



2023 K-12 Nutrition Survey Report

**Insights on School Nutrition Trends,
Challenges, and Operations**



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Introduction

It's Time To Check In on K-12 Nutrition Programs

School nutrition teams provide nutritious meals to students every day during the school year. For many students, this vital service extends into the summer and across winter and spring breaks. It's an essential role, ensuring students stay well fed all year and fueled to learn.

However, the past few years rocked many nutrition departments to their core with operational changes, increasing food and supply costs, the ongoing labor shortage, and student meal debt. Through it all, nutrition teams proved resilient. They adapted to changes and took on challenges, all while dedicated to delivering healthy meals to students.

Nutrition teams in every state felt some of the same challenges coming from the federal level. When traditional operations with the [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#) and [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#) suddenly halted, they rolled up their sleeves and shifted to the [Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#). There were other top-down changes, too. They adjusted to the [Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), [At-Risk Afterschool Meals](#), and [NSLP Seamless Summer Option \(SSO\)](#).

While K-12 nutrition departments remain the unsung heroes of education, that doesn't mean all is well in the cafeteria. Returning

to traditional NSLP operations, school food service departments see their non-profit school food service accounts dwindling after years of higher reimbursement. This includes the important 2022-23 school year's additional reimbursement from the [Keep Kids Fed Act \(KKFA\) of 2022](#).

Meanwhile, funding gaps and challenges dominate K-12 headlines. Nutrition programs aren't immune. Topics like unpaid meal debt, price inflation, staffing shortages, and supply chain woes deeply concern school nutrition professionals.

It all begs the questions:

“What's the current state of school nutrition?”

And perhaps even more importantly,

“Where are K-12 school nutrition departments going?”

LINQ commissioned a survey with Edge Research to find out.

Study Background and Methodology

Study Background

To understand the state of school nutrition and better identify trends and concerns for the lunchroom, LINQ commissioned a study seeking K-12 nutrition and business professionals' input to create a clearer picture of:

- Biggest challenges for K-12 nutrition departments
- Back-office processes for managing school nutrition programs
- Concerns around school nutrition funding shortfalls
- Key priorities and areas of focus across different size districts and roles
- Overall outlook of school nutrition programs and their ability to provide healthy meals



Audience Profile and Survey Methodology

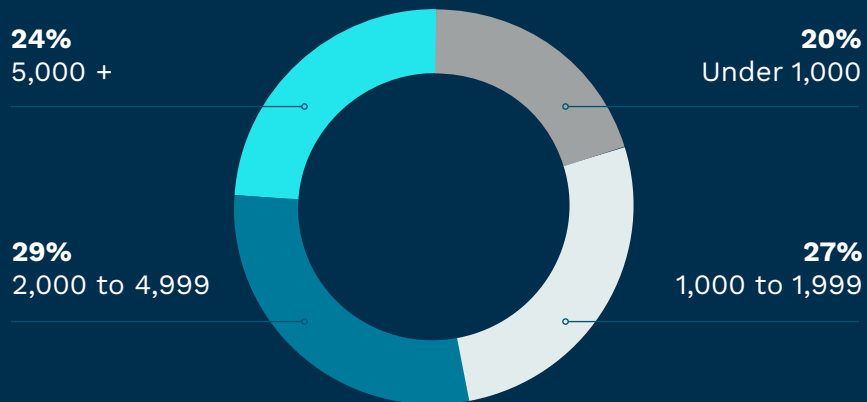
LINQ partnered with third-party research firm Edge Research to field an online survey. An objective sample of K-12 school nutrition and business professionals received the survey between May 15-23, 2023. Among the 359 respondents to the survey, roles included:

% OF RESPONDENTS

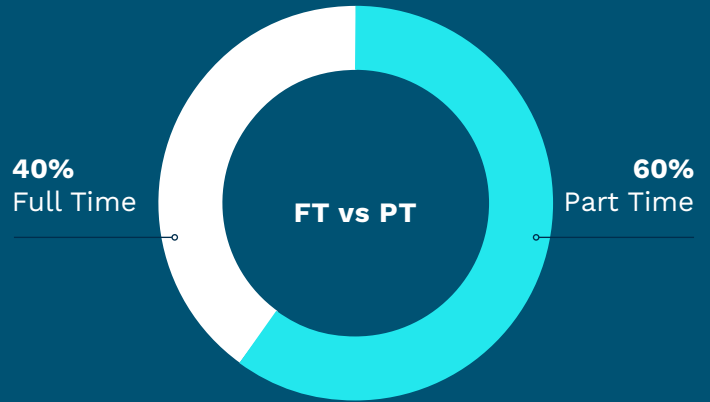
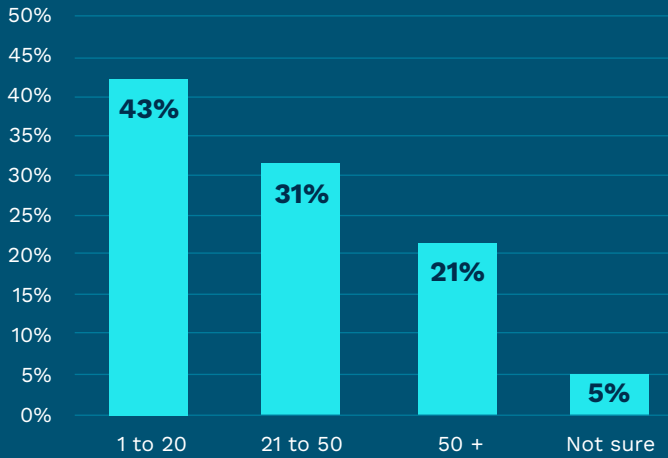
Nutrition/Food Services (includes Food Service Director, Food Service/Cafeteria Manager, Claims Preparers or other nutrition/food service)	40%
Superintendent/Asst Superintendent/General Admin	25%
Information Technology/Cybersecurity	22%
Finance/Accounting/Business Office	8%
Communications/Marketing/Community Outreach	4%
Purchasing/Procurement	3%
Student Services	3%

*Note: Respondents may have selected multiple roles.

District Size (# of Students)



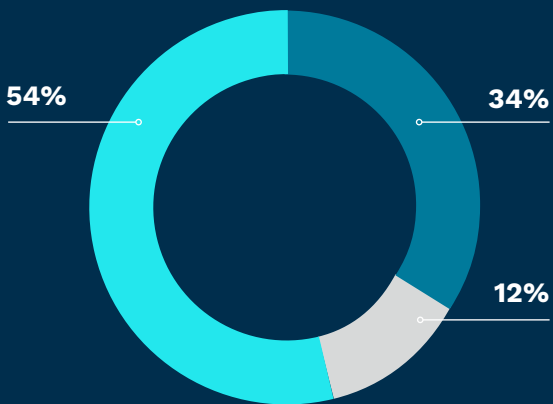
Size of Nutrition Team Staff



Over half (57%) of the Food Service Directors held that type of role for more than 11 years, while 21% of Superintendents held that title for more than 11 years.

