

# Tips for Increasing Participation in the NSLP

Based off of recent brainstorming results from ADE trainings – Summer 2012

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## How will you market the new meal pattern to increase or maintain participation in the National School Lunch Program?

- Send home surveys to parents to get feedback on what they would like to see served to their children and what their children are liking/disliking so far.
- Have a 'suggestions' or feedback forms available to the students and community (hard copy and online).
- Utilize resources such as 'Fuel Up to Play 60' and 'Let's Move' salad bars to schools, to help enhance the lunchroom and increase participation.
- Put up signage relating to new meals.
- Make your salad bar or serving line resemble the rainbow or 'serve the rainbow' in fruits and veggies.
- Have a 'specials' tray displayed at the front of the serving line just like a restaurant would feature their daily specials to make the food look appealing and to show students what a reimbursable meal looks like.
- Provide a sample of new foods or fruits and veggies that students might not be familiar with to increase participation and likelihood that the students will eat the food.
- Build your own sandwich station to simulate what they would experience at their favorite sandwich shop (maybe a ½ sandwich depending on the portion size/credits of your grain component).
- Hold a competition to name menu items – each class or grade group can vote on it. The example in the training was 'Loco Tacos'.
- Hold a classroom competition to see which class can try the most variety of fruits and veggies (include nutrition education).
- A-Z salad bar: 1<sup>st</sup> week is A-E and includes apple, broccoli, carrots, date, eggplant etc.
- Have a fruit/veggie coloring contest, the prize is having their artwork displayed.
- Give out a list of available components and allow students to vote on their favorite ones to be served on a given day (i.e. Friday can be 'Kid's Choice Day'). Announce the winners each week or month so that kids will be interested in going to the cafeteria to see what their classmates came up with.
- Give a prize such as a pencil or eraser when you see students taking an extra fruit or veggie.
- Send a letter (or monthly newsletter) home to parents outlining the changes due to the new meal pattern to help field questions and encourage participation.
- Have samples at open house for parents and children to try together (or on meet the teacher night).
- Create a daily menu in a 'Myplate' format.
- Chef demonstrations in classrooms.
- Have theme weeks for the menu.
- Package food differently to get kids interested, and create convenience.
- Have a 'culture day' to train staff on the new healthy menu and create excitement over the re-branding and new menu items.
- CLEAN SALAD BARS AND LUNCH LINES. The cleaner they are, the more appealing they will be.
- Lucky Tray Day. When a child gets a tray with a sticker on the bottom they get a prize.
- Use 'Color My Tray' boards to help with nutrition education.
- Have the school mascot promote the new meal enhancements and healthy eating.

## What changes are you making to your menu right now due to the new meal pattern that could help increase participation in your program? What changes could you institute in the future?

- Roll out the new "Flaming Hot Jicama" instead of Cheetos (Jicama cut into matchsticks rolled in chili powder).
- Celery with peanut butter cups
- Sliced apples with peanut butter
- Mini pizzas on whole wheat English muffins

- Use dried fruit in deserts instead of chocolate chips
- Add shredded carrots and celery to chicken salad or other 'salads'
- Meatless Mondays
- Utilize [thelunchbox.org](http://thelunchbox.org) for recipe ideas.

**What are you going to do NOW to get parents to turn in their household applications?**

- Solicit a parent or volunteer to help coordinate.
- Work with PTO on ideas and resources for collecting applications.
- Offer prizes at a classroom level to incentivize the submission of applications (could be monetary or cost efficient, examples were: a drawing for a bike or gas cards).
- Do classroom tours to educate teachers and students about positive changes.
- Have a 'banquet' night for all families that submit a household application, the example given was spaghetti and meatball night.
- Parents get a lunch 'date' for their child when they turn in their application, lunch is on the house.
- If the families bring their application in they get to meet their teachers early.

\*Disclaimer, incentives and prizes should only be used if they are donated to the food service department. Food service funds should not be used to purchase prizes.