

South Carolina
School Food Service Program Reference Manual
Contributor - All
Chapter 23 – Student & Parent Involvement

Table of Contents

Document Activities.....	23-1
Develop a Plan for Student and Parent Involvement	23-1
Assess Current Activities.....	23-1
Determine Needs	23-1
Collect Resources	23-2
Plan for Involvement	23-3
Activities to Involve Students and Parents.....	23-3
Nutrition Advisory Councils (NACs).....	23-5
How to Form a NAC	23-5
Activities for a NAC	23-6
Rewards for NAC Members	23-7
How to Develop a Food Preference Survey	23-7
Design the Survey.....	23-7
Administer the Survey	23-7
Collect and Combine the Results	23-7
Share the Results.....	23-7
Plan for Improvement.....	23-8
Forms:	
Documentation of Activities for Parent/Student Involvement & Nutrition Education	23-A
Taste Testers Survey for Elementary School Students.....	23-B
Sample Customer Survey for Elementary and Middle School Students	23-C
Sample Customer Survey for Middle and High School Students	23-D

Chapter 23 – Student and Parent Involvement

Federal and state regulations require that schools involve students and parents in the National School Lunch Program. In schools with kindergarten through 5th grade, food service managers must meet with the 4th and 5th graders at least twice per year. Student and parent involvement improves the overall acceptance of school meals and increases participation levels. Such activities may include menu planning, enhancement of the school nutrition environment, program promotion, wellness policy, and related community support activities.

Document Activities

Since involvement of students and parents is a requirement, schools should document all activities. Form 23-A, Documentation of Activities for Parent/Student Involvement & Nutrition Education may be used or the school/School Food Authority (SFA) may document activities using an alternate method of their choice.

Develop a Plan for Student and Parent Involvement

Assess Current Activities

The type of parent and student involvement is left to the discretion of the individual school. This gives the school flexibility to plan and implement a program to meet its individual needs. Before designing a program of student and parent involvement, identify existing activities. Are any of the following or similar activities currently being conducted in your school?

- Are menus distributed to students and sent home to parents?
- Are student and/or parent advisory committees participating in planning Child Nutrition Program (CNP) activities?
- Do CNP personnel speak at parent, teacher, student and/or school board meetings?
- Are surveys conducted to determine students' food preferences?
- Is nutrition education taught in the classroom?
- Is the CNP department used as a “learning laboratory” to supplement classroom instruction?

Determine Needs

Determine if current activities are adequate to involve students and parents in the CNP or if additional activities should be planned. It may be helpful to form a committee of interested parties to assist in assessing the need and planning future actions.

Collect Resources

There are many resources available for parent and student involvement activities. For a more complete list, see Chapter 31 – Resources, in this *Program Reference Manual*. Some resources that may be of specific interest include the following:

- **Student, parent and other school and community organizations**
 - Parent-Teacher Organization
 - Student Council

Chapter 23 – Student and Parent Involvement

- Student Government Association
- Site Council
- Rotary Club
- Lions Club
- School Improvement Council
- C-SHACs

- **Nutrition education and promotional materials**
 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) distributed *Changing the Scene – Improving the School Nutrition Environment* to all SFAs in 2000. Copies may be obtained (while supplies last) from www.fns.usda.gov/tn. This kit provides suggestions for examining your school’s nutrition environment, developing a plan for improvement and putting the plan into action.
 - Team Nutrition
 - *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010*
 - www.MyPlate.Gov

- **School and community health and nutrition professionals**
 - School nurse
 - Registered Dietitian
 - Food and Consumer Science Extension Agents
 - Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) or county health departments

- **Allied Health and Professional Organizations**
 - Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
 - Action for Healthy Kids
 - Alliance for a Healthier Generation
 - American Heart Association
 - American Cancer Society
 - Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
 - School Nutrition Association
 - National Food Service Management Institute

- **Media**
 - School newspapers and websites
 - Local radio and TV stations
 - Local newspapers

- **Agricultural Producer Organizations** – See [Chapter 31 - Resources](#) for contact information
 - National Cattleman’s Beef Association
 - National Dairy Council
 - Others (e.g. wheat, egg, specific fruits and vegetables)

Chapter 23 – Student and Parent Involvement

Plan for Involvement

Establish objectives and goals for a program to promote student and parent involvement that are realistic and consistent with the identified needs. The plan of action should be designed to use existing resources and meet the established goals and objectives. The plan could include:

- Description of activities to be performed;
- List of resources needed to carry out the activities;
- Description of how to use existing resources;
- Timetable for implementing each activity;
- Person(s) responsible for each activity; and/or
- Evaluation procedures to determine the effectiveness of the activities.