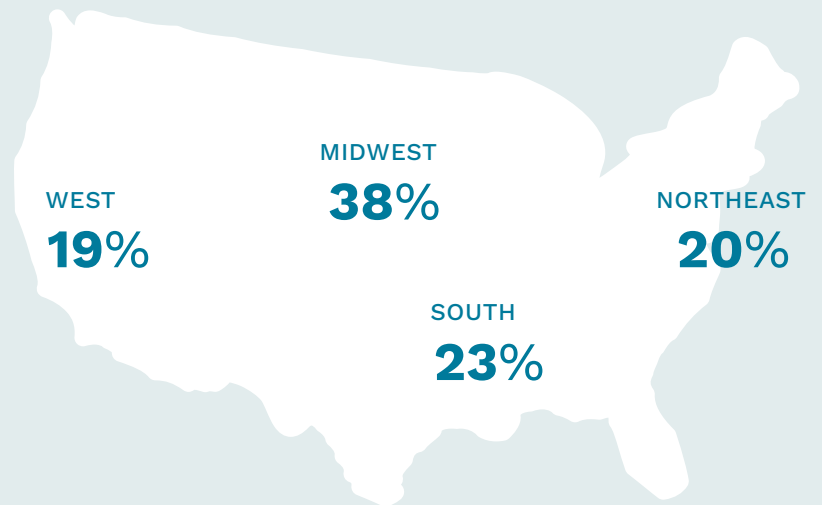
Lunch Programs

On average, 67% of students in their district receive or purchase a school lunch (participate in the school lunch program)



- Full-Priced Lunch
- Reduced-Price Lunch
- Free Lunch

Geographic Distribution of Survey Respondents



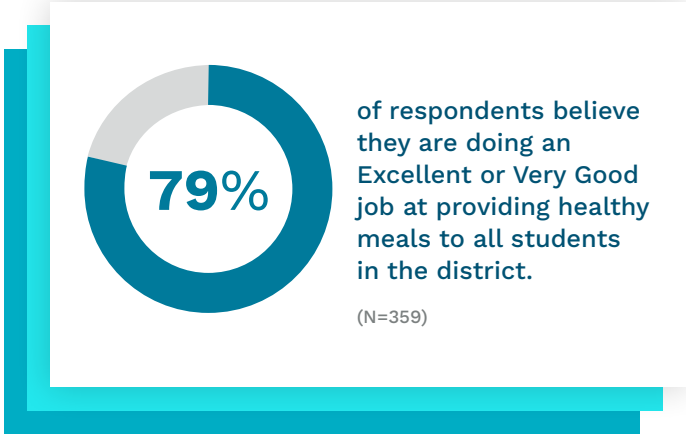
Study Findings

INSIGHT 1

Nutrition and business professionals are confident the school meals they’re providing are healthy and beneficial to students.

Survey findings indicate that K-12 nutrition and business professionals feel confident that they’re providing school meals that are healthy, reinforced by U.S. Department of Agriculture data that says schools provide the healthiest meals students receive each day.

Further, it proves that perceptions across the district and the perceived perception of families is that school meals are healthy.¹ Only 4% believe that their district does a “Fair” or “Poor” job of providing healthy school meals.



USDA’s *School Nutrition & Meal Cost Study*² found that in accordance with the Healthy Eating Index (HEI), which assigns scores based on how consistent they are with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, school lunches earn an 80 (with 100 being the most nutritious). Furthermore, students who eat school lunches are more likely to consume milk, fruits, and vegetables at lunch.

Research that demonstrates the benefits of eating breakfast at school bolsters district and community buy-in. It’s associated with better attendance rates, fewer missed school days, and better test scores.³ The benefits of school meals cannot be understated, and it’s heartening to see robust support on behalf of both the school districts and families.

1 https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SNMCS_infographic5_SchoolLunchesAretheMostNutritious.pdf

2 <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-nutrition-and-meal-cost-study>

3 <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/nutrition/schoolmeals.htm#:~:text=School%20meals%20are%20nutritious.&text=Research%20shows%20that%20students%20who,overall%20diet%20quality%2C%20than%20nonparticipants>

INSIGHT 2

Districts give their nutrition operations performance an overall “B” average.

Districts give their nutrition programs moderately high ratings for delivering on their core functions, with larger districts (2K+ students) grading themselves higher than their smaller counterparts on most attributes.

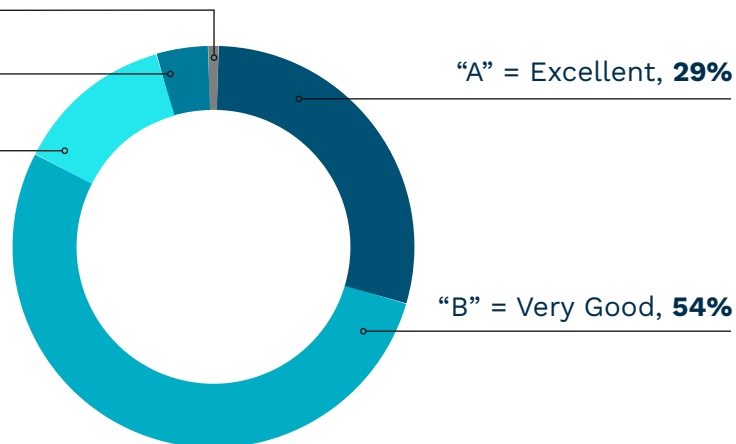
Grades for Overall Nutrition Operations

(N=359)

