



Media Release Guide

The following information was adapted from “School Nutrition Media Release: Tips and Templates” by the Institute of Child Nutrition.



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(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: [\(202\) 690-7442](tel:2026907442); or

(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Writing Media Releases

Sending out regular media releases can help you develop a relationship with local media outlets, who will then be more likely to come to you for accurate, reliable information when child nutrition news stories are developing. The [School Nutrition Association](#) (SNA) and other organizations provide media release templates for many national events (such as School Breakfast Week) and general nutrition issues, but sometimes you may want to put together your own, specific to your school meal program.

What can you write about in a media release?

- Promote school nutrition related events (such as National School Lunch Week)
- Announce new program offerings or significant changes
- Call attention to healthier options (e.g., pizza with whole grain crust)
- Celebrate successes (e.g., increasing white milk selection, decreasing food waste)
- Comment on national trends that are being incorporated into your program (e.g., customizable bowls, vegetarian/meatless Monday, sriracha, ethnic/global cuisine, etc.)

What should you include in a media release?

1. **School or department name:** Send out release on school letterhead if possible, or at least include your logo
2. **Contact information:** Name, phone number, fax number, e-mail address, website, and social media addresses (if applicable)
3. **Release date:** Specific date or you may write “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE”
4. **Headline:** A short, catchy phrase that sums up the release and grabs attention
5. **Body:** The who, what, where, when, and why of the story



Media Release Templates and Examples

On the following pages are media release templates and examples that you can adapt or use for inspiration when writing your own. Make sure to insert your school logo at the top of the page or use school letterhead!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact:

_____ (Contact name)
_____ (Title, e.g., School Nutrition Director)
_____ (School name)
_____ (Telephone number)
_____ (Fax number)
_____ (E-mail address)

SMART NUTRITION IS ON THE MENU IN _____ (insert name) SCHOOL DISTRICT

New kid-friendly choices focus on improving both health and academic performance

_____ (city), _____ (state) – _____ (date)

Some healthy new items have been showing up on the breakfast and lunch menus in the _____ (insert name) School District. And, to the amazement of many adults, kids from kindergarten to high school are enjoying good-for-them foods – even _____ (insert food)!

“We recognize the importance of school meals in children’s lives,” says School Nutrition director _____ (insert name). “Our foodservice staff carefully plans breakfast and lunch menus that provide the nutritional balance which helps our students be fit, healthy, and ready to learn. Over the past _____ (insert timeframe), we have made some real improvements, like _____ (describe specific changes - more fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains, baked chips, low fat cooking techniques, use of new kitchen equipment).”

With an enrollment of _____ (insert number) students, _____ (insert name) District cafeterias serve over _____ (insert number) breakfasts and _____ (insert number) lunches to students lunches per month. “It’s been easier than we thought to get children to eat more of the foods that are good for their bodies and their brains,” says Nutrition director _____ (insert name). “With all the healthy changes we’ve made, we’re thrilled that our participation rates have actually increased during _____ (insert timeframe).”

National surveys show that many youth are overweight and even more are undernourished. Poor eating habits mean that significant numbers of children do not get the recommended amount of key nutrients, like vitamins A and C, calcium, iron, and fiber. Serving more nutritious choices at school breakfast and lunch helps provide the brainpower students need for academic success.

Changes in school meals are just some of the many ways that _____ (insert name) School District is focusing on the critical connection between student health and performance in the classroom. “When children are well-nourished and physically fit, they are better able to pay attention in class and do well on tests,” says _____ (insert name of administrator). “In addition to teaching smart eating habits in the cafeteria, we are also _____ (describe other improvements in school wellness, nutrition or physical activity).”



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact:

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SMART NUTRITION IS ON THE MENU IN BILLINGS SCHOOL DISTRICT

New kid-friendly choices focus on improving both health and academic performance

Billings, Montana – January 1, 2008

Some healthy new items have been showing up on the breakfast and lunch menus in the Billings Public School District. And, to the amazement of many adults, kids from kindergarten to high school are enjoying good-for-them foods – even spinach and oven baked “fries”!

“We recognize the importance of school meals in children’s lives,” says Food Services Manager Bette Hunt. “Our foodservice staff carefully plans breakfast and lunch menus that provide the nutritional balance which helps our students be fit, healthy, and ready to learn. Over the past few years, we have made some real improvements, like adding fresh spinach to our salad mix and serving only baked fries in our high schools. Salads are offered daily at all levels (elementary, middle, and high school) and we have even reformulated our pizza to be lower in fat.”

