

# Take your place at the table



and join us as we  
reimagine the future.

Experts agree! **Universal school meals** are a necessity for success in school. With them, students like you and your fellow classmates learn better, stay in school longer, and can pay closer attention. Bottom line: access to nourishing meals levels the playing field on hunger in the classroom, and allows *you*—and **your whole community**—to level up.

There are so many IG and Tik Tok influencers posting about food these days. Cooking shows talk about the benefits of locally sourced foods like leafy greens and sweet tomatoes fresh off the vine.

**Good looking food is cool, but we know it's about way more than that, especially in our school days. It's about solid nutrition choices, your lifelong health, and a curiosity around your food and where it comes from.**

Whether you've noticed or not, you are connected to everyone in your local community through food, and when done properly, universal school meals can make sure that your entire food system is just and fair—to everyone and everything it touches. *Truly* equitable food systems upgrade the academic and personal lives of you and your classmates, and actually strengthen and empower the food producers, workers, educators, and other communities who make up that system. By eating whole, locally sourced foods, you become the best version of yourself, and in turn, help support the folks that made it their mission to bring you the best food out there. It's win-win.

So, the time has come to reimagine the system that feeds us—but we have to do it together. From schools to policymakers to parents to farmers to you, it takes a community to ensure wholesome, equitable, economically and environmentally sustainable foods get into your hands. We need everyone's help, so pull up a chair, and let's get started.



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# Take action today for a better tomorrow

## Action 1

**Talk to a teacher you know and trust. Ask them about starting a **student advisory committee** to talk about school meals.**



### Ideas you can work on as a student advisory committee:

- Collaborate with other students, existing student organizations, teachers, administration, and cafeteria managers to advocate for positive change in your school meals programs. You can **advocate for healthier, culturally diverse school meals, partnerships with local farmers, or a school garden!** [FoodCorps' Healthy School Toolkit](#) is a great resource for guiding you as you advocate for healthy school meals and create a school-wide culture of health at your school!
- Invite a science teacher to talk about the climate impacts and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of different food options served in the cafeteria. Initiate a group project **making a visual graphic that shows the GHG footprint of specific menu items** in order to get other students engaged.
- **Make a fun video or make a post with other students** that can be shared with the whole school. You can feature a delicious school meal, advocate for more locally procured, farm to school meals or educate other students on the climate and labor impacts of various food options.
- Host educational opportunities for other students. **Look at how local, small-scale decisions can contribute to sustainability in the wider food system.** Sustainable packaging, composting in the cafeteria, local sourcing for school meals, and the benefits of plant-forward diets are some topics to get you started!



### Related resources:

[National Farm to School Network Fact Sheets & Resources](#)  
[Starting and Maintaining a School Garden](#)  
[Healthy School Toolkit by FoodCorps](#)



## Action 2

Participate in **National #SchoolLunchHero** day, which is hosted by the School Nutrition Association every May.

This upcoming year, School Lunch Hero day is on May 5, 2023. This can be as simple as asking one of your teachers to have their classes to make appreciation cards for the food service staff in your school, to writing to your school district's leaders to have School Lunch Hero Day made official.



**Need ideas on ways to make School Lunch Hero Day special? Try these:**

- Write to your school district's leaders & **ask to make SLHD official**—get that first Friday in May on the school calendar. Spread the word to every school within your district.
- **Hang signs around the school** celebrating your school nutrition staff.
- Ask teachers to have their classes **make cards for the foodservice staff**.
- Surprise the food workers by decorating the cafeterias.
- Give them a shoutout on social media. Get to know the workers, interview them, take their picture, and share about them on your school's social media.

Click [here](#) for more celebration ideas!



### Related resources:

About [School Lunch Hero Day](#) by School Nutrition Association  
[How to celebrate School Lunch Hero Day](#)  
[More ways to celebrate School Lunch Hero Day](#)



## Action 3

Read all about the **food systems, values and people** that get your school meals to you, using the resources linked below.

If you can **pick a topic for a school project**, pick something related to the food system and explore these questions: Where does food for your school meal program come from? What are the positive environmental impacts of locally sourced food? What are the climate justice impacts of different food options? You can even find someone to interview—a farmer, a cafeteria manager, or a food service director.



### Related resources:

[School Meals: Who's at the Table?](#)

[The Benefits of Farm to School](#)

[School Food Politics: A Conversation with Jennifer Gaddis,](#)  
author of "The Labor of Lunch"

## Bonus Action!

Share something from **NSFN's Instagram** to highlight that you care about school meals and where they come from.

Tag **@farmtoschool** and use the hashtag **#farmtoschool** on your social media posts related to any of the above!