Not Sure/Not Applicable, **1%**

“D” = Fair, **4%**

“C” = Good, **13%**

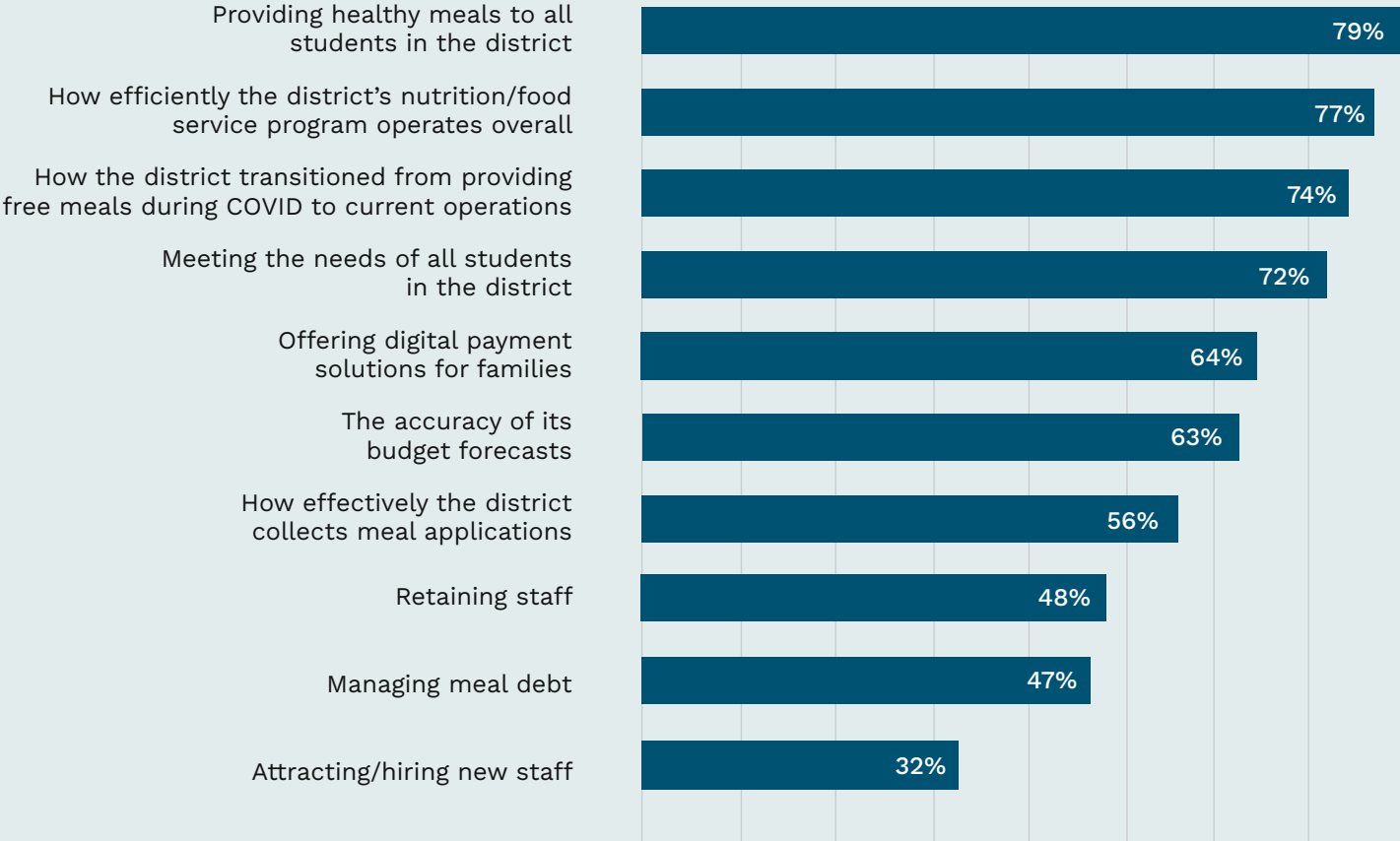


School nutrition departments proved agile in the pandemic’s aftermath. Even in the face of uncertainty, federal regulations and guidance helped them operate consistently through each stage of the global pandemic response. Districts have transitioned from the pandemic with highest confidence in their ability to deliver healthy meals, operate efficiently, and meet the range of students’ needs.

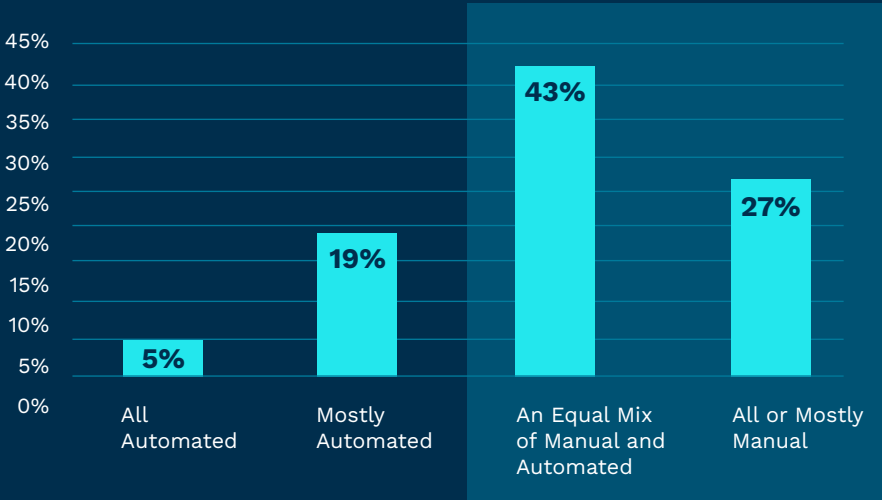
But there are other areas indicating a need for improvement, most notably in retaining and attracting/hiring staff and managing meal debt. Across the board, districts graded themselves lowest in those areas.

Percentage Grading Their Nutrition Program an “A” or “B”, by Attribute

(N=285-359)



When asked about their nutrition department’s back-office processes, such as inventory, menu planning, and production records, **over 70% report conducting back-office activities with some level of manual effort.**



of larger districts (2K+ students) are still using at least partially manual processes. 48% of smallest districts (<1K students) are all or mostly manual.

Respondents who did not work directly in the K-12 nutrition department perceive a greater use of automation than food service staff. This may indicate a lack of awareness on school district administration's part, signaling an opportunity for food service staff to advocate for systems that can streamline inventory, menu planning, and production records.

Gone are the days when cash was king. 86% of point-of-sale (POS) transactions in the U.S. were made with either a card or digital wallet in 2022.⁴ **When asked about their ability to provide digital payment solutions for families, only two-thirds of respondents think they perform well.** This drastically falls with districts under 1,000 students, with only 49% believing they perform well.



One in five respondents indicate that students with meal debt sometimes do not receive a hot meal.

35% of all/mostly automated districts rate their nutrition operations as “Excellent”, whereas just **19%** of all/mostly manual districts give their operational efficiency a top grade.

At the same time, even fewer districts believe they perform well at managing meal debt. With the return to traditional operations, unpaid meal debt increased dramatically in the 2022-23 school year. The overall median meal debt sits at \$6,000 for districts that do not provide free meals to all students.⁵ Making meal payments as seamless as possible, such as offering digital payment solutions, can help reduce outstanding balances.