With an enrollment of more than 15,400 students, School District 2 cafeterias serve over 34,400_ breakfasts and 155,400 lunches to students per month. “It’s been easier than we thought to get children to eat more of the foods that are good for their bodies and their brains,” says Ms. Hunt. “With all the healthy changes we have made, we are thrilled that our participation rates have actually increased during the past year.”

National surveys show that many youth are overweight and even more are undernourished. Poor eating habits mean that significant numbers of children do not get the recommended amount of key nutrients, like vitamins A and C, calcium, iron, and fiber. Serving more nutritious choices at school breakfast and lunch helps provide the brainpower students need for academic success.

Changes in school meals are just some of the many ways that the Billings Schools are focusing on the critical connection between student health and performance in the classroom. “When children are well-nourished and physically fit, they are better able to pay attention in class and do well on tests,” says Dr. Virginia Mermel, School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) chair. “In addition to teaching smart eating habits in the cafeteria, we are also looking at ways to improve foods and beverages in vending machines and fundraisers.” Billings Schools are also promoting physical activity with before-school walking programs and creating school-based teams for Big Sky Fit Kids (www.bigskyfitkids.org/) and Shape Up Montana (www.shapeupmontana.org/).



For Immediate Release: October 1, 2007

For more information, contact: Anita Finch, RD

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King County Schools Seize Opportunities to Serve Local Foods

King County, WA - With fall harvest in full swing, King County Child Nutrition Directors are identifying opportunities and developing partnerships with Pacific Northwest companies and farms to bring local foods to students in King County schools.

At a time when food often travels farther than ever, the appeal of serving students local foods is obvious: tastier and fresher fare, as well as the opportunity to support neighboring businesses and sustainable agricultural practices. A majority of school districts in King County already serve local foods; many of these districts have been providing locally grown food for over 30 years.

“The economic viability of purchasing locally grown food is very important to Child Nutrition Directors in King County,” says Anita Finch, Seattle Public Schools Child Nutrition Director. “In fact, serving locally grown produce in King County Schools has been a valuable way to not only support local farmers and supplement contracted food services, but also to emphasize what students are learning about healthy lifestyles and nutrition in the classroom.” In addition, buying from local farmers reduces long-distance transportation and handling of foods. Most importantly, child nutrition directors appreciate the opportunity to provide nutritious, fresh and great tasting produce to students in King County.

King County school districts obtain local foods through a variety of channels. One method has been to partner directly with local farms. Auburn Public Schools has established partnerships with Tolt Hill Farms - a certified organic grower with a stall at the University District Saturday Farmer's Market - where Farmer Steve Hallstorm has planted carrots specifically for use in Auburn schools. “We also have purchased fresh fruits and vegetables from the Whistling Train Farm in Kent and the Growing Things Farm in Carnation for school meals. In addition, we take out ads in our community newspapers soliciting local farmers to partner with us to provide fresh fruits and vegetables in the schools”, says Eric Boutin, Auburn Public Schools Child Nutrition Director.

One local farm, American Produce Express, LLC has successfully served multiple King County school districts, including Federal Way, Highline, Kent and Northshore for several years. This Eastern Washington orchard supplies Kent School District with fresh apples whole for secondary menus and sliced apples both individually portioned and in bulk pack for salads. Slicing the fruit has increased the consumption of produce, especially with elementary students. “This direct partnership with the grower, John Butler and American Produce Express, has been a terrific and mutually beneficial experience for both the Kent District and the grower,” according to Kent Child Nutrition Director Dan Johnson, “and it helps us stretch our produce dollars to purchase more fresh local products”.

Linda Hoel, Northshore School District Child Nutrition Director, agrees, “This partnership is win-win; making the most of our produce dollars”. Currently, Northshore School District has salad bars at all elementary schools promoting a “Fruits & Vegetables: More Matter” campaign. “We look forward to expanding our fresh choices through our partnership with American Produce to include sliced apples, pears and pluots,” Hoel adds.



Another way in which King County child nutrition directors can provide locally grown produce is to utilize existing distribution strategies, requesting that produce be supplied by local vendors. Both Seattle Public Schools and Highline Public Schools have found success using this approach. Vendors that have pre-existing relationships with local producers can often procure seasonal local products at competitive prices. “This has been a great way to maintain relationships with our regular supplier through the school year, but also support small farms in Washington State,” says Chris Neal, Highline Public Schools Child Nutrition Director. Seattle Public Schools labels all locally grown produce on the monthly menus with a space needle symbol, and has served a variety of local foods during the month of September, including cucumbers, pears, plums and carrots.

