [How school meals are essential to student learning and health](#)
 - [School Breakfast Program](#)
 - [Local Food in Schools](#) – Share facts about local foods in your school!
 - Local farmers, food hubs, co-ops, or food distributors your program works with.
- [How to read a nutrition label](#) and why monitoring sodium, added sugars, trans fats intake is important for health.
- [Nutrition based physical activity games](#)



Interactive Activities

- Family style meal
- Play a [“Did you know?”](#) matching facts with nutrients game—for 7–12th graders with their family.
- Family recipe swap! Ask each student to bring a recipe they enjoy at home or would like to try. Students can exchange recipes and prepare them at home individually or together, follow up with photos to the School Nutrition Team. A favorite could be created into a school meal!
- Ask families and students to submit recipes to be created and served as a school meal.
- [Local foods trivia!](#) Include questions on what fruits, vegetables, and herbs are grown in your local food system, how these foods are grown, and where to purchase locally grown produce in the community.
- Reflection question stations: Ask attendees to reflect on one food-related question and to write their answer on a communal space other attendees can see.
- For example, ask attendees to “Share a favorite food and how it makes you feel.” Ask attendees to write their answer on an apple-shaped piece of paper and pin the apple on a large paper tree or local food system poster for all other attendees to read. Share some answers in your event follow-up messages!
- Host a guided cooking lesson of a simple recipe or snack for local, in season fruits or veggies.
- Free or farmers market style produce (partner with a local community garden, food bank, farmer) table with recipes and [info cards on how to prepare a few of the produce items](#).
- Host an optional [vegetable chopping skills](#) quick 10 min lesson.



Taste Test Ideas

BREAKFAST

[Baked blueberry oatmeal](#)
[Apple cinnamon sheet pan pancakes](#)
[Overnight Oats](#)
[Smoothies](#)
[Breakfast energy bites](#)
[Hashbrown and egg casserole](#)
[Berry cornmeal muffins](#)
[K12 Eggo® Froot Loops® Waffles Recipe Concepts](#)

LUNCH

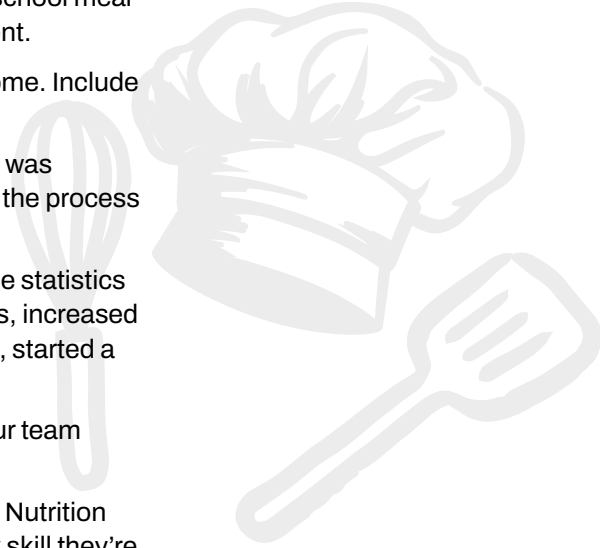
[Herbs and spices \(low sodium\) on cooked veggies](#)
[Wraps](#)
[Scratch prepared dressings and/or hummus with fresh veggies](#)
[Bean and cheese Pupusas](#)
[Black bean patties with crema](#)
[Chana Masala](#)
[Carrot parmesan fries](#)

[Broccoli cranberry salad](#)
[Chicken Kung Pao bowl](#)
[K12 Eggo® Eggoji Recipe Sheet](#)
[K12 Whole Grain Cheez-It® Cruncheezy Wrap Recipe Sheet](#)
[K12 MorningStar Farms® Whole Grain Chik'n Nuggets Recipe Concepts](#)

Highlight Your Program and School Nutrition Professionals

Give your school community more visibility into the daily workings of your school meal program and celebrate your hard-working school nutrition team at your event.

- Print and hand out popular school meal recipes for families to make at home. Include these recipes in newsletters and social media posts too!
- Create a “Lifecycle of A Recipe” poster to demonstrate how a new recipe was created, tested, and prepared for serving. Include images of each step in the process and student feedback.
- Share your Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Award Journey! Include statistics on how your team has lowered sodium and added sugars in school meals, increased scratch & speed scratch recipes, collected and utilized student feedback, started a salad bar, or incorporated nutrition education.
- If your event is inside, run a slideshow of photos from the cafeteria, of your team preparing and serving meals, and students enjoying school meals!
- Create a “Meet Your School Lunch Heroes” poster for each of your School Nutrition Professionals! Include their photo, favorite school meal recipe, a culinary skill they’re an expert at, and facts about their daily workday, such as the number of pounds of apples sliced this week.
- Invite one of your local procurement partners to host an interactive table and answer questions on local procurement with your school meal program, such as a produce farmer. Display photos of the produce you purchase from this partner, how the produce is grown, and meals prepared with the produce along with student feedback on these meals.
- Host a Day in the Life of a School Nutrition Professional Q&A session with event attendees!
- Have one School Nutrition Professional sit at each table to connect with families by sharing their passion for child health, their daily work, and how school meals impact students.



