



Summer Edition: Encouraging Participation in Child Nutrition Programs

June 16, 2026

1:30 PM - 2:00 PM



Meet Your Host



Ashley Kennedy, SNS

HEALTH AND NUTRITION SERVICES SPECIALIST

Welcome!



upLIFT was designed specifically for child nutrition professionals like you. It offers resources to help you LEARN about nutrition, get INSPIRED on meal choices for your participants, FEED students healthy meals, and TEACH others in your community about your programs.

You can look forward to materials and monthly webinars featuring unique upLIFT content showcasing Arizona child nutrition professionals, and providing ongoing inspiration throughout the year. This will empower you to upLIFT your programs in your own unique way!

Overview

1. Overview of Parent Involvement in Child Nutrition Program
2. Marketing Strategies with Insight from Tuscon Unified School District
3. Resources

Parent Involvement in Child Nutrition Programs

Overview

Parent Involvement

- Parent involvement significantly impacts children's dietary behaviors
- Programs with parent participation lead to:
 - Improved diet quality and food variety
 - Enhanced nutrition knowledge and behaviors
- Consistent messaging at home and school benefits students by reinforcing healthy eating habits and creating a supportive environment for children

Overview

Family engagement is a critical component of nutrition program success, it's not optional!

By involving families, programs can ensure that healthy eating habits are reinforced at home, leading to more **sustainable outcomes**.

Engaging families can be achieved through regular communication, workshops, and activities that invite participation and feedback. When families are informed and involved, they become allies in promoting **nutritious choices**, fostering an environment that supports the well-being of all participants. Additionally, family engagement helps to build a sense of **community** and shared responsibility, enhancing the overall impact and reach of the nutrition program.

Overview

Parental Impact on Participation

- The reduced effectiveness of educational initiatives often stems from negative perceptions, which can also affect attitudes towards child nutrition programs (CNPs)
- Clear and transparent communication about the benefits of healthy eating is crucial for tackling these negative views.
- Adopting inclusive practices and establishing responsive feedback mechanisms can help lessen adverse effects and improve acceptance of child nutrition initiatives.
- It's essential to cultivate positive perceptions of child meals to enhance participation levels in both educational and nutrition programs.
- To attain the desired outcomes, fostering a positive atmosphere around child nutrition within educational environments is key.

Overview

Parental Impact on Participation

- Enthusiastic engagement and active contributions stem from positive views.
- Meaningful experiences arise from positive perceptions.
- Enhanced student participation enriches the overall learning environment.
- A sense of community and collaboration is nurtured through positive engagement.
- Negative perceptions act as barriers to student engagement.

Overview

Interactive Approaches

Parents can take part in **workshops** and **short sessions** that focus on building balanced meals. When families and schools work together, kids benefit from positive, supportive routines.

Sharing simple planning guides and making family meals a regular habit can boost children's excitement for healthy eating.

Overview

Interactive Approaches

Arizona districts provide nutrition education activities for classrooms and families. One example is the [Phoenix Elementary School District 1](#), which offers cooking demos and nutrition lessons on request.

Each session lasts 30 to 90 minutes and includes healthy snacks as part of the lesson.



Overview

Gather Feedback

- **Surveys and Polls:** To gain valuable insights, the school conducts surveys and polls to collect feedback.
- **Parent Advisory Groups:** Participation in parent advisory groups is encouraged to ensure their input is instrumental in refining and enhancing menu offerings.
- **Collaboration:** This effort guarantees that meals align with the expectations of the students.



Overview

Interactive Approaches

Highlight partnerships! **Osborn School District** has successfully collaborated with community organizations to enhance educational experiences.

This partnership model not only enriches the curriculum but also fosters a sense of community involvement and support, helping to prepare students for future success in both their personal and professional lives.



Parental Involvement

Parental Involvement: Understanding Your Audience

It's essential to recognize that parents come from diverse backgrounds and have varying needs and expectations. By understanding these segments, you can tailor your approach to ensure effective communication and support.

