PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

food service

feeding tomorrow together

Food Service 101

FEBRUARY 2021

Providing all students with nutritious, nourishing meals thoughtfully sourced and made with love.

About PPS Food Service

Our work fuels students' learning, builds life-long habits of health, and strengthens our community.

Representing the largest school district in Maine, we are driven to elevate the role of food in public education so that all students can experience a model of sustainable, equitable food systems.

Our vision is that the cafeteria becomes a valued hub for nourishment, experiential learning and community connection.

We have approximately
50 STAFF MEMBERS

Making scratch-cooked meals for more than
6,500 STUDENTS

In the largest district in Maine with
16 SCHOOLS

Partners

We partner with FoodCorps, Cultivating Community, school garden coaches, local farms and providers, Let's Go, AmeriCorp, Food Fuels Learning, SNAP-Ed, Full Plates Full Potential, Cumberland County Food Security Council and others to serve community needs in fun and creative ways.

We value...

TEAMWORK: We work together as a team to cultivate an environment of collaboration and mutual respect – for the people we work with, the people we feed, and the community we serve.

DEPENDABILITY: We are there with meals for the students every day, no matter what.

QUALITY: We take pride in meeting nutritional guidelines with fresh produce and whole grains, incorporating locally sourced ingredients when possible, and showcasing scratch-made meals.

COMMUNITY: We are committed to Portland. We work to make our communities stronger and more resilient by embracing local purchasing and fostering community partnerships.

FUN: We love feeding kids and have fun doing it!

CUSTOMER SERVICE: We enjoy authentic interactions with students, recognizing teachable moments around the food on their plate and beyond, and creating opportunities for student's voices to be heard.

We believe...

1. All children deserve access to nourishing food.
2. A child can't learn when they're hungry. When their nutritional needs are met, the child is more attentive, has fewer absences, and works and plays better with others.
3. Food is a powerful tool for change and connection. Food systems and supply chains that value human life and the environment support the overall health of Portland students.
4. School meals are a key place where students can begin to build positive relationships with food and foster healthy habits they carry through to adulthood.
5. When more students participate in school meals, stigma reduces and community connection grows.
6. The cafeteria and kitchen are welcoming spaces that offer tremendous opportunity as an experiential learning laboratory.

School Meals and the Impact on the Community

Supporting the PPS Food Service Program supports the PPS community

The PPS Food Service Department, while part of the school system, is a self-supporting business.

Our goal is to maintain our program with the reimbursements received for meals served, and not request money from the
school budget.

Money spent on school meals directly increases the operating budget we have to provide meals with more local produce and scratch cooking.

Increased participation reduces stigma and increases purchasing power

When a child's nutritional needs are met, the child is more attentive, has fewer absences, and an increased likelihood for positive academic outcomes. [1]

"For many food insecure students, the meals they eat at school comprise a crucial portion of the food they consume daily." [2]

Citations: Food Fuels Learning, 2018

Quality meals improve learning outcomes for ALL students.

When all students participate, stigma associated with eating school meals decreases. [3]

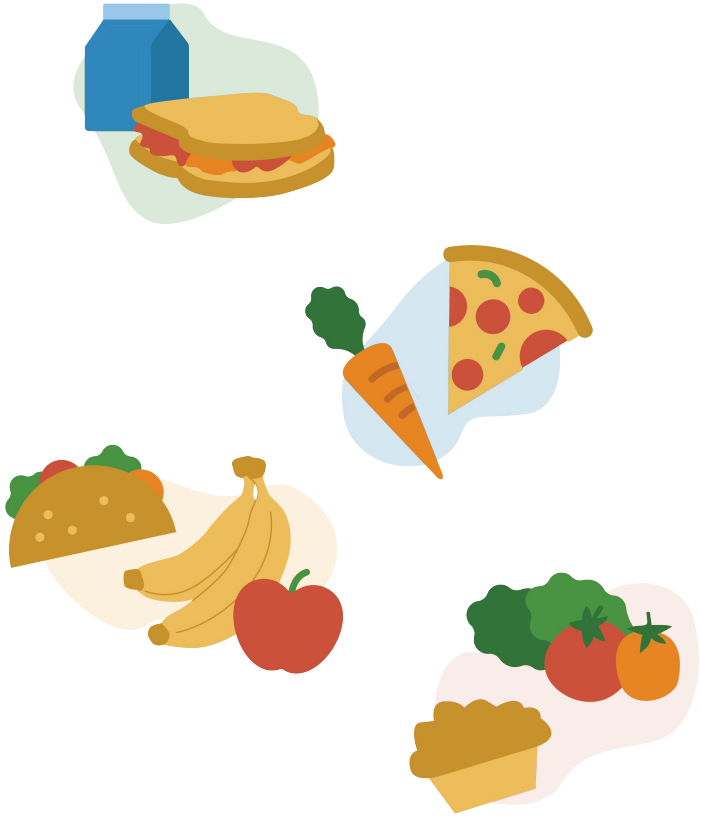
The use of available federal reimbursements and resources are maximized and able to be invested in meals. [4]

We are able to channel more resources to local farmers and the local economy and support the chance for *all* students to enjoy local, minimally processed food.

Citations: Food Fuels Learning, 2018

Meal Design and Sourcing

We focus on utilizing fresh produce, whole grains, featured locally sourced ingredients and scratch cooking to exceed USDA nutritional guidelines.



Meal Design

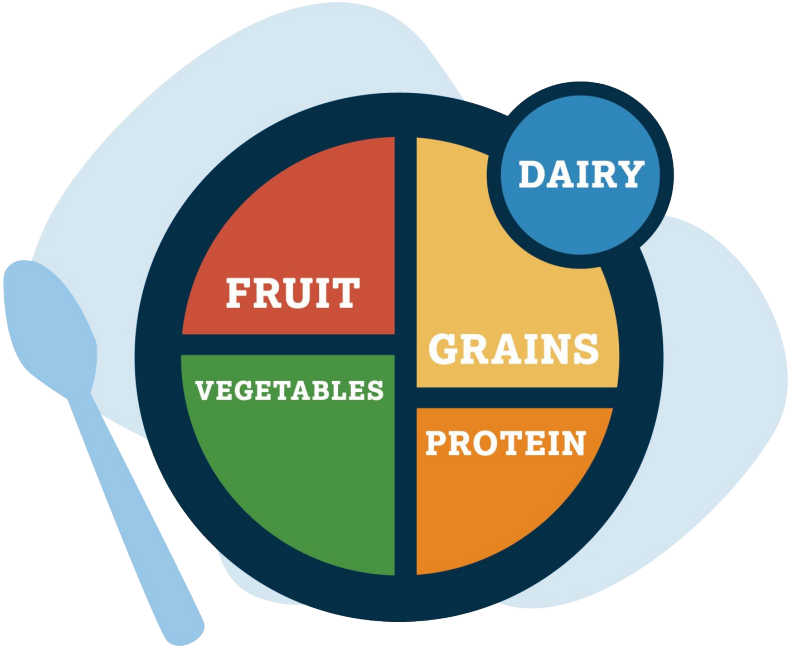
Our meals