POST-EVENT

Continuing Family Engagement

After the event, it's important to keep the momentum going by engaging families, evaluating the event's success, and building on the connections made during the meal. In this section, you'll find strategies to follow up with attendees, gather feedback, and share highlights of the event with the broader community. Additionally, we provide tips on how to leverage the event to increase ongoing participation in school meal programs and deepen family engagement. Post-event efforts are crucial for sustaining interest and support for future events and ensuring that the impact of your Family Meal Event continues long after the event concludes.

Evaluation

- Follow up with a thank you for attending and include information on the next event, social media accounts to follow, new menu highlights, and photos of the event.
- Send out a brief [evaluation survey](#) for parents/guardians and students. Keep the questions simple family friendly!
- Add meals served to school lunch menu
- Family recipe contributions, sharing meal and pictures on school's social media

To effectively implement these strategies and ensure broad support for school meal programs, it is essential to gain buy-in from key stakeholders, including the school nutrition team, parents, teachers, and students. Building a strong sense of community around the meal program will not only increase participation but also create a lasting impact on students' health and well-being. The following strategies outline how to engage and involve these groups in meaningful ways, fostering a collaborative environment that supports the success of school nutrition initiatives.

QUICK TIP

Think “experience,”
not just “meal.”
Interactive elements
keep families
engaged.



Increase Meal Program Participation

- Serve taste tests at student events, school board meetings, sporting events, back to school nights, open houses, school or event registration events.
- Host tours of the school kitchen for students and families during regular school events.
- Start an [after-school cooking club for students](#).
- Host a weekly or monthly cooking, taste test, or nutrition education lesson at an afterschool program or club.
- Work with high school foods or health classes: Ask students to design a meal for the lunch menu this year. Have the students prepare and serve taste tests for the student body to vote on.
- Update your school nutrition and district webpages and social media accounts with nutrition program statistics.

Example stats to share:



Pounds of fresh local carrots (or another fresh vegetable) served



Number quarts of fresh Pico de Gallo (or another scratch prepared sauce, dressing, or condiment) prepared and served



Percentage of students who tried and loved a new menu item



Weekly veggie features on the salad bars



Invite school administration, teachers, staff, and coaches to serve meals and to eat with students in the cafeteria on a regular basis.



Form a student advisory group to share meal ideas and collect feedback from peers on the school nutrition programs.



[Start a school garden](#), either in containers, grow towers, or a hoop house. Work with teachers to incorporate the garden into the curriculum, recruit student clubs to harvest the produce, and serve student-grown produce in meals.

Gain Support and Buy-In

- [Market your School Nutrition Programs!](#) Brag about how fantastic your meals and School Nutrition Professionals are and demonstrate how the school nutrition program supports student health and wellbeing.
- [Celebrate your School Nutrition Professionals!](#) A confident, motivated, and [proud School Nutrition Team](#) makes all the difference in engaging your school community.
- Work with teachers to [incorporate nutrition education into regular activities and curriculum](#).
- Include nutrition education and school meal program community events in your [school and district wellness policies](#).
- [Teach](#) families how important their support and involvement in the school community is for their students.

Develop Local Partnerships

- Form a [Health and Wellness Advisory Committee](#) with parents and families to build trust and create space for feedback and learning. Invite local non-profit organizations and public health organizations as guest speakers.
- Work with the Parent Teacher Association to include school meal program goals and information in their meetings. Present to the Association how your school meal programs impact students, new program innovations, and student feedback.
- [Form a Community of Practice group](#) with School Nutrition Professionals and/or with local food distributors and farmers in your city, region, or state. Meet virtually or in-person regularly to brainstorm ideas, work through challenges, and learn from each other.
- [Contact](#) local food hubs, co-ops, and farmers about procurement of local produce, honey, meat, grains, eggs, or poultry. Work with local farmers to plant plots of vegetables specifically for your school district.
- Contact local non-profit organizations, [university extension offices](#), and your [state agency](#) for resources on connecting with your school community.
- Work with a local [Foodcorps](#) or Americorps chapters for volunteers who are motivated and invested in supporting school communities through farm to school programming, nutrition education, and community connections.