- **Working Families:** These parents often juggle multiple responsibilities, including demanding jobs and family obligations. To engage them effectively, consider offering flexible scheduling for meetings and events, and provide resources that can be easily accessed online.

Parental Involvement

Parental Involvement: Understanding Your Audience

- **Multilingual Households:** Language barriers can pose a significant challenge. Offering translations of key communications and providing interpreters during meetings can foster inclusivity and ensure all parents feel welcome and informed.
- **Cultural Considerations and Inclusivity:** Respecting and celebrating the diverse cultural backgrounds of families within your community is crucial. Incorporate cultural awareness into your programs by including multicultural events and encouraging parents to share their traditions and experiences. This not only enriches the community but also helps build a sense of belonging for everyone involved.

Barriers to Family Engagement

Common Barriers Identified in Research

- Misunderstanding of meal quality/nutrition standards
- Stigma associated with free/reduced-price meals
- Lack of awareness or communication from child nutrition programs
- Mistrust or lack of transparency

Example

Some parents worry children will be judged or labeled based on meal participation.

Marketing Strategies with Insight from Tucson Unified School District

Marketing & Promoter Position & Philosophy

Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) introduced social media in 2022 after COVID and adopted an ambitious philosophy:

“changing the narrative”
surrounding school meals.

The marketing role was created to actively influence perceptions of school meals. They aimed to highlight quality, freshness, and community connection through captivating digital content and live events.



Social Media Strategy & Highlights

Key initiatives driving engagement and changing the narrative around child nutrition programs through strategic social media outreach.

✓ **Posting Schedule**

Wellness Wednesdays and Food Service Fridays keep the audience engaged with consistent, themed content.

✓ **Farm & Local Produce**

Spotlighting local farms and fresh ingredients to build transparency and community trust.

✓ **Behind-the-Scenes Staff**

Showcasing nutrition team staff and kitchen operations to humanize the child nutrition program.

✓ **Engagement Metrics Tracking**

Monitoring views, likes, and shares to refine strategy and demonstrate program impact.

Social Media Strategy & Highlights



Traveling Road Shows & Community Networking

TUSD incorporated traveling **roadshows** that deliver taste tests straight to families and community members, providing feedback that supports new product development.

These events have received a positive response, enhancing community relations and creating trust in their school meal programs throughout the district.



Website Development & Technology Integration

Building a large digital presence to better serve students, families, and staff through modern tools and accessible information.

✓ Department Website

Focused on district menus as the most-visited page, replacing printed menus entirely.

✓ ADA Compliance

Ensuring full accessibility standards in the new website system for all users.

✓ Titan-A and Linq iSite Package

Integrated menu planning and nutrition facts tool supporting transparency and informed choices.

✓ District Communications Partnership

Collaborating with the district communications director to align messaging and digital strategy.

Student Engagement Strategies

Students play a central role in their nutrition marketing strategies. They utilize eye-catching serving line posters and flyers to grab attention and ignite curiosity.

By highlighting locally sourced produce in students' meals, they foster awareness and pride among students. **Taste-testing events** and **interactive displays** offer interactive experiences.



Parental Involvement & Challenges

Outreach efforts, education initiatives, and obstacles in engaging parents with child nutrition programs.

✓ CEP Free Meal Education

Educating parents on Community Eligibility Provision and how they have access to free meals.

✓ Open House Taste Testing

Food service staff present at open houses to engage families with hands-on meal sampling.

✓ Admin Buy-In Challenges

Navigating administrative barriers and building support for nutrition outreach programs.

✓ Tools & Future Plans

Leveraging Canva, Parent Link messaging, and social media with plans for classroom videos.

Strategic Partnerships & Branding

Consistent branding and strong school liaisons are key to effective nutrition outreach across TUSD.