Similarly, Highline Public Schools features a “Harvest of the Month”, in which a locally grown fruit or vegetable is featured on the lunch menu and highlighted on the menu back. Fruits and vegetables are not the only local foods that school district provide. Seattle Public Schools also purchases Darigold milk and yogurt, which come from a local farm. In addition, Seattle Public Schools fish products come from Trident, a Pacific Northwest company.

Despite the success of serving locally grown produce in King County Schools, child nutrition directors have discovered that there can be significant barriers to creating effective relationships with local farms. Challenges such as growing seasons, ensuring an adequate supply and uniformity of product, bid laws, delivery and payment procedures are issues that can create difficulty in making and sustaining effective partnerships. “Good communication at the beginning of the process, ensuring growers/suppliers can provide sufficient volume as well as designing menus that to reflect the seasonality of locally grown foods are all crucial for successful partnerships,” says Mary Asplund, Federal Way Public Schools Child Nutrition Director.

Purchasing local foods for use in King County school districts is mutually beneficial for both schools and farms. Local farmers benefit when increased demand for locally grown produce creates new market opportunities. Students in King County Schools benefit when school lunches provide them with opportunities to not only develop healthy eating habits, but to learn where food comes from through cafeteria-to-classroom connections. And Child Nutrition Directors benefit by supporting local companies and serving up tasty and seasonal produce.

Note: Photo opportunities in school lunchrooms and with local food producers can be arranged at your request.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL PROGRAM COMING TO A SCHOOL NEAR YOU

East St. Louis, IL – June 2, 2017

Many Illinois schools are getting ready to implement “Breakfast After the Bell” programs this fall, but some have already gotten a head start. In a pep talk of sorts this past spring, Dr. Tesha Robinson, Principal at Wyvetter Younge Alternative Center (East St. Louis District 189), said to her teachers, “Breakfast After the Bell is mandated and we want to be ready for it from the beginning. By conducting a pilot, we can ensure that we are properly prepared.”

Dr. Robinson, referring to the Breakfast After the Bell legislation (SB 2393) passed in August 2016, has been a supporter of the bill, which will increase student access to breakfast. More than 817,000 Illinois students rely on a free or reduced-price lunch, and fewer than half of them are starting the day off with breakfast. Transportation issues, little appetite in the morning, and access to food can all get in the way of eating a nutritious breakfast.

That’s where Breakfast After the Bell comes in. Starting in Fall 2017, schools with at least 70% of students eligible to receive free or reduced price meals will be required to serve breakfast after the instructional day begins. Dr. Robinson’s school, Wyvetter Younge, is just one of many in East St. Louis District 189 falling into that category. Knowing that there may be some issues to work out, the district partnered with University of Illinois Extension and Chartwells Food Service this past spring to prepare and pilot Breakfast After the Bell in advance of the 2017-2018 school year.

The district learned that the bill allows schools flexibility in choosing the right Breakfast After the Bell model for their circumstances and took advantage of this provision. Wyvetter Younge, tested a “Grab and Go” breakfast, in which students picked up packaged breakfasts on their way into the school and then ate in class. Meanwhile, four kindergarten classrooms at Annette Officer Elementary School and twelve 5th grade classrooms at Mason Clark Middle School piloted “Breakfast in the Classroom.” Chartwells Food Service staff prepared breakfast meals taken directly to classrooms, where students were able to eat at their desks.

There may be some concerns about serving food in the classroom: Laquitsha Bejoile-Hayes, UI Extension Program Coordinator, explained that staff are often worried about it distracting from instructional time and leading to messes. After the District 189 pilots, teachers noted that it did take some adjustment, but taking attendance, collecting homework, and making announcements while students ate helped to maximize the class period. Dust buster kits were provided to all participating teachers and students were responsible for cleanup.



Despite initial misgivings, teachers were overwhelmingly positive about the results. One teacher commented that she felt it cut down on behavioral issues and bullying that were happening in the cafeteria, helping her students start their day off positively. Another described less disruption in class and calmer, more focused students.

Further underscoring the success of the pilots was what happened when Breakfast After the Bell came to an end. One educator stated, “This week [after the pilot ended] I’ve had latecomers asking for breakfast. It was heartbreaking to see the sad look on their faces because there was no breakfast available to them.” Mrs. Pippen-Stewart, Chartwell Food Service Lead, explained that before the Breakfast After the Bell pilot, many students who hadn’t eaten breakfast would go down to the cafeteria, crying because they had a headache or their stomach hurt but they were actually hungry.