In order to effectively implement a program of student and parent involvement, it is essential to:

- Establish communication with all groups who will be affected and/or directly involved;
- Present the plan to these groups; and
- Gain approval and support.

The approval and support of local school officials are vital to an effective program of student and parent involvement. The attitudes and acceptance of the CNP by local school administrators often have a direct impact on students' and parents' attitudes.

Activities to Involve Students and Parents

Many activities can be implemented to promote student and parent involvement. Activities can be very simple or complex. Work to develop a comprehensive plan consistent with local needs and abilities to involve students and parents in all aspects of program operations. Try some of the activities listed below to involve students and parents in the program.

1. Provide program information in student and parent handbooks or other school enrollment materials.
2. Design creative menus to post in the school and distribute to parents and students. Advertise the day's menu on an attractive menu board. Print menus in the school or local newspaper and include on the school website.
3. Celebrate special occasions with special menus. Examples include holiday meals, ethnic meals, National School Lunch Week, National School Breakfast Week, athletic victories, etc. Coordinate ethnic meals with language studies, social studies, and/or history classes. Have students participate by decorating the dining area, designing costumes, providing music, etc.
4. Invite parents, grandparents, business partners, or other people in the community to have lunch at school.
5. Sponsor a Parents' Night and invite families to enjoy a school meal.
6. Create a dinner theater by serving a meal to accompany a school theatrical production.

Chapter 23 – Student and Parent Involvement

7. Plan projects to improve the appearance of the dining area. Use bulletin boards, special holiday or seasonal decorations, and student artwork, etc.
8. Prepare articles and/or pictures for use in the local newspaper, student newsletter and/or school website. Articles might feature menus, meal statistics, special activities, Offer versus Serve, or nutrition information.
9. Write news items for the school and local newspapers, highlighting a nutrition education item for the week or month, or assist students in writing such articles.
10. Supply weekly or monthly news bulletins to parents on the school menus, suggestions for home meals, recipes, marketing and nutritional tips. These bulletins could be placed in local newspapers or printed on the back of lunch menus sent home to parents.
11. Conduct guided tours of the kitchen and serving area for students and parents.
12. Allow classes to plan menus. Before the menu is planned, visit the classroom to discuss requirements and good nutrition principles.
13. Discuss nutrition in the classroom. Plan to evaluate one week's cafeteria menus to determine if they meet the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010*. Evaluate the menus as to variety, texture and color.
14. Allow students to complete a nutrient analysis of the school lunch menus. Provide a nutrient analysis of the school lunch menus for parents.
15. Serve as a resource person for food and nutrition subject areas. Provide and/or present information on the CNP and nutrition to classes.
16. Sponsor food and nutrition fairs and exhibits with school and community health professionals and/or teachers. Students and parents can assist in planning, organizing, providing publicity or designing and staffing exhibits.
17. Establish a nutrition education resource center in cooperation with the school media specialist and make materials available for checkout to students and school personnel.
18. Establish a Nutrition Advisory Council (NAC) to help with planning activities – menus, nutrition education, decorating and improving the cafeteria environment, etc. See the section entitled, "Nutrition Advisory Councils (NACs)" provided in this chapter of the *Program Reference Manual* for additional information.
19. Form a parent advisory committee from within the local Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) to discuss topics such as school nutrition regulations, budgets, food allergies, breakfast in the classroom, the commodity program, school wellness policy, ways of increasing participation, alternate menu items and possible menu changes.
20. Use the child nutrition program as a learning laboratory for science classes in relation to food and food handling.
21. Provide special training sessions for student athletes on sports nutrition education.

Chapter 23 – Student and Parent Involvement

22. Discuss the CNP and nutrition at student assemblies, PTA/PTO meetings and other meetings of students, parents and teachers.
23. Invite a guest speaker, such as a local health professional, to speak to the student body on nutrition and health.
24. Conduct taste-testing events to evaluate new products and recipes. Students, parents and teachers could serve on the taste-test panel. See Form 23-B, Taste Testers Survey for Elementary School Students and Form 23-C, Let Us Hear From You provided in this chapter of the *Program Reference Manual* for sample taste test forms.
25. Invite students or parents to complete a food preference questionnaire to determine their likes and dislikes. See the section provided in this chapter entitled, “How to Develop a Food Preference Survey” (p.23-7) and Form 23-D, Sample Customer Survey for Middle and High School Students.
26. Conduct a plate waste survey and discuss with students possible improvements to reduce waste.
27. Sponsor contests to improve school lunch participation, nutrition awareness, etc. Contests could help to select the best student-made nutrition poster, ideas for cafeteria design, recipes, etc. Use rewards that promote good nutrition.
28. Sponsor a student advertising campaign to increase participation in the CNP.