Branding Element

Logo & Identity

Messaging

School Liaisons

Before

Inconsistent visuals

"Scratch cooking" unclear

No formal network

After

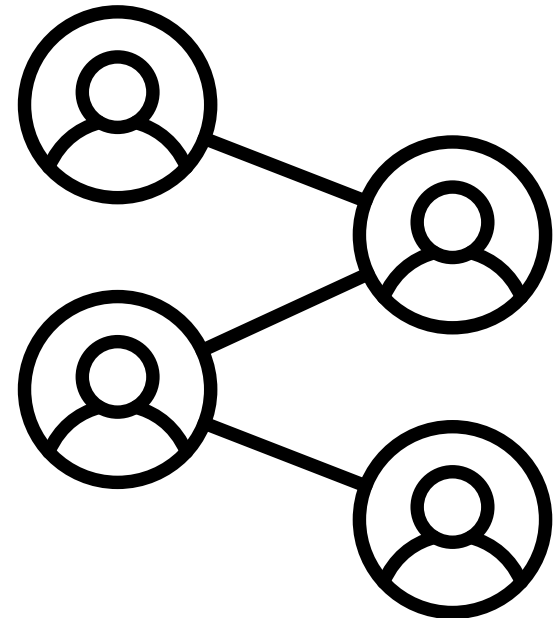
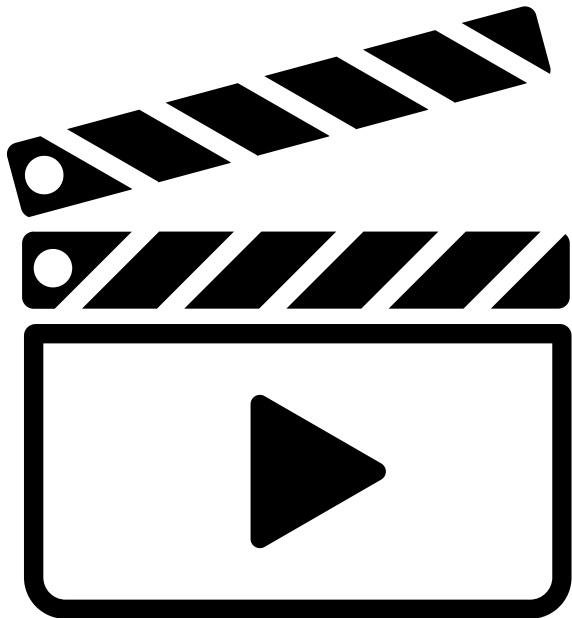
Unified logo & mission

"Fresh Made" branding

Active school liaisons

Looking Ahead

Plans to focus on enhancing engagement through classroom activities and peer-led initiatives.



Top 10 Tips for Effective Marketing

- Collaborate with graphic designers
- Develop a logo & mission statement
- Keep content student-centered
- Engage school nutrition liaisons
- Be consistent across all platforms
- Streamline your branding identity
- "Fresh Made" vs. Scratch messaging
- Leverage strategic partnerships
- Use Canva for visual materials
- Tell the story — change the narrative

Contact Info



Lindsay Aguilar RD, SNS

Director, Food Services Department
Tucson Unified School District

Email: lindsay.aguilar@tusd1.org

Resources

Resources



Local Produce in Arizona

FIND LOCAL PRODUCE IN ARIZONA:

- BLUE SKY ORGANIC FARMS:
 - Frozen, WHOLE Strawberries (leaves removed)
 - Frozen, Trimmed Green Beans (cut in half)
 - Salad Mix
- AGRITOPIA FARMS:
 - Spring Onions

Check out what Local Foods are available

2026 Producer List

TEACH

SPRING ONIONS - AGRITOPIA FARM AND BLUE SKY ORGANIC FARMS

Spring onions contain vitamin A to maintain healthy organ functioning, vitamin C to strengthen the immune system, and vitamin K to promote faster wound healing. The onions also provide calcium to protect bones and teeth, potassium to balance fluid levels within the body, antioxidants reduce inflammation. Spring onions have a fresh, sweet, and subtly pungent flavor well suited for both raw and cooked preparations.