Amy Funk, UI Extension SNAP-Ed Educator, said “hunger has a known negative impact on children’s academic performance and behavior in school. Breakfast After the Bell is built on research demonstrating that eating breakfast can boost academic performance, improve classroom behavior, and reduce tardiness and absenteeism.” Following the District 189 pilots, “it was exciting to hear the number of teachers that cited improved concentration and better behavior in the mornings during the pilot week, demonstrating the potential positive impact Breakfast After the Bell can have over the course of a year, once implemented,” Funk said. “Thanks to this legislation, thousands of Illinois students will reap the benefits.”

Despite the positives of expanding school breakfast, implementing Breakfast After the Bell does present a major paradigm shift for schools, and it can be a challenge to plan for additional equipment and changes to staffing and logistics. University of Illinois Extension has partnered with the Illinois State Board of Education and Rise & Shine Illinois to help schools prepare for their Breakfast After the Bell programs. UI Extension’s ABCs of School Nutrition staff are available throughout Illinois to provide technical assistance, training, and breakfast promotion.

For more information, visit extension.illinois.edu/abcsofschoolnutrition or contact Amy Funk, SNAP-Ed Extension Educator with the University of Illinois Extension amyfunk@illinois.edu or 618-344-4230.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 1, 2007

EAT RIGHT MONTANA www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm

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MT Department of Public Health & Human Services

Support Smart Nutrition and Fitness at School

With school routines firmly in place, this is a great time to focus on healthy choices at school. In the first year of local wellness policies mandated by the US Congress, districts across Montana have made exciting and significant changes in nutrition and physical activity for students and staff. During October, National School Lunch Week and International Walk to School Month provide perfect opportunities for parents to support the changes in their district. It is also a great time to get involved in ongoing efforts to create the healthiest possible learning environments.

“Montana continues to be a pioneer in creating healthy school environments,” says Katie Bark, RD (Registered Dietitian) with the Team Nutrition Program at Montana State University. “In our efforts to provide what’s best for kids at school, Team Nutrition – funded by a USDA grant – works closely with administrators, teachers, and Child Nutrition Directors in all Montana districts. We also collaborate with the volunteer leaders of statewide groups like Montana Action for Healthy Kids and Montana PTA, as well as local community groups across the state.”

During National School Lunch Week – October 15 through 19 – Montana school cafeterias will celebrate a national trend towards healthier lunches. Parents, grandparents, and other family members are encouraged to join their children for lunch – and taste the positive changes in school meals for themselves. Some of the exciting changes in Montana schools include:

- **Billings:** Both School District #2 and Billings Catholic Schools have switched to healthier a la carte items in middle schools. Veggie boats and fruit cups have been sell-out hits.
- **Box Elder** schools won a HealthierUS School Challenge Award for their efforts, including a morning nutrition break for teens, a salad bar for grades 6-8, and fruit bars for all ages.
- **Lewistown schools** have increased participation and improved nutrition with healthy Grab-and-Go high school meals, daily entrée salads, and fresh fruits/veggies four days a week.

To learn more about Montana school wellness in action, download Making It Happen in Montana at www.opi.mt.gov/PDF/SchoolFood/SchoolWellCaseStudies.pdf

Many districts will use International Walk to School Month and Walk to School Day on October 3rd to showcase safe routes for walking or biking to school – one of the easiest ways to increase children’s daily physical activity. Schools from Billings to Vaughn have already registered at www.walktoschool.org/who/seestate.cfm?st=MT, where groups can find ideas for events and materials to distribute to children and families. Examples of fun activities in schools include:

- **Bozeman’s Emily Dickinson Elementary** will kick-off Walk/Bike/Wheel to School Month at a party with their mascot (Carlo the Newfoundland), healthy snacks and a bicycle drawing.
- **Gardiner’s** first-time WTSD event will include neighborhood “walking school buses,” smart breakfast snacks at school, and a “Be Safe, Be Seen” Fashion Show for participating students.
- **Shelby Elementary** will have *Walk-and-Wheel Wednesdays* all year. By completing punch cards whenever they bike or walk to school, students will be eligible for prize drawings.

Past and current issues of Eat Right Montana’s monthly packets can be downloaded free at www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm. Additional tips for smart nutrition at school and active school days are attached.