How Carrollton Exempted Village School District Turned a Family Meal Night into a Community Win

At many schools, the challenge isn't the quality of the food—it's helping families and students fully understand and experience the care, creativity, and nutrition behind school meals. Carrollton Exempted Village School District in Carrollton, Ohio, set out to change that perception with a Family Meal Night called "A Taste of Carrollton." Their goal was simple: show, don't tell. By inviting families into the cafeteria and allowing them to experience the nutrition program firsthand, they created an event that built trust, boosted engagement, and celebrated their school nutrition team.

What began as a school nutrition event quickly became something much bigger. More than 400 attendees—including students, families, school and district staff, and community partners—came together to experience the event. Families explored the cafeteria, sampled meals, participated in activities, connected with staff, and saw firsthand the creativity and energy behind the district's nutrition program. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with requests from the community to make it an annual tradition. Carrollton even noted a small increase (about 6%) in high school meal participation after the event.

At the center of the evening was a student cooking competition that had taken place in the weeks leading up to the event. Student teams developed recipes that met school nutrition guidelines while incorporating ingredients such as commodity foods and produce grown through the district's gardening efforts. The winning dishes were then featured at the Family Meal event, giving families an opportunity to taste and vote on potential new menu items.

Check out Carrollton's Family Meal night

In addition to student-created recipes, the event featured samples of popular school meals and new menu items, giving families a firsthand look at the variety, flavor, and quality of food served in the cafeteria each day. But the evening extended far beyond the meal itself.

Throughout the cafeteria, students and community partners led interactive stations featuring nutrition games, hands-on activities, wellness education, and creative displays. Families explored greenhouse-grown plants, participated in trivia and tasting activities, learned about school wellness initiatives, and connected directly with community organizations and school staff. Student groups played an especially visible role throughout the evening—running stations, facilitating activities, and performing live music that helped create a welcoming and energetic atmosphere.

The combination of food, student leadership, education, and community involvement transformed the cafeteria into a vibrant community-centered experience that brought the school nutrition program to life. More importantly, **“The Taste of Carrollton” changed the perception of the school meal program as families and the community experienced first-hand the creative energy, flavor, and quality of school food.**



“I would encourage every district to do something like this. It is a chance to toot your own horn.”

— Barbara Burns, RDN/LD
Food Service and Farm to School Director



How They Made it Happen

The strategies below highlight how Carrollton planned and implemented their event while offering practical ideas schools can adapt within their own communities.

Set Guiding Goals

Carrollton's Family Meal Night had a few clear goals:

- Highlight their school nutrition program in a positive, visible way
- Highlight student creativity through featured “test kitchen” winning recipes
- Connect families to broader health and wellness efforts in the community



TIP: Set a few simple, realistic goals that allow your team to get behind a shared vision.

Start with What You Already Have

Instead of building an event from scratch, Carrollton built around an existing success: a **student test kitchen competition**. Student teams created recipes that met school nutrition guidelines, and the winning dishes were featured at the event. This gave the night a built-in centerpiece—and something students and families were already excited about.

TIP: Don't overcomplicate it. Start with a program, class project, or initiative you already have and build your event around it.



Collaborate

One of the biggest reasons the event worked? Collaboration. The nutrition director partnered with:

- Teachers: specifically a teacher with strong student relationships
- Student groups (choir, volleyball, art, media/tech, and more)
- Community organizations
- State and local partners



This turned the event into more than a meal — it became a **mini health fair** with multiple activities and voices involved.

TIP: Don't try to do it alone. Pull in people from across your district and community—even those you don't usually work with.

Get Students Involved Early

Students weren't just helping—they were leading. Students:

- Created recipes for the competition
- Ran activity stations
- Designed games and trivia
- Performed music during the event



This had a powerful ripple effect: **when students are involved, families show up.**

TIP: Student involvement helps naturally promote your event while building excitement, fostering leadership opportunities, and strengthening family engagement.

Create an Experience, Not Just a Meal

Instead of a traditional sit-down dinner, Carrollton set up **interactive stations**:

- Food tasting stations featuring student-created recipes and menu favorites such as Mac & Cheese with Pulled Pork, Rosemary Chicken & Potatoes, and Honduran Nachos
- Nutrition education games like bingo and trivia wheels
- Physical activity stations
- Interactive information tables from community partners and school groups



They even had a simple voting system at each food station where attendees could rate dishes using tokens like “love it” or “not so much.”

TIP: Think “experience,” not just “meal.” Interactive elements keep families engaged.

Keep Logistics Simple and Strategic

Carrollton made a few smart logistical choices:

- **Timing:** They held the event from 4:30–6:30 PM on a weekday (right after school, before families go home)
- **Location:** Indoors in the cafeteria (reliable and familiar)
- **Scheduling:** Avoided conflicts with sports, concerts, and other district events
- **Layout:** Stations arranged in a circle with seating options and space to mingle



TIP: Convenience matters. Make it easy for families to attend by choosing the right time and place.