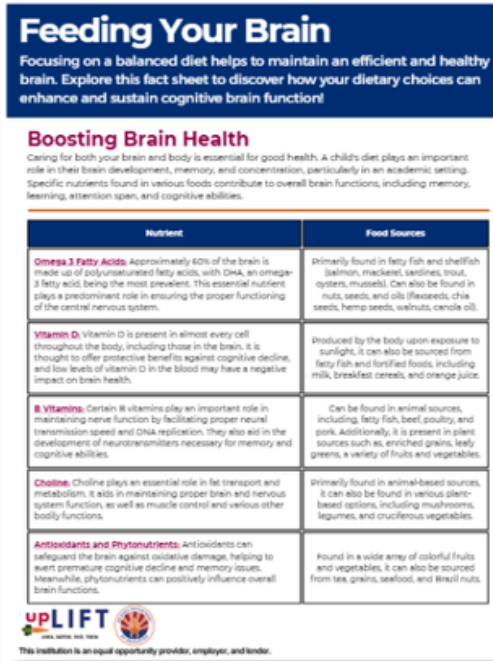
SALAD MIX, TRULOCAL FARM

- Lettuce shouldn't be stored near any ethylene-emitting fruits. Ethylene causes lettuce to ripen super fast and can decay rapidly!
- Lettuce is about 95% water.
- Dark green lettuce leaves are more nutritious than light green leaves.
- Lettuce is the second most popular fresh vegetable in the United States. (Potato #1)

To ensure food safety with fresh produce always thoroughly wash under running water immediately before cutting and eating.

June 2026 | TASTE AZ | The Arizona Department of Education
USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Taste AZ



Feeding Your Brain

Focusing on a balanced diet helps to maintain an efficient and healthy brain. Explore this fact sheet to discover how your dietary choices can enhance and sustain cognitive brain function!

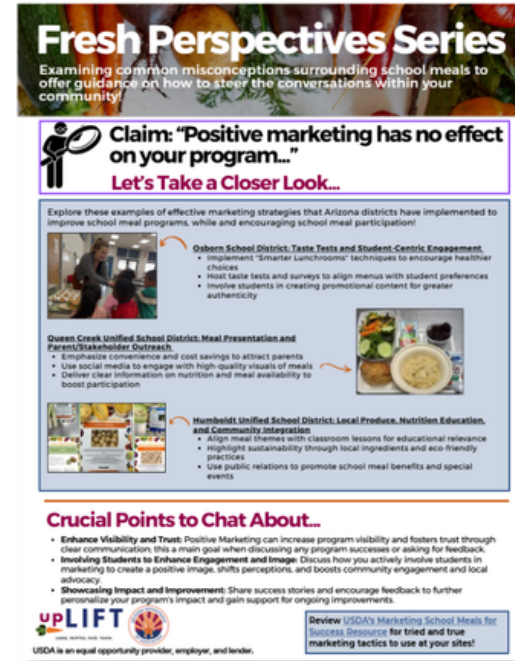
Boosting Brain Health

Caring for both your brain and body is essential for good health. A child's diet plays an important role in their brain development, memory, and concentration, particularly in an academic setting. Specific nutrients found in various foods contribute to overall brain functions, including memory, learning, attention span, and cognitive abilities.

Nutrient	Food Sources
Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Approximately 60% of the brain is made up of polyunsaturated fatty acids, with DHA, an omega-3 fatty acid, being the most prevalent. This essential nutrient plays a predominant role in ensuring the proper functioning of the central nervous system.	Primarily found in fatty fish and shellfish (salmon, mackerel, sardines, trout, oysters, mussels). Can also be found in nuts, seeds, and oils (flaxseeds, chia seeds, hemp seeds, walnuts, canola oil).
Vitamin D: Vitamin D is present in almost every cell throughout the body. Including those in the brain, it is thought to offer protective benefits against cognitive decline, and low levels of vitamin D in the blood may have a negative impact on brain health.	Produced by the body upon exposure to sunlight. It can also be sourced from fatty fish and fortified foods, including milk, breakfast cereals, and orange juice.
B Vitamins: Certain B vitamins play an important role in maintaining nerve function by facilitating proper neural transmission speed and DNA replication. They also aid in the development of neurotransmitters necessary for memory and cognitive abilities.	Can be found in animal sources, including, fatty fish, beef, poultry, and pork. Additionally, it is present in plant sources such as, enriched grains, leafy greens, a variety of fruits and vegetables.
Choline: Choline plays an essential role in fat transport and metabolism. It aids in maintaining proper brain and nervous system function, as well as muscle control and various other bodily functions.	Primarily found in animal-based sources, it can also be found in various plant-based options, including mushrooms, legumes, and cruciferous vegetables.
Antioxidants and Phytonutrients: Antioxidants can safeguard the brain against oxidative damage, helping to avert premature cognitive decline and memory issues. Meanwhile, phytonutrients can positively influence overall brain functions.	Found in a wide array of colorful fruits and vegetables, it can also be sourced from tea, grains, seafood, and tree nuts.