⁴ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/568523/preferred-payment-methods-usa/>

⁵ <https://schoolnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2023-School-Nutrition-Trends-Report.pdf>

OPPORTUNITY AREA

Improving the Process of Collecting Meal Applications

Proactively collecting meal applications and conducting direct certification can also mitigate the impact of meal debt.⁶ **Focusing on meal applications, only 56% of respondents feel they perform well in collecting meal applications.** Improving meal applications can increase reimbursement and help identify students that may qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Making online meal applications as easy as possible to submit can expedite reimbursement and offset meal debt balances.

There are also correlations between a district's effectiveness in collecting meal applications and their ability to manage meal debt or forecast their nutrition program budget accurately. **For districts scoring themselves as “Excellent” or “Very Good” in collecting meal applications, 57% give themselves an “A/B” on their ability to manage meal debt and 75% rate themselves highly on their budget forecasting accuracy.**

Conversely, for those less effective in collecting meal applications, only 30% give themselves an “A/B” grade for managing meal debt. For those grading their collection of meal applications as a “C-F”, only 45% consider they're doing an excellent/very good job in accurately forecasting their nutrition program budget.

⁶ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/2017-edition-overcoming-unpaid-meal-challenge-proven-strategies-our-nations-schools>

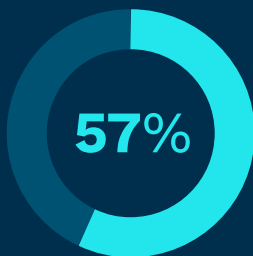
INSIGHT 3

K-12 nutrition departments worry about balancing rising costs with limited revenues.

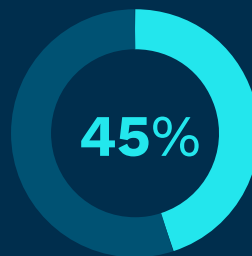
The #1 concern among all district segments is increasing costs associated with running nutrition programs, with 57% indicating they are “Extremely” or “Very” concerned.

Top Three Concerns

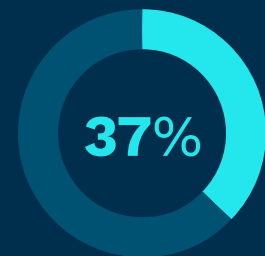
% Indicating “Extremely” or “Very” Concerned



Overall increasing costs

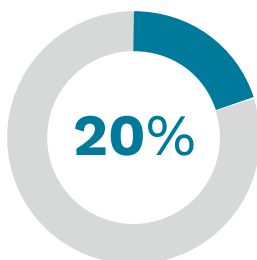


Food service staff shortages



Reimbursement rates not covering per-meal costs

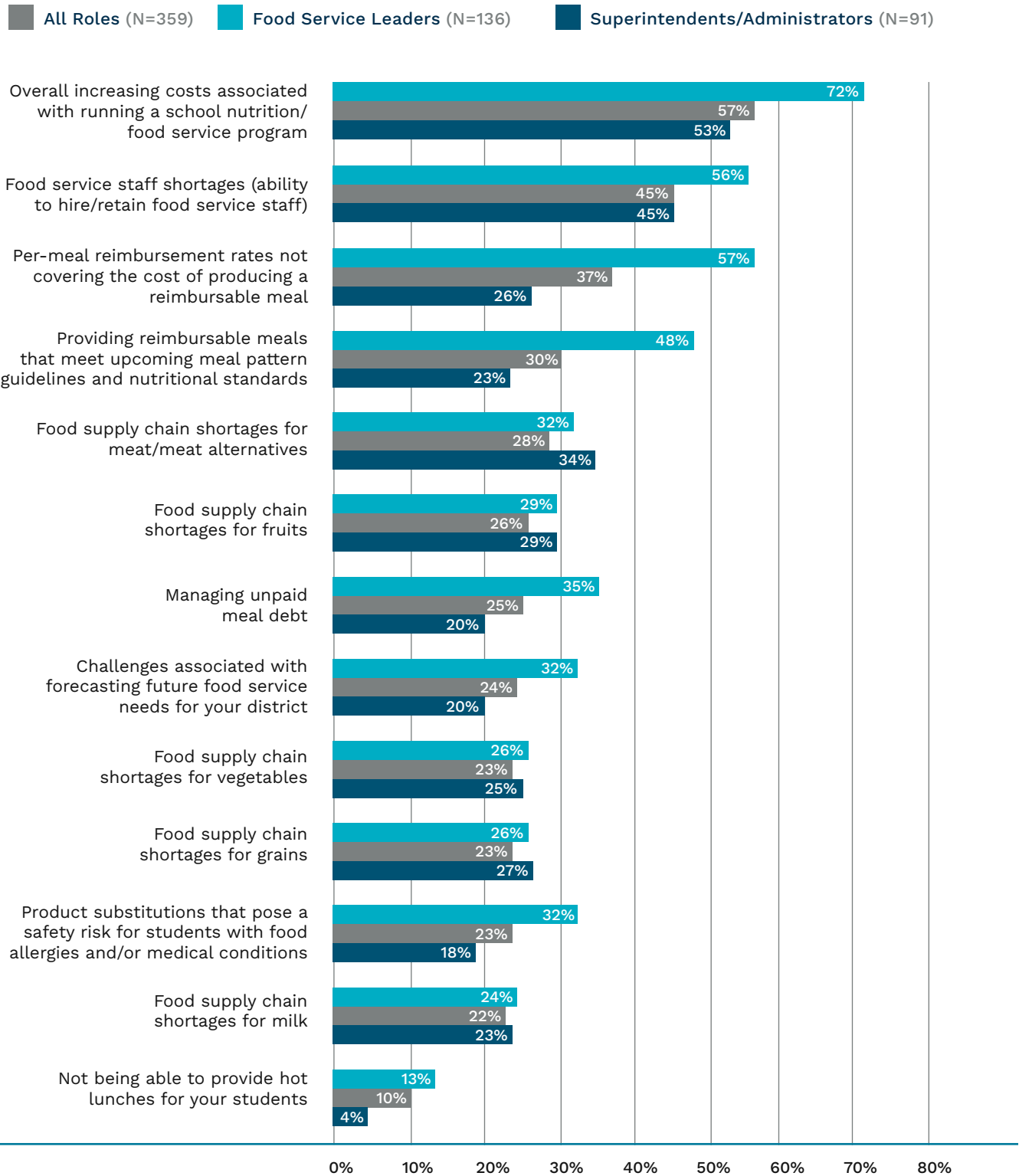
DEEPER DIVE



of respondents are “Extremely Concerned” about rising costs associated with running their school nutrition program. Most worried are smaller districts (<2K students) with fewer nutrition staff (<50) whose per-meal reimbursement rates aren’t covering their current costs.

Differences in Concerns by Job Role

School Food Service Leaders share significantly different concerns than Superintendents/Administrators, especially in terms of costs and reimbursements.