Nutrition Advisory Councils (NACs)

NACs are student organizations or clubs that provide advice to nutrition programs and fellow students. They can be an excellent resource for the child nutrition program and for other students. A NAC can help by:

1. Assisting with marketing efforts by providing ideas and by decorating the dining area and serving line(s).
2. Providing an opportunity for students to learn about nutrition and health.
3. Serving as a communication bridge between students, administrators, CNP personnel, faculty, parents and the community.

How to Form a NAC

To form a NAC, follow these easy steps.

1. Establish a few realistic goals for the NAC to accomplish in the first year.
2. Obtain the support of the principal and other administrators. Be prepared to market your program and to discuss your goals for your program and for the NAC.
3. Enlist the support of the CNP staff. Be prepared to discuss the time commitment required by involvement with the NAC and the advantages of the NAC (for example,

Chapter 23 – Student and Parent Involvement

assistance with marketing efforts, increased participation, improved communication within school community, etc.)

4. Recruit a faculty member to lead the group (for example, the school nurse, physical education teacher, counselor, classroom teacher, etc.). Someone visible to students can help publicize it and support the efforts of the group.
5. Recruit approximately 10-15 students to serve on the NAC. Members may be of any age. Possibilities include the following:
 - The NAC may be a sub-committee of the Student Council.
 - The principal or school faculty may choose members for the NAC.
 - Student elections may be held to determine who should serve on the NAC.
6. Join the national NAC organization sponsored by the School Nutrition Association (SNA) to obtain a handbook, newsletters, technical support, etc. Call SNA at 1-301-686-3100 for more information.
7. Plan a small budget to meet anticipated NAC expenses each year. NAC activities may include fund raising events that support other NAC efforts.

Activities for a NAC

NACs can conduct several types of activities and contribute in many ways. Urge students to play meaningful roles though. Steer them away from activities that are just fun and games. Possibilities include the following:

1. Menu Planning – Provide a worksheet and help your student advisors plan menus that reflect the dietary guidelines and new SLP/SPB meal patterns. Be sure to recognize student input by printing their names on the menus or posting them in the dining area..
2. Taste Testing – Have NAC members taste test new products from vendors, school-made products and fresh fruits and vegetables. Discuss the nutritional contribution of the food. Ask for their advice on how to prepare the food and on how to introduce them to the other students.
3. Marketing – Let NAC members develop a marketing campaign for the year, decorate bulletin boards, make announcements over the school PA system, develop advertisements and/or posters, and then evaluate their efforts.
4. Customer Survey – Work with NAC members to develop and conduct a survey. Students may be more likely to complete a questionnaire if conducted by their peers. Ask teachers to encourage and collect responses.

Chapter 23 – Student and Parent Involvement

Rewards for NAC Members

NAC student advisors not only gain new skills but often find their work fun. Still, it's important to reward them in tangible ways. Such recognition keeps commitment high. Here are a few popular ideas.

1. **Publicity** – Everyone likes to see their name in print. List the names of NAC members in school newsletters, local newspapers, on menus, bulletin boards, etc. Print nametags for members to wear at meetings and at an Open House. Present certificates of appreciation at a board meeting.
2. **Special Identification** – Reward group members with logo items such as T-shirts, water bottles, visors, note pads, etc. Limit distribution so they remain “special” and encourage their use as a sign of distinction. Give as “welcome aboard” items or as thank you gifts.
3. **Food** – Provide healthy snacks at meetings and offer taste tests.

How to Develop a Food Preference Survey

Design the Survey

- Identify the topics on which you want the students' opinions. Possibilities include the variety of food offered, quality of food, attractiveness of food on the serving line, friendliness of servers and atmosphere in the cafeteria.
- Phrase questions carefully to avoid prompting either a positive or negative response.
- Use a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions.
- Ask the students to identify their age, gender and whether they do or do not regularly participate in the CNP in question (i.e. breakfast, lunch, snack, etc.)
- Ask for opinions on only those things that the program is willing to change or implement. For example, do not ask students if they want a particular food available daily if it is not a realistic possibility.