Budget-Friendly Approaches

The biggest expense? Food. But Carrollton recommends keeping costs manageable by:

- Limiting the number of food stations
- Using in-kind donations from partners
- Incorporating existing resources
- Seeking small grants and local funding support
- Hosting creative fundraisers



Carrollton estimated about \$1,500 as a helpful target—but noted it could be done for less.

TIP: If you don’t ask for support, you won’t get it. Reach out to local partners and foundations.

Spreading the Word

Promotion was a mix of traditional and digital:

- Yard signs and banners
- School website and social media (especially Facebook)
- District-wide all-calls from the superintendent
- Local newspaper



TIP: Use multiple channels—and don’t underestimate the power of direct communication from district leadership.

Lessons Learned and Strategies for Success

Even a highly successful event like Carrollton's Family Meal Night came with a few lessons—and plenty of takeaways for other districts looking to do something similar.

- One thing they'd do differently next time is build in a more formal way to **gather feedback** from students, families, and other attendees. While they heard overwhelmingly positive responses, adding a simple survey and a more structured post-event evaluation would help capture insights and make future events even stronger.

TIP: Don't skip evaluation—it's key to improving your event and demonstrating its impact.

- **Collaboration** was key to their success—working across departments, with student groups, and alongside community partners made the event possible. **Strong student involvement** helped drive attendance and energy, while **support from district leadership** gave the event visibility and credibility.
- Lastly, Carrollton emphasizes the importance of having a willingness to celebrate your nutrition program's success. Use the event as an opportunity to highlight the incredible work your staff does every day. At the end of the day, the biggest takeaway is this: **families can't appreciate what they don't see**. A Family Meal Night puts your program on full display—and that can make all the difference.

“It's up to you to show your families what you do during the day to keep their children healthy. And you might just be surprised that the parents love the food as much as the kids.”

— Barbara Burns, RDN/LD
Food Service and Farm to School Director

Events like the one Carrollton hosted are possible in your district too! By applying the strategies and tips outlined throughout this toolkit, schools can create engaging, impactful Family Meal Events that build trust, increase participation, and strengthen connections with families and the broader community.



APPENDIX

Printable Event Templates

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Run of Show Templates

Use the following templates to plan and execute your event. Choose the format that best fits your event style.

Option 1: Station-Based Event Run of Show

Event Overview	
Event Name	
Date	
Time	
Location	
Event Lead	

Schedule			
Time	Activity	Lead	Notes
	Staff Arrival and Setup		
	Final Walkthrough		
	Doors Open		
	Welcome Remarks		
	Stations Open		
	Mid-Event Reminder		
	Last Call		
	Closing Remarks		
	Event Ends		
	Cleanup		

Station Assignments		
Station	Lead	Notes
Welcome Table		
Activity 1		
Activity 2		
Activity 3		
Info Table		

Additional notes

Option 2: General Event Run of Show

Event Overview	
Event Name	
Date	
Time	
Location	
Event Lead	
Event Type	

Schedule			
Time	Activity	Lead	Notes
	Staff Arrival and Setup		
	Final Walkthrough		
	Doors Open / Guest Arrival		
	Opening Remarks		
	Main Event Activity		
	Engagement Period		
	Mid-Event Reminder		
	Closing Remarks		
	Event Ends		
	Cleanup and Breakdown		

Activity Details (Optional)			
Activity	Description	Lead	Notes
Welcome			
Main Activity			
Engagement			
Closing			

Additional notes

Budget Planning Template

Use this template to estimate costs, track expenses, and identify funding needs for your Family Meal Event.

Category	Item/Description	Estimated Cost (\$)	Actual Cost (\$)	Notes
Food and Beverage				
Supplies				
Decorations and Signage				
Marketing				
Activities				
Incentives				
Staffing				
Contingency				
Totals				

Sample Budget

Category	Item/Description	Estimated Cost (\$)	Actual Cost (\$)	Notes
Food and Beverage	Extra produce, toppings, fruit cups	\$400.00	\$370.00	Used existing chicken/beans
Supplies	Plates, utensils, napkins, serving items	\$100.00	\$140.00	
Decorations and Signage	Table decor, printed signage	\$100.00	\$85.00	
Marketing	Flyers, printing, outreach materials	\$50.00	\$40.00	
Activities	Materials for stations, taste test supplies	\$100.00	\$155.00	
Incentives	Gift cards + raffle items	\$100.00	\$80.00	
Staffing	3 Nutrition staff (\$20/hr x 3 hrs)	\$100.00	\$120.00	
Contingency	Unexpected costs	\$50.00	\$10.00	
Total		\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	

Sponsorship Letter Template

Customize this letter to request financial or in-kind support from local businesses, organizations, and community partners. Copy and paste the content below as a starting point to personalize your event messaging.