Nutrition occupies a unique position in school and district finances. Federal regulations⁷ require districts to operate a non-profit school food service account (NSFSA). A key aspect of operating a school nutrition program is the expectation to operate as a self-funding non-profit organization. Net cash must not exceed three months-worth of average expenditures. Programs should not require operational funding outside of the NSFSA.

Many school nutrition departments built a rainy-day fund during the past few years due to higher reimbursements from USDA waivers and key legislation from Congress. In the 2021-22 school year, the USDA issued waivers

permitting schools to operate the SSO while receiving the higher SFSP reimbursement. These two waivers allowed school nutrition departments to generate significant funds for their NSFSA.

Even with the end of waivers and a return to traditional operations in the 2022-23 school year, the KKFA provided an additional 40-cent reimbursement for lunch and 15-cent reimbursement for breakfast. Despite higher reimbursement rates, not all is well for K-12 nutrition departments as they grapple with rising inflation, supply chain shortages, and growing unpaid meal debt.



Did You Know?

Consumer Price Index (CPI) data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that **school food prices increased by 296% from April 2022 to April 2023**, well above the overall uptick of food prices at 7.7% in the same period.⁸

As with this study, SNA's *2023 School Nutrition Trends Report* found increasing costs to be one of the top three challenges for school meal programs. Nearly all (99.8%) respondents indicated increasing costs significantly challenge their program. Furthermore, only a quarter of respondents in their report said that the 2022-23 school year reimbursement rates were sufficient to cover the costs of producing a reimbursable meal.⁹

Within LINQ's study, 54% across all roles indicate that the 2022-23 reimbursement rates covered costs. Yet that number falls to just 45% when looking at the responses of K-12 finance and business professionals. Those working in financial roles have greater insights into the overall finances of the school nutrition department and are more likely to consider all the costs associated with the NSFSA.

⁷ [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210/subpart-C#p-210.9\(b\)\(1\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210/subpart-C#p-210.9(b)(1))

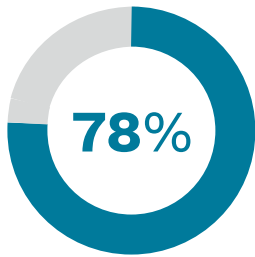
⁸ <https://www.k12dive.com/news/school-food-prices-soar-300-percent/650453/>

⁹ <https://schoolnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2023-School-Nutrition-Trends-Report.pdf>

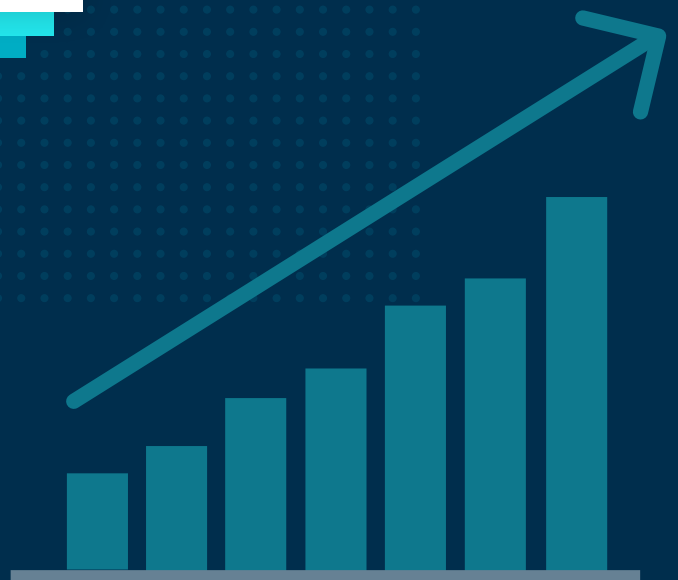
While over half of survey respondents feel reimbursement rates are sufficient, trouble may be brewing in operational costs. The overwhelming consensus is that nutrition budgets will tighten in the coming years. Over 90% of Food Service Directors in LINQ's survey reported some level of concern—with 40% “Extremely Concerned”—with overall increasing costs associated with operating a school nutrition program.

The USDA's *School Nutrition & Meal Cost Study*¹⁰ found the following breakdown in costs for producing a school lunch:

Food	44.7%
Labor/Benefits	44.5%
Other direct costs (supplies, contracted services, equipment, utilities, etc.)	9.5%
Indirect costs	1.3%



of respondents agree (strongly or somewhat) that nutrition/food service budgets will only get tighter in the future.



¹⁰ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-nutrition-and-meal-cost-study>

OPPORTUNITY AREA**Expanding Sources of Revenue and Reimbursement**

Without additional funding from the KKFA, nutrition departments will benefit from looking outside the NSFSAs to boost revenues. Districts may evaluate their other revenue sources—such as revenue from meal payments—and engage with families to provide easier solutions and increase student meal purchases.

School nutrition departments can also increase revenues through selling à la carte items and vending. A robust catering program can be another alternative for boosting nutrition program revenue.

School districts may also take the opportunity to reevaluate nutrition program operations. Provisions like the [Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\)](#) or [Provision 2](#) may afford districts higher reimbursements depending on the Identified Student Percentage (ISP) of categorically eligible children. The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) reported large increases in CEP participation among school districts (15.8%) and individual schools (20.8%), with 82% of eligible schools participating.

Adopting CEP means districts can reduce administrative costs and paperwork from collecting and processing school meal applications. Still, districts need to take great care to ensure that the funding model is financially viable.

Contributions to School Food Authority (SFA) Revenues¹¹

USDA Reimbursements	57%
Student Payments for Reimbursable Meals	20%
À la Carte and Other Non-Reimbursable Sales	11%
USDA Foods	6%
State and Local Funds	6%

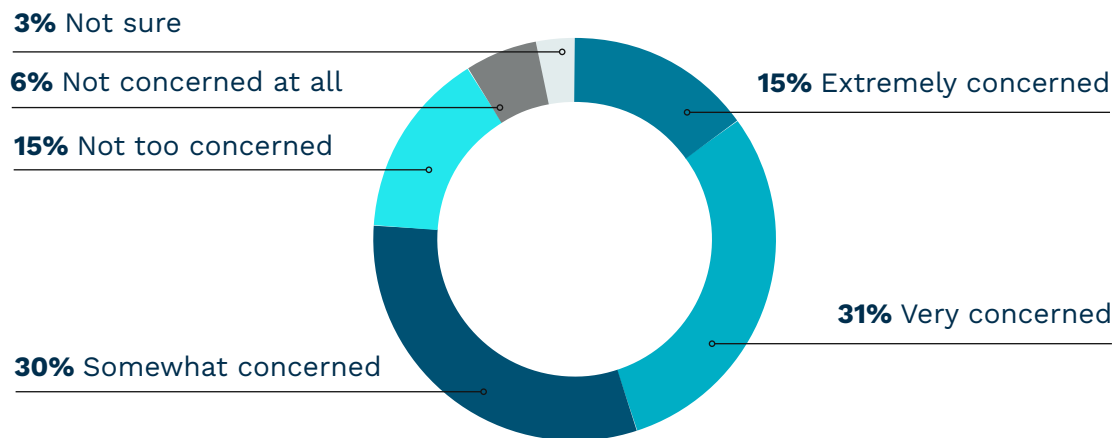
¹¹ https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SNMCS_infographic4_CostofProducingSchoolMeals.pdf

INSIGHT 4

Staffing challenges persist across school districts, including nutrition departments.