uplift
USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Nutrition Knowledge
Fact Sheet



Fresh Perspectives Series

Examining common misconceptions surrounding school meals to offer guidance on how to steer the conversations within your community!

Claim: "Positive marketing has no effect on your program..."
Let's Take a Closer Look...

Explore these examples of effective marketing strategies that Arizona districts have implemented to improve school meal programs, while encouraging school meal participation!

Oakburn School District: Taste Tests and Student-Centric Engagement

- Implement "Smarter Lunchrooms" techniques to encourage healthier choices
- Host taste tests and surveys to align menus with student preferences
- Involve students in creating promotional content for greater authenticity

Queen Creek Unified School District: Meal Presentation and Parent/Stakeholder Outreach

- Emphasize convenience and cost savings to attract parents
- Use social media to engage with high-quality visuals of meals
- Deliver clear information on nutrition and meal availability to boost participation

Humboldt Unified School District: Local Produce, Nutrition Education, and Community Integration

- Align meal themes with classroom lessons for educational relevance
- Highlight sustainability through local ingredients and eco-friendly practices
- Use public relations to promote school meal benefits and special events

Crucial Points to Chat About...

- Enhance Visibility and Trust:** Positive Marketing can increase program visibility and fosters trust through clear communication; this a main goal when discussing any program successes or asking for feedback.
- Involving Students to Enhance Engagement and Image:** Discuss how you actively involve students in marketing to create a positive image, shifts perceptions, and boosts community engagement and local advocacy.
- Showcasing Impact and Improvements:** Share success stories and encourage feedback to further personalize your program's impact and gain support for ongoing improvements.

uplift
USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Review USDA's Marketing School Meals for Success Resource for tried and true marketing tactics to use at your sites!

Fresh Perspectives

<https://www.azed.gov/hns/nslp/uplift/>

See You Next School Year!

Join us in September!

September 2026 upLIFT Webinar

Introducing our 2026-2027 upLIFT Initiative!

September 16, 2026

1:30-2:00 pm



Thank you!

Any questions?
Please type them into the Q&A now.

If you are attending the live webinar, you will receive an email once attendance has been completed. Once you have received this email, your training certificate will be available in Arizona Professional Learning Development (APLD).

If you are watching the recorded webinar, you can access the survey link and certificate of completion at the end of the webinar slides.



Congratulations!

You have completed the recorded webinar: [Summer Edition: Encouraging Participation in Child Nutrition Programs](#)

To request a certificate, please go to the next slide.

In order to count this training toward your Professional Standards training hours, the training content must align with your job duties.

Information to include when documenting this training for Professional Standards:

Training Title: Recorded Webinar: [Summer Edition: Encouraging Participation in Child Nutrition Programs](#)

Professional Standards Learning Codes:

Length: [0.5 hour](#)

Please Note:

- Attendees must document the amount of training hours indicated regardless of the amount of time it takes to complete it.

Congratulations!

Requesting a Training Certificate

Please click on the link below to complete a brief survey about this webinar. Once the survey is complete, you will be able to print your certificate of completion from Survey Monkey.

*This will not appear in your ADE Professional Learning Development (APLD) Account.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/upliftrecordedwebinar>

The information below is for your reference when completing the survey:

- Training Title: [Summer Edition: Encouraging Participation in Child Nutrition Programs](#)

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (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; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