[School/District Name]
[Address] | [City, State ZIP] | [Phone] | [Website]

[Date]

Sponsorship Opportunity: Family Meal Night Event

Dear [Company Name/Contact Name],

On behalf of [School/District Name], we are excited to invite you to partner with us in supporting our upcoming Family Meal Night, taking place on [Date] at [Time] at [Location].

Family Meal Night is a community-centered event designed to bring students, families, and school staff together to explore and celebrate the role of school meals in supporting student health, well-being, and academic success. Through taste tests, interactive activities, and family engagement opportunities, the event helps build awareness and trust in school nutrition programs while creating a fun and welcoming environment for all.

We are seeking community partners to help make this event possible. Your support would directly contribute to event materials, food tastings, family engagement activities, and overall event success.

As a sponsor, [Company Name] will be recognized as a valued supporter of student wellness and family engagement. Sponsorship recognition may include:

- Logo placement on event materials and signage
- Recognition on school and district social media platforms
- Acknowledgment during the event
- Opportunities to engage with families and the school community

Suggested sponsorship levels range from \$250–\$1,000, though contributions of any size are appreciated. Sponsors may also choose to contribute in-kind donations such as food items, supplies, or giveaways.

This partnership offers a meaningful way to demonstrate your commitment to supporting children, families, and healthy communities.

We would be grateful for your consideration and would be happy to discuss sponsorship opportunities at a level that works best for your organization. Please feel free to contact us at [Contact Information] with any questions or to confirm your participation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We hope to partner with you to make this event a success!

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Title]

[School/District Name]

[Contact Information]

Menu Planning Template

Use this template to design a menu that aligns with your event goals while incorporating nutrition education, student favorites, and themed menu items.

Event Overview	
Theme and Goal	
Event Format (taste test, station-based, lunch line, etc.)	
Target Audience	
Estimated Attendance	
Service Style	

Menu Considerations	
How does the menu reflect the event theme or goal?	
Seasonal or Local Ingredients to Feature	
Culturally Relevant Dishes to Include	
Scratch-Cooked Items (if applicable)	
Are there student favorites to incorporate and highlight?	
What nutrition education can be provided?	

Station-based Menu			
Station Name	Food/Menu Item	Activity or Education Component	Staff/Partner Lead

Sample Menu Planning Template

Event Overview	
Theme and Goal	Spring Showcase Event; goal is promoting school meals, student engagement, and family participation
Event Format (taste test, station-based, lunch line, etc.)	Station-Based Family Meal Event + Taste Test Stations
Target Audience	K–12 Students and Families
Estimated Attendance	350–400 attendees
Service Style	Open-flow event with tasting stations, activity booths, and student-led engagement opportunities

Menu Considerations	
How does the menu reflect the event theme or goal?	Menu includes student-selected favorites, taste test opportunities, and meals designed to encourage family engagement with the school nutrition program
Seasonal or Local Ingredients to Feature	Fresh herbs from school hydroponics program, seasonal produce, locally sourced ingredients when available
Culturally Relevant Dishes to Include	Mac & Cheese with Pulled Pork, Rosemary Chicken & Potatoes, Honduran Nachos
Scratch-Cooked Items (if applicable)	Rosemary Chicken & Potatoes; student-created recipes
Are there student favorites to incorporate and highlight?	Yes; Mac & Cheese with Pulled Pork and Honduran Nachos
What nutrition education can be provided?	School meals can be nutritious, flavorful, and fun; nutrition games, MyPlate activities, hydration education, and produce education stations included throughout the event

Station-based Menu			
Station Name	Food/Menu Item	Activity or Education Component	Staff/Partner Lead
Taste Test Station	Mac & Cheese with Pulled Pork	Vote on favorite menu item	School Nutrition Team
Taste Test Station	Rosemary Chicken & Potatoes	Learn about herbs and seasoning	Culinary Staff
Cultural Foods Station	Honduran Nachos	Explore global flavors	Spanish Club
Smart Snacks Station	Smart Snack Samples	Healthy snack education	Student Group
Hydration Station	Fruit-Infused Water Samples	Hydration education	HS Students
Produce and Gardening Station	Fresh Herbs and Hydroponics Display	School garden education	Agriculture Program

Webpage Invitation Templates

Use the templates below as a starting point and customize them to reflect your unique event. Personalizing your event messaging can help increase excitement and drive attendance. Consider highlighting special features such as student-led activities, featured menu items, taste tests, cultural themes, performances, or community partnerships. Tailoring invitations to reflect what families can specifically experience at your event can make messaging more engaging and encourage participation.

Option 1: Best for District Homepage

Family Meal Night 🍽️

Join us for a fun and interactive evening where families can explore, taste, and learn more about school meals!