52% agree that staffing shortages have hurt their nutrition program's ability to operate efficiently.

Concern About School Food Service Staff Shortages



School districts still face widespread staffing issues. Staffing shortages in school lunchrooms caused some districts to react by offering cold brown bag lunches, using more single-use paper products, and asking other staff to step in to assist during lunch periods. Staffing challenges adversely affect operations, pulling Food Service Directors away from menu planning and advocating for their program to manage staffing shortages

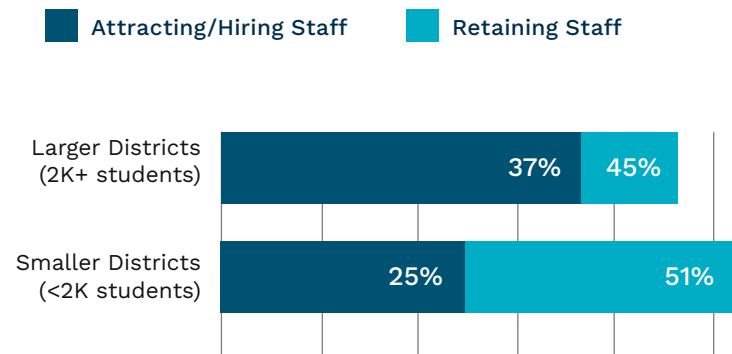
instead. Especially in districts with 2,000 or more students, staffing shortages hurt the nutrition program's efficiency.

Hiring remains a struggle with only 32% of respondents reporting their district as “Excellent” or “Very Good” at hiring or attracting new staff. That statistic drops to 25% when asking those in the role of Food Service Director.

To help manage hiring challenges, cafeteria workers may offer signing bonuses and hire district students part-time to fill gaps in their workforce.¹² These strategies, while effective in the moment, may offer only a short-term solution for a long-term problem. School nutrition departments should continue to develop strategies to attract high-quality candidates to ensure adequate staffing.

Boosting hiring provides only one piece of the puzzle. School nutrition departments also recognize that retention is key to long-term success. Barely half of respondents (48%) feel their organization retains staff well.

Larger districts are more confident in their ability to attract/hire staff, while smaller districts are more confident in their ability to retain staff.



OPPORTUNITY AREA

Improving Nutrition Staff Retention

After the acute challenges of the past several years, it's important to express gratitude for school nutrition workers and for the sacrifices they made amidst turmoil and understaffing—they truly are school lunch heroes.¹³

Beyond showing appreciation for staff, K-12 nutrition departments can identify ways to streamline aspects of food service operations. Investing in equipment or software can take the guesswork out of menu planning. Simplifying management and reporting gives back time for staff to focus on the most impactful and rewarding parts of their job. These types of operational improvements can bring big benefits in stress reduction and career satisfaction. Plus, it can alleviate heavy burdens on school nutrition workers.

¹² <https://www.food-management.com/k-12-schools/5-things-district-hires-high-schoolers-staff-cafeterias>

¹³ <https://schoolnutrition.org/about-school-meals/school-lunch-hero-day/about-school-lunch-hero-day/>

