

WELLNESS WEDNESDAY

National School Lunch Week (NSLW)

Nutritional Development Services | October 2025



October 13th - 17th, 2025

This annual observance promotes the importance of eating a healthy school lunch and the impact it has both in and out of the classroom. The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) was created to provide nutritious meals to children from low-income families who might not otherwise have access to a daily meal. NSLP ensures the health and well-being of all school students, boosts academic performance by giving students the fuel they need to succeed, and closes the opportunity gap for children across the country.

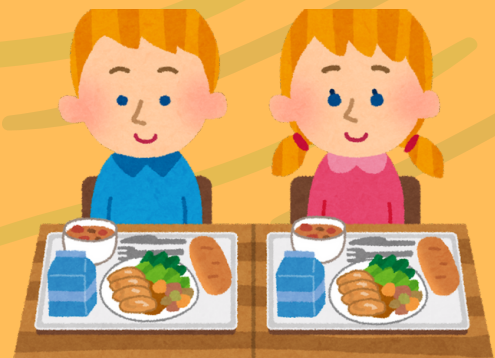
The NSLP offers students a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and fat free or low-fat milk at every meal. Federal nutrition standards also ensure these meals are within age-appropriate calorie levels and limit both unhealthy fats and sodium.

Goals of NSLW

- Increase student participation.
- Spread the message to parents that healthy lunches are available for students at school.
- Connect with teachers and administrators to spread the word that school meals are available.

How to Celebrate

- Decorate the cafeteria and hallways with NSLW posters or student artwork portraying nutritious lunch foods.
- Promote the week-long celebration on your school website, social media, and communication to parents.
- Incorporate healthy lunch discussions in lesson plans. Encourage students to share favorite meals and stories.
- Host special visitor(s) to join students at lunch time.
- Highlight school nutrition professionals. Recognize and appreciate the hard work of the school nutrition staff who serve students meals every day.



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Seasonal Fall Produce

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Eating seasonal produce hosts several benefits including increase nutrient intake, improved flavor and freshness, and cost savings. Further, it supports local farmers and reduces the environmental impact of food transportation. Below are examples of fall produce. Aim to try and incorporate as many as you can this month!

Find Seasonal Fall Recipes [here!](#)

Pumpkin

Pumpkin is full of dietary fiber and beta-carotene, which provides its vibrant orange color. Beta-carotene converts into vitamin A in the body, which is great for your skin and eyes. To balance pumpkin's sweetness, try adding savory herbs, such as sage and curry.



Cranberries

Cranberries offer a wealth of nutritional benefits. Fresh and dried cranberries pair well with a variety of meats and poultry. Fresh cranberries can be eaten raw but often are cooked. Dried cranberries are delicious in grain and vegetable salads and make a healthy snack on the go.



Pears

Pears are the most delicious in the fall when they're at their peak. Pears are unique in that they do not ripen on the tree; they will ripen at room temperature after they're picked. You know a pear is ripe if the fruit near the stem gives to a little pressure. There are a wide range of pear flavors and textures. Try pears on the grill, poached in red wine, tucked into a panini, pureed into soup or a smoothie, or simply sliced with cheese.



Parsnips

Parsnips are cousins to carrots — they have the same root shape but with white flesh. They're typically eaten cooked, but also can be eaten raw. One-half cup of cooked parsnips is full of dietary fiber (3 grams) and contains more than 10% of the daily values of vitamin C and folate. Try them roasted, pureed into soup or mashed. You can even top a shepherd's pie with mashed parsnips instead of the traditional mashed potatoes!



Spaghetti Squash

Spaghetti squash is a fun, kid-friendly vegetable that is a lower-calorie and gluten-free alternative to grain-based pasta. Cut one in half and scoop out the seeds. You can cook either in the microwave or oven until tender. Scrape the flesh with a fork and spaghetti-like strands will appear! Toss with pesto or marinara sauce.



Kale

One cup of raw kale has only 8 calories and is loaded with vitamins A, C and K, as well as manganese. Kale is great sautéed and cooked in soup, but also is excellent raw in salad; simply remove tough stems, slice into thin slivers and pair with something a bit sweet such as carrots or apples. One advantage of using kale for your leafy greens is that you can add dressing ahead of time; kale becomes more tender and delicious, not wilted.



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Healthy Halloween Celebration

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Holiday celebrations and family events are great opportunities to promote a healthy lifestyle, provide consistent messages and create excitement around nutritious choices and physical activity at school. Halloween is a celebration focused on sweet treats, but you can switch out sweets—without any tricks—and emphasize the importance of healthy foods.



HALLOWEEN



Fun and Active Games

- Host a costume dance party: Encourage kids to dance and show off their costumes to upbeat music.
- Organize a Halloween scavenger hunt: Hide small Halloween-themed toys or healthy treats and provide clues for kids to find them.
- Play active games: Consider activities like a mummy wrap relay race (wrapping each other in toilet paper), pumpkin bowling (using pumpkins as bowling balls), or a zombie musical chairs game.
- Halloween-themed charades: Have kids act out different Halloween characters or scenarios.
- "Monster Tag" or "Zombie Tag": One child is the monster, and anyone they tag becomes a monster or zombie.
- Costume Parade: Let kids show off their costumes in a fun parade, either indoors or outdoors.
- Pumpkin Hunt: If you have a yard, hide pumpkins and have kids search for them. You can also visit a pumpkin patch and walk around.

Healthy Halloween Treats

FRUITY SPIDER Students can have fun making these creepy crawlers using grapes and blueberries. Fill toothpicks with a few blueberries to create legs. Stick the legs into a red grape to represent the body of the spider.