At Family Meal Night, you'll have the opportunity to:

- 🍎 Taste-test school meals and discover new favorites
- 🎉 Participate in fun activities and games
- 🥗 Learn how school meals support student health and learning
- 👨👩👧👦 Spend quality time together as a family

Event Details:

📅 Date: [Insert Date]

🕒 Time: [Insert Time]

📍 Location: [Insert School Name/Address]

This event is free and open to all families. We hope to see you there!

Webpage Invitation Templates

Option 2: Best for School Nutrition Webpage

You're Invited: Family Meal Night! 🍽️

Come experience school meals like never before! Family Meal Night is a fun, hands-on event designed to bring families together to explore the foods students enjoy every day.

Join us to:

- Try a variety of nutritious school meals
- Learn how meals are planned to fuel student success
- Participate in interactive activities and taste tests
- Connect with school staff and your community

Event Details:

📅 Date: [Insert Date]

🕒 Time: [Insert Time]

📍 Location: [Insert School Name/Address]

Free for all families!

Option 3: Best for District Events Calendar

Family Meal Night 🍽️

Join us for a fun evening of food, activities, and family connection!

📅 [Date] | 🕒 [Time] | 📍 Location

Free and open to all families.

Event Flyer Template

Use this template and sample copy to create an eye-catching flyer that highlights event details and encourages family participation.

Family Meal Night

Join us for a fun and festive evening of food, fun, and family!

Date and Time:

Location: [School Name] Cafeteria, [Address]

Event Highlights:

- Taste testing with your family
- ...
- ...

Cost:

Free for all families!

RSVP:

Please RSVP by [Date] at [Phone Number] or [Email Address].

Contact Information:

For questions, contact [Name] at [Phone Number] or [Email].

Call to Action: Don't miss out—bring your whole family for a memorable night!



Family Meal Night

Join us for a fun and festive evening of food, fun, and family!

Date:

Time:

Location:

RSVP by:

RSVP to:

at

Event Highlights

FREE
for all
families!

Don't miss out—
bring your whole family
for a memorable night!



Newsletter Template

Use this template and pre-written content to promote your event, share school nutrition program highlights, and build excitement leading up to the event.

Family Meal Night

Does your student enjoy school meals? Are you curious about our school nutrition program? Join us at the **[insert school district name] [insert event name]** for an evening of culinary adventure and school spirit! **[Insert 2 – 3 activities for the event. For example: Meet our School Nutrition Professionals, taste samples of our scratch-prepared salad dressings, and learn about our Harvest of the Month program.]**

School meals feed **[insert district statistic. For example: 75% of our student population or 2,000 students every day]** and are often the most nutritious meals students eat due to the program [nutrition requirements](#) focused on whole grains, fruits and vegetables, low fat proteins, and reduced sodium and added sugars. Eating school meals [reduces students' risk for chronic disease](#), supports the development of lifelong healthy eating habits, and supports a better learning environment for all.

Mealtimes are an essential part of every student's school day. Our School Nutrition Team mission is to **[insert mission statement, such as provide nourishing, delicious meals that support our students' health and wellbeing]**. So far this school year [or month], **[insert 2-3 school nutrition program facts. For example: we have served 52 pounds of spring mix lettuce on our salad bars and 1 new student-tested and approved recipe and trained our staff in preparing fresh potatoes to replace the pre-packed frozen potatoes served last year.]**. And, most importantly, our students love these changes!

[Insert student feedback quote(s) and/or a photo of students enjoying a school meal].

Whether you last ate a school meal 5 years ago or 50 years ago, we guarantee that school meals have transformed! We invite all families to experience school meals the **[insert district name]** way on **[insert date, time, location of event]**. All are welcome! There is no cost to attend. See you there!

School Board Invitation Letter Template

Use this letter to invite school board members and district leaders to attend and support your Family Meal Event. Copy and paste the content below as a starting point to personalize your event messaging.

[School/District Name]
[Address] | [City, State ZIP] | [Phone] | [Website]

[Date]

[School Board Member Name]
[Title]
[District/Organization]

Invitation to Attend Family Meal Night

Dear [School Board Member Name],

On behalf of [School/District Name], I am pleased to invite you to attend our upcoming Family Meal Night, taking place on [Date] at [Time] at [Location].

This event is designed to bring families, students, and school staff together to explore and celebrate the role of school meals in supporting student health, well-being, and academic success. Through taste tests, interactive activities, and opportunities for engagement, families gain a deeper understanding of the nutritious meals served in our schools each day. This event aligns with our district's commitment to student wellness, family engagement, and creating supportive learning environments.

Your presence would mean a great deal to our school community. Family Meal Night provides a valuable opportunity to see firsthand how our nutrition programs are engaging families, supporting student wellness, and strengthening connections between schools and the communities they serve.

We would be happy to welcome you during the event and highlight your visit as part of the evening. The event may also include photo opportunities and highlights shared with the broader community.

We would be honored to have you join us for this special event. Please let us know if you are able to attend or if we can provide any additional information.