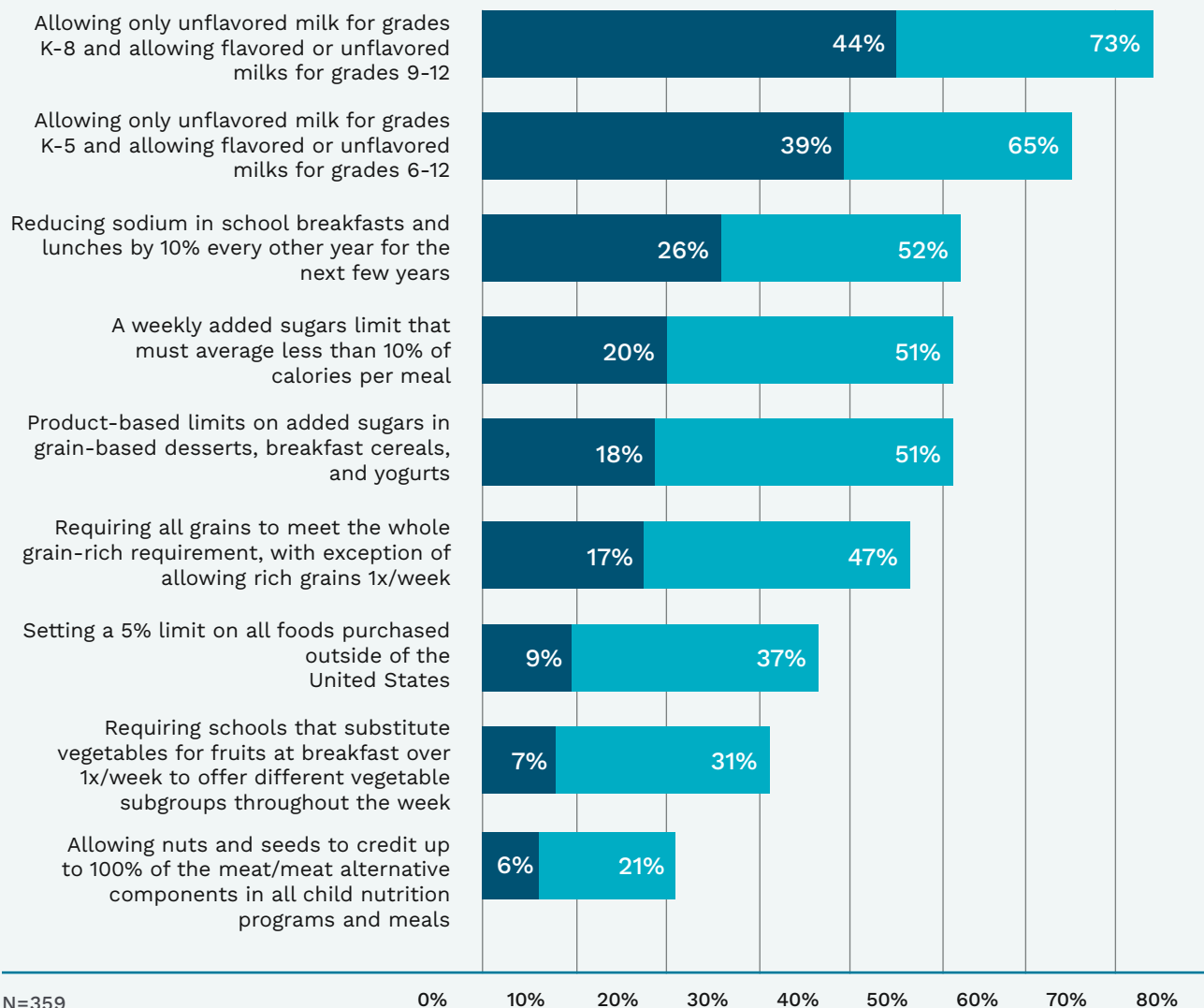
INSIGHT 5

Meal pattern changes are a concern, with restrictions on flavored milk and sodium levels at the top of the list.

Yet potential meal standard updates did not rank among the highest-priority areas of concern.

Impact of Possible School Meal Pattern Updates

Very Negative Impact Very/Somewhat Negative Impact



N=359

Beginning with the [Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 \(HHFKA\)](#), a renewed focus on school meals and health meant shifts in meal patterns. HHFKA sought to make lunches healthier by promoting whole grains, fruits, and vegetables in schools, as well as reducing sodium and removing trans fats in school meals.¹⁴

Because of the burden it placed on K-12 nutrition programs to adapt their menus to meet new requirements, advocacy groups and school districts objected. In 2017, the USDA issued a proclamation allowing for the easing of those standards.¹⁵ The 2022-23 school year saw a return to transitional guidelines around some of the meal patterns, marking a turn toward realigning with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

The Child Nutrition Act of 1966, as amended by the HHFKA, requires that the USDA ensures its meal pattern aligns with

Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which are updated every five years.¹⁶ In response, the USDA released¹⁷ a series of proposed changes to the meal pattern for public comment on February 7, 2023. These sweeping proposed changes addressed all aspects of the meal pattern and procurement.

Following the release of the proposed meal pattern changes, industry chatter swirled about their potential impact on school meal programs. SNA released their comments on the issue in a press release,¹⁸ including data from their *2023 School Nutrition Trends Report*.¹⁹ In the report, nearly 90% of respondents reported challenges in obtaining sufficient menu items to meet the current meal standards, while over 95% expressed concern about the availability of foods that meet transitional sodium limits and appeal to students.

Get your guide of all the USDA proposed changes

DOWNLOAD NOW ↗

USDA Proposed Meal Pattern Changes

The USDA plans to update school nutrition standards to align with the latest nutrition science and student preferences. This guide simplifies the proposed changes and compares them to current meal patterns. Final changes will be announced in the fall of 2023. See what's likely to change and get expert tips to prepare for implementation in 2025.

	CURRENT	PROPOSED
ADDED SUGARS	None	Limits on specific products
MILK	Flavored milk ok 3rd option for all grades	Only unflavored milk for K-4 / or maintain current
GRAINS	Whole-grain rich for min. 80% of weekly grains. Remaining must be enriched	All grains must be whole-grain rich, except enriched grains offered 1x/week / or maintain current
SODIUM	Meet Target 1 for breakfast & lunch. Meet Target 16 for lunch only by 09/23/24	BRF21: Two 10% reductions—07/20/26 & 2/2/28 LUNCH: Three 10% reductions—07/20/26, 2/2/28 & 2/2/30
NUTS & SEEDS	Allowed as meat alternate, credited at 50%	Allowed as meat alternate, credited at 100%
NLP AFTER-SCHOOL SNACKS	Must include 2 from each component group	Align with CACFP snack standards, make fruit & veggies two separate components, & other CACFP snack requirements
BRF21: FRUITS & VEGGIES	Okay to substitute any veggie for fruit at breakfast, provided other requirements are met	Allows hummus to be exempt from total fat standard
SMART SNACKS	Total fat content cannot exceed 30% and saturated fat must be < 10% of total calories	If substituting veggie for fruit more than 1x/week are required to vary veggie subgroups throughout the week
BUY AMERICAN	Must purchase domestic to max extent practical, with 2 limited exceptions	Sets 9% limit on non-domestic food purchases when using exception: added documentation, over 5% must be domestically grown

Key Considerations When Implementing Changes

1. Impact on Student Preferences

- Correlation between salt and taste preferences in children may impact participation (Source)
- Decreases in milk consumption when flavored milk is removed, leading to increased milk waste (Source)

2. Implications on Current Product Nutritional Standards

- Requires effort and buy-in from industry partners
- Most nutritious meals come from school lunch (Source)
- Previous updates resulted in difficulties in cost and availability of available foods (Source)

3. Adds Greater Staff Effort

- Challenges meeting Buy American requirement (Source)
- Balancing costs with compliance as food costs rise (Source)
- Implications of buy-in from manufacturers and distributors could impact variability

Learn more about the USDA proposed changes from LINQ nutrition experts in this webinar recording.

14 <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/2017/05/03/government-eases-sodium-and-whole-grain-standards-for-school-meals/>

15, 16 <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2017/05/01/ag-secretary-perdue-moves-make-school-meals-great-again>

17 <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/02/07/2023-02102/child-nutrition-programs-revisions-to-meal-patterns-consistent-with-the-2020-dietary-guidelines-for>

18 <https://schoolnutrition.org/sna-news/sna-comments-on-usdas-proposed-nutrition-standards/>

19 <https://schoolnutrition.org/sna-news/sna-survey-shows-school-meal-programs-face-critical-challenges/>

Responses to LINQ’s survey are consistent with these reactions. Negative perceptions persist toward the proposed changes, specifically around flavored milk. **73% of respondents negatively view the restriction to allow only unflavored milk for grades K-8 and flavored or unflavored milk for grades 9-12.** 25% ranked it as posing the biggest problem among impacts of the proposed changes, with 44% indicating it would have a “Very Negative Impact” on their district.

The negative sentiment is felt most strongly among smaller districts (<2K students), with 78% indicating a negative impact if unflavored milk restrictions are applied to grades K-8. If unflavored milk restrictions are applied to grades K-5, 76% of smaller districts still indicate a very/somewhat negative impact. Conversely, 55% of larger districts (2K+ students) convey that restrictions on K-5 would have a negative impact.

“I would support lower levels of added sugar in flavored milk but not go as far as to ban flavored milk for students. There is no nutrition in any food item unless that food is actually eaten. I feel this proposed update will only feed the trash cans and not children.”