BOO-NANA POPS Cut bananas into halves and place onto popsicle sticks. Dip bananas in low-fat yogurt and add toasted oat cereal to create eyes and a mouth. Freeze for 20-30 minutes and enjoy!

VEGGIE SKELETON Create a fun Halloween skeleton using veggies. Use celery sticks for arms and legs, sliced red peppers for ribs, broccoli for hands, and mushrooms and olives for a face. Be creative and enjoy this yummy creation with veggie dip or other low-fat dips.

SPOOKY PIZZA • Create Halloween themed pizza using whole grain crust. • Create ghosts by using ghost shaped cookie cutters on mozzarella cheese. • Add pizza sauce and ghost to whole-grain crust and bake.

For More Healthy Halloween Snack Ideas Click

[HERE](#)

TRICK
OR
TREAT

Candy Alternatives

Opt for a healthier option for treat-or-treaters. For additional ideas, click [here](#)

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| • Fruit Snacks | • Fruit Cups | • Bubbles |
| • Granola Bars | • Yogurt-Covered Raisins | • Stickers |
| • Popcorn | • 100% Fruit Cup Boxes | • Bouncy Balls |
| • Mini Bags of Pretzels | • Mini playdough | |

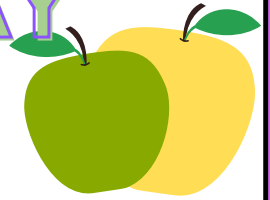




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Harvest of the Month: Apples

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There are about 7,500 different varieties of apples grown around the world, with about 2,500 varieties grown in the U.S. Apples can range in color in shades of red, green, and yellow. They also vary in flavor from tart (ex. Stayman and Granny Smith) to sweet (ex. Fuji and Gala). Most varieties are eaten raw, some are considered good for cooking such as McIntosh, Granny Smith, Rome and Cortland.



Ideas to Enjoy Apples

- Bake apple chips: Slice apples thinly and bake them with cinnamon for a healthy snack.
- Blend them into smoothies: Add apples to your favorite smoothie recipes for extra nutrients and flavor
- Make an apple sandwich: Hollow out an apple and fill it with nut butter and granola.
- Add crunch to your salad: Toss apple slices into green salads, coleslaw, or chicken salad wraps.
- Snack smarter: Pair apple slices with nut butter (almond, peanut, or sunflower) or cheese for a protein boost.
- Sweeten your breakfast: Add sliced apples to oatmeal or yogurt.



Nutrition:

- Apples are an excellent source of fiber and vitamin C. Most of the fiber can be found in the skin. Dehydrating or drying the apples removes the vitamin C. Apples are also a source of phytochemicals which are substances that are believed to guard against cell damage and have a wide variety of health benefits. Studies show that apples, or the specific phytochemicals in them, may protect against cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and some forms of cancer and may help with weight control.

Selection:

- Good quality apples are firm, with smooth, clean skin that is free of blemishes.
- Avoid apples with soft or dark spots and ones that have rough and scab-like conditions on the stem end.

Storage:

- Store apples in a cool, dark place. They can be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Store apples away from ethylene sensitive products such as bananas, broccoli, carrots, cucumbers, leafy greens, lettuce, and sweet potatoes.

Did you know...

- Pennsylvania produces 400 to 500 million pounds of apples per year and ranks fourth in the nation for apple production.
- About one third of Pennsylvania's apple crop is sold fresh. The remainder is sold for processing to make products such as apple cider, applesauce, apple pies and apple juice.
- The majority of apple production in Pennsylvania is centered in the southcentral part of Pennsylvania but apples are grown throughout the Commonwealth.

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Healthy Fundraisers

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Fundraising events and activities that do not involve selling food to eat-on-the-spot provide schools with a powerful opportunity to send consistent, positive health messages, enhance classroom lessons and promote healthy living to students and families. Use fundraisers as an opportunity to promote healthy eating and/or physical activity all while raising money for the school.

SALE

Promote Healthy Eating With:

- Herb starter kits
- Cookbook of family recipes
- Farmers markets
- Cookware and kitchen utensils
- Fruit and Vegetable boxes, baskets or bundles.
- Family nights at healthy restaurants
- School seed store
- Healthy spices and seasonings



Non-Food Ideas

- Car washes
- Game night such as bingo
- Auctions
- Discount cards/coupon books
- School spirit apparel and merchandise
- Plants, flowers, bulbs, seeds
- Community craft fairs or garage sales
- Raffle tickets for donated prizes and special items
- Holiday themed decorations and greenery

Promote Physical Activity

- Walk-a-thons, bike-a-thons, jump-rope-a-thons, bowl-a-thons, skate-a-thons, hula-hoop-a-thons
- School dances
- Family obstacle courses
- Teacher-student competitions (volleyball, softball, frisbee, etc.)
- 30-day fitness and fundraising challenges
- Sport camps or clubs

Smart Snacks

Did you know... fundraisers that involve the sale of foods and beverages intended for immediate consumption (think soft pretzels) during the school day must meet the USDA's Smart Snacks guidelines.

Smart Snacks in School refers to the federal nutrition standards for all foods and beverages sold to students on school grounds, outside of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. These standards, established by the USDA, aim to improve student health by ensuring that snacks and drinks sold in vending machines, school stores, and à la carte lines meet specific nutritional criteria.

Please refer to the Smart Snack Calculator, found [HERE](#), when selling food or beverages at school.

School Spirit