Thank you for your continued support of our students and school community.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Title]
[School/District Name]
[Contact Information]

Social Media Posts and Captions Templates

Use these ready-made posts and captions to promote your event before, during, and after the celebration.

Before the Event

Caption 1

 Join us for Family Meal Night!

Explore tasty, nutritious school meals, participate in fun taste tests, and learn how school nutrition fuels success! Bring the whole family and enjoy a night of good food and great connections. 

 [Date] |  [Time] |  Location

Caption 2

 Calling all families!

Explore what's on the menu at school! At Family Meal Night, enjoy taste tests, discover healthy choices, and learn how nutritious meals support learning.

 [Date] |  [Time] |  Location

 Don't miss this FREE event!

Caption 3

 Good food brings us together

Join us for Family Meal Night and experience how school meals support student health, learning, and connection.

Come hungry—we've got something for everyone! 

 [Date] |  [Time] |  Location

Caption 4

 Wondering what fuels your student's day? Find out at Family Meal Night!

- ✓Taste-test school meals
- ✓Learn about nutrition
- ✓Celebrate healthy eating

 [Date] |  [Time] |  Location

FREE for all families—join the fun!

Photo with caption 5

 [Include photo of sample school meal tray or colorful dish]

 Sneak peek...

This is just a taste of what you'll experience at Family Meal Night! 

Come try it for yourself and discover how school meals are made to fuel strong, healthy students. 

 [Date] |  [Time] |  Location

Photo with caption 6

 [Include graphic or simple "1 day to go!" sign]

 Almost time!

Family Meal Night is just around the corner!

Grab your family and join us for a fun (and delicious) evening you won't want to miss. 

 [Date] |  [Time] |  Location

Social Media Posts and Captions Templates

During the Event

Caption 1

 We're LIVE at Family Meal Night!

Families are taste-testing, learning, and having so much fun exploring school meals together. 

From fresh flavors to student favorites—there's something for everyone!

Stop by if you're nearby—we'd love to see you! 

 [Location]  Happening now!

Caption 2

 What would YOU try first?

Families are sampling delicious school meals and sharing their favorites at Family Meal Night! 

Drop a  for fruits and veggies

Drop a  for protein picks

Drop a  or whole grains

We're loving the feedback so far!

Caption 3

 Such an amazing turnout at Family Meal Night!

We're seeing families connect, learn, and enjoy nutritious meals together—and that's exactly what this night is all about. 

Thank you for being here with us!

Caption 4

 [Include photo close-up of plated meal, colorful tray, or featured dish]

 A closer look at what's on the menu tonight!

Nutritious, balanced, and made to keep students energized throughout the day. 

Yes... school meals really do look this good! 

Photo with caption 5

 [Include photo of cafeteria staff, volunteers serving food or engaging with families]

 Shoutout to the amazing team behind the scenes!

Our school nutrition staff and volunteers are making this night possible—and bringing so much heart to the table. 

Social Media Posts and Captions Templates

After the Event

Caption 1

🙌 Thank you for joining us at Family Meal Night!

From taste tests to meaningful conversations, it was a night full of connection, learning, and great food. 🍴

We loved seeing families explore school meals and celebrate healthy eating together.

Caption 2

🌟 What a night!

Family Meal Night brought together students, families, and staff to:

- ✓ Explore nutritious school meals
- ✓ Share feedback and favorites
- ✓ Learn how food fuels learning

This is how we build stronger, healthier school communities. 🍌🍎

Caption 3

🗣️ The conversation doesn't stop here!

Thank you to everyone who joined us for Family Meal Night. Your feedback and participation help shape better, healthier meals for our students every day. 🙌

Stay tuned for more opportunities to get involved!

Photo with caption 4

📷 [Include multiple photos showing mix of taste tests, activities, food, smiles]

Swipe to relive some of our favorite moments from Family Meal Night! ➡️

- 🍴 Taste tests
- 🎉 Fun activities
- 🙌 Community connections

We loved every minute of it!

Photo with caption 5

📷 Photo idea: Group photo of staff + partners

🙌 It takes a village—and this team made it happen

A heartfelt thank you to our incredible staff and partners who brought Family Meal Night to life. From planning to preparation to showing up with smiles, your dedication made this event truly special. 🙌

We couldn't have done it without you!

Photo with caption 6

📷 [Include photo of winner with family or group shot]

🙌 Celebrating one of our amazing students/families!

Congratulations to [Name], our Family Meal Night contest winner! 🎉

Events like this are all about connection, participation, and community—and you helped bring that to life.

Thank you for being part of such a special evening!

Follow Up Email Templates

Use these templates to thank attendees, volunteers, sponsors, and community partners while reinforcing key event highlights.

Parent/Guardian/Family

New message

Subject: Thank You for Joining Us! Family Meal Night was a Success!