Survey respondent

According to a study funded by the Milk Processor Education Program (MilkPEP), milk consumption declined on average by 35% when flavored milk is not available.²⁰ As milk is a required component of a reimbursable meal, this may lead to concerns about a reduction in reimbursable meals or milk waste. Students required to take a milk for their meal may end up throwing it away or not consuming the full amount, leading to more waste.



²⁰ <https://www.dairymax.org/sites/default/files/MilkPEP-Study-Summary.pdf>

Respondents also worry about changes to sodium (52%), added sugars (51%), and grains (47%), relating impacts to the “taste and waste factor:” if kids don’t like the taste, more food ends up in the trash. Combined with the restrictions on flavored milk, school meal participation rates may drop, further impacting reimbursement rates.

Here too, smaller districts have a stronger reaction to sugar limits. 58% of smaller districts (<2K students) indicated negative impacts from restrictions on sugar versus 46% for larger districts.

“Our students get breakfast, lunch, and dinner at our schools and these are the best meals some of these students get to eat. Changing the taste and/or quality could impact the types of foods offered, which could impact participation rates.”

Survey respondent

It’s important to note that both the proposed changes around sodium and added sugars also require buy-in and changes in formulations from manufacturers. Processed foods will have to adjust sodium and sugar levels to meet any new proposed changes.

While scratch cooking may alleviate some challenges arising from meeting new requirements, challenges from staffing shortages may not make scratch cooking a viable option for many districts. Scratch cooking empowers school districts and gives the cafeteria staff more control over meeting meal pattern requirements by directly adjusting recipe amounts to meet the meal pattern. However, scratch cooking may require more food service workers and full-time employees.

Despite negative feelings towards many of the proposed changes, respondents indicate they are not overwhelmingly concerned about their ability to provide reimbursable meals that meet proposed meal pattern changes. This may speak to the resiliency and flexibility school nutrition programs have shown over the past several years after the pandemic severely impacted schools. Nutrition programs have proven their ability to adapt, and they have the benefit of time with final rules not expected until April 2024.²¹

²¹ <https://www.k12dive.com/news/USDA-school-nutrition-universal-meal-rules/653309/>

How LINQ Can Help

LINQ Nutrition Solutions for K-12 Schools, Districts, and State Agencies

LINQ's integrated nutrition platform is purpose-built by education experts for K-12 professionals. It's the only solution of its kind featuring FOH and BOH integration for schools, providing real-time inventory and sales updates and automating tedious management tasks. It's all about giving nutrition directors and staff more time and energy to focus on their most impactful work—delivering nutritious meals to the students depending on them. [LINQ Nutrition](#) helps both states and districts address the administrative burdens that come with operating a successful school nutrition program.

[LINQ District Nutrition](#)

Streamline your operations and spend time on what matters most. Food Service Directors can lead their meal programs with confidence with an integrated solution that tracks an item from delivery to food preparation, to the POS—then back to the production record.

It's a unified system that establishes real-time data flows across the FOH and BOH, keeping teams informed. Accurate inventory, production, and sales records enable strategic meal planning and preparation. Reduce food waste while ensuring that every student's needs are met. Plus, districts can cut down on unpaid meal debt with technology that makes it easier than ever for families to submit meal applications, refill lunch accounts, and feed it forward for students in need of meal assistance.

[LINQ Connect](#), the family portal and payments app that comes with LINQ Nutrition, simplifies everything from loading account balances to checking purchase records. It also lets families pay other school fees, like club dues and field trip fees. They can receive automatic alerts when a balance is low or action is needed, and the app uploads in real-time so they see the most up-to-date information 24/7.

It even helps with adjusting menu plans while maintaining compliance with the USDA meal patterns. LINQ District Nutrition relieves stress for K-12 nutrition departments because it automatically flags meal compliance issues with USDA-approved nutrient analysis software.

LINQ State Nutrition

Simplify application submissions and track claims from a single location. With the [LINQ Food Distribution Program](#), state agencies can maximize Planned Assistance Level from both the state and district levels, gain deeper operational insights, and provide a user-friendly experience for schools. LINQ

designed this solution with both the state and school district in mind, providing an easier experience for schools with a single login to submit and receive USDA Foods orders and seamlessly update inventory. Access everything with a single system.

Harness the Power of Your Data with an Integrated Business Solution

LINQ ERP

The LINQ K-12 business operations platform brings it all together. LINQ ERP gives districts and their K-12 nutrition departments the power to streamline their technology infrastructure, reduce costs, and improve operational efficiency. Centralized data ensures districts can leverage real-time data to make informed decisions, drive business value, and put students first.

Real-time, accurate data and deeper insights help leaders understand the performance and value of the school nutrition department and see where teams need support. With the increasing use of technology in K-12 education, nutrition departments deserve to stay up to date with the latest tools and applications to ensure they can effectively support their schools and students.

Simplify Forms, Documents, e-Signatures, and Workflows

LINQ Forms & Workflows

Simplify all of your forms and workflows with a single solution. LINQ Forms & Workflows eliminates the burden of menial tasks. Designed for fast and easy implementation, this self-sufficient solution helps districts realize greater efficiency,

cost savings, enhanced data security, improved communication, and better insights. Users can easily create custom workflows, multi-step approvals, and track real-time responses.

Technology Helps School Nutrition Superheroes Shape a Brighter Future

School nutrition professionals deserve praise. They've adapted and excelled in the face of shifting challenges and an uncertain future. They kept students fed even when schools were closed, and they continue to fuel hungry, growing children every day as costs rise, meal debt increases, staffing shrinks, and regulations change. They kept the state of school nutrition strong.

K-12 nutrition teams and leaders proved they can handle anything that comes their way, and with the right tools, it's clear they'll shape a bright, sustainable future for their programs in the coming years. The good news is that tools up for the challenge already exist. From integrated FOH and

BOH systems that automatically sync with inventory and production records, to digital payment solutions that simplify transactions and help schools minimize meal debt, LINQ is here to partner with you.

By adopting these technologies, school districts can streamline administrative processes and improve the overall performance of their schools. Technology keeps shaping the future of education, and that includes K-12 nutrition. Take control of your program's future by giving your teams the tools to deliver for students, your program, and your community.





LINQ brings a new level of digital transformation and operation efficiency to K-12 leaders across districts and states. Built by a team of K-12 experts, our solutions include Nutrition for districts and states, Education Resource Planning (ERP), Forms & Workflows for districts and Payment portals for Parents and Guardians. Through our first-of-its kind K-12 Business Platform, LINQ is committed to Empowering the Business of K-12.

[LINQ.COM](https://www.linq.com)