Administer the Survey

- If necessary, secure approval and support from administrators, teachers and parents.
- Select the most appropriate setting by asking yourself which will reach the broadest group of students and encourage them to take the survey seriously.
- Consider the month, day and time that the survey is to be administered.

Collect and Combine the Results

Get help if possible. Some SFAs have equipment available to scan computer surveys. Consider asking a math or science class or the NAC to combine the results as part of a project. Have students interpret the results and make recommendations for solving any problems that they identify.

Share the Results

Chapter 23 – Student and Parent Involvement

Report the results to the students so that they know you heard them. Let them know what you plan to do with the new information.

Plan for Improvement

- Meet with the CNP staff and administrators if appropriate to plan a few changes.
- Make changes gradually.
- Tell the students when you make a change that they recommended just in case they don't notice.

See Form 23-D for a sample customer satisfaction survey for middle and high school students. The National Food Service Management Institute also has a variety of surveys available at reduced prices. Access information at www.nfsmi.org

Use Form 23-A, Documentation of Activities for Parent/Student Involvement & Nutrition Education or an alternate method of your choice to document activities each year. Make additional copies of the form as needed and keep the forms on file. Review the success of current activities when planning future activities.

Documentation of Activities for Parent/Student Involvement & Nutrition Education

See Chapter 23 – Student & Parent Involvement of the *Program Reference Manual* for information and suggested activities.

Target Date _____ Actual Completion Date: _____

Description of Activity:

Evaluation/Comments:

Number of Attendees: _____ Group Type (parents, students, etc.): _____

Target Date _____ Actual Completion Date: _____

Description of Activity:

Evaluation/Comments:

Number of Attendees: _____ Group Type (parents, students, etc.): _____

Target Date _____ Actual Completion Date: _____

Description of Activity:

Evaluation/Comments:

Number of Attendees: _____ Group Type (parents, students, etc.): _____

Taste Testers Survey for Elementary School Students

Grade: _____

Please put a mark in the box that describes how much you do or do not like each food.

Food: _____



<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Good O.K. Not so
Good

Food: _____



<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Good O.K. Not so
Good

Food: _____



<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Good O.K. Not so
Good

Food: _____



<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Good O.K. Not so
Good

Sample Customer Survey for Elementary and Middle School Students

Let Us Hear From You

You can help us provide the very best quality food by taking just a few minutes to complete these questions.

Menu Item: _____

	Good	Fair	Unsatisfactory
1. Food appearance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Food taste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Food texture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Food temperature	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments or suggestions:

Date: _____ Grade: _____

THANK YOU!

Let Us Hear From You

You can help us provide the very best quality food by taking just a few minutes to complete these questions.

Menu Item: _____

	Good	Fair	Unsatisfactory
1. Food appearance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Food taste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Food texture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Food temperature	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments or suggestions:

Date: _____ Grade: _____

THANK YOU!

Sample Customer Survey for Middle and High School Students

Please take a minute to give us your feedback. Your opinions are very important to us!

Food Choices & Quality	Very Satisfied		Not Satisfied		
	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, how satisfied are you with the food:					
Quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Appearance?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Taste?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Temperature?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Quantity?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Choices?	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Customer Service	Very Satisfied		Not Satisfied		
	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, how satisfied are you with the:					
Courtesy and friendliness of the staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Speed of service?	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Cafeteria Environment	Very Satisfied		Not Satisfied		
	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, how satisfied are you with the:					
Cafeteria's cleanliness?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Cafeteria's appearance?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Cafeteria's noise level?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Cafeteria's overall atmosphere?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Amount of time available to eat?	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Prices	Very Satisfied		Not Satisfied		
	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, how satisfied are you with the prices charged for:					
Complete meals?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Individually priced items?	<input type="checkbox"/>				

(Over please)

Sample Customer Survey for Middle and High School Students, Page 2

Please tell us about you.

When you eat lunch at school, which items below do you usually take? (Check all that apply.)

- Milk
- Fruit
- Vegetable
- Main dish/entrée
- Bread
- Dessert

How often do you eat lunch provided by the school?

- Every day
- 3 or 4 days a week
- 1 or 2 days a week
- Less than once a week
- Never

How often do you bring lunch from home?

- All the time
- 3 or 4 days a week
- 1 or 2 days a week
- Less than once a week
- Never

How often do you go somewhere else for lunch besides home or school?

- All the time
- 3 or 4 days a week
- 1 or 2 days a week
- Less than once a week
- Never

What ideas or suggestions do you have for improving any aspect of the Child Nutrition Program at your school?

What is your grade? _____

What is your name? (Optional) _____

THANK YOU!