Dear [Parent/Guardian/Family],

Thank you for joining us at Family Meal Night! We loved seeing so many families come together to explore school meals, try new foods, and connect with our school community.

 **Event Photos:**

[Insert Photo Link]

 **Stay Connected:**

- [Event Name] – [Date]
- [Event Name] – [Date]
- [Event Name] – [Date]

 **We'd love your feedback:**

[Insert Survey Link]

 **Interested in school meals?**

Visit [link] to learn more about menus and meal programs at our school.

Thank you again for being part of such a special evening.

Warmly,

[Your Name]

[Title]

[School/District Name]

Follow Up Email Templates

Staff and Partner

New message

Subject: Thank You for Supporting Family Meal Night

Dear [Name/Team/Organization],

Thank you for your support in making our Family Meal Night a success. We truly appreciate the time, energy, and collaboration you brought to this event. Your dedication behind the scenes and during the event made a meaningful difference.

 **Event Photos:**

[Insert Photo Link]

 **Looking Ahead:**

- [Event Name] – [Date]
- [Event Name] – [Date]
- [Event Name] – [Date]

 **We Value Your Feedback:**

[Insert Survey Link]

Thank you again for your partnership and commitment to supporting students and families. We welcome continued collaboration and would be happy to explore future partnership opportunities.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Title]

[School/District Name]

Follow Up Email Templates

Sponsor

New message

Subject: Thank You for Your Support of Family Meal Night

Dear [Sponsor Name/Organization],

Thank you for your generous support of our Family Meal Night. Your partnership helped make this event possible and created a meaningful experience for students and families in our community.

Because of your support, we were able to provide [taste tests / materials / activities] and welcome over [#] students and family members to engage, explore school meals, and connect in a fun and welcoming environment centered on student health and well-being.

We were proud to recognize [Company Name] as a valued community partner throughout the event and across our communications.

 **Event Photos:**

[Insert Photo Link]

Your support helped create lasting connections and meaningful engagement for our families.

We are grateful for your commitment to supporting children, families, and healthy communities. We would welcome the opportunity to partner again on future events and continue this important work together.

Please feel free to reach out if you would like to discuss future opportunities or ways to stay involved.

With appreciation,

[Your Name]

[Title]

[School/District Name]

Parent Feedback Survey

Thank you for attending our Family Meal Night! Please take a minute to share your feedback.

1 Overall, how would you rate this event?

- Excellent
- Good
- Okay
- Needs Improvement

2 What did you enjoy most? (Check all that apply)

- The food
- Spending time with my child at school
- Learning about school meals
- Activities (games, taste tests, etc.)
- Meeting school staff
- Other:

3 Did this event change how you feel about school meals?

- Yes, more positive
- No change
- Not sure

4 How likely are you to encourage your child to eat school meals?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not likely

5 What would you like to see at future events?

6 How did you hear about this event?

- Email
- Flyer
- Social media
- School staff
- My child
- Other:

Student Feedback Survey

We want to hear from YOU! Tell us what you think!

1 Did you have fun?

Yes!

Kind of

Not really

2 What was your favorite part?

The food

The games

Being with my family

Other:

3 Did you like the food?

Loved it!

It was okay

Didn't like it

4 Would you eat school lunch more often?

Yes!

Maybe

No

5 Draw or write your favorite part of the event below:

Staff and Partner Feedback Survey

Thank you for helping make our Family Meal Night a success! Please take a few minutes to share your feedback.

1 What was your role at the event?

School staff
Nutrition staff
Volunteer
Partner organization
Other:

2 Overall, how would you rate your experience supporting this event?

Excellent
Good
Okay
Needs Improvement

**3 What worked especially well during the event?
(Check all that apply)**

Event organization/planning
Family participation/engagement
Food and taste tests
Activities (games, stations, etc.)
Communication with staff/partners
Other:

4 From your perspective, did this event positively impact how families view school meals?

Yes, definitely
Somewhat
Not sure
No

5 How engaged were families during the event?

Very engaged
Somewhat engaged
Not very engaged

6 Were your role and responsibilities clear during the event?

Yes
Somewhat
No

7 What would you like to see improved for future events?

8 What would have helped you feel more prepared or supported?

9 Would you be interested in supporting a future event like this?

Yes
Maybe
No

This toolkit is designed to provide the inspiration, tools, and guidance needed to host a successful Family Meal Event at any school. By bringing together students, families, and the community, these events offer a unique opportunity to create lasting impressions that promote healthier eating habits and increase awareness of the vital role school meals play in supporting student success. Every step—whether in planning, engaging, or following up—helps to build stronger community connections and fosters a positive, sustainable impact on the school’s nutrition program. The goal is to create an event that celebrates nutritious food, strengthens community ties, and contributes to a healthier future for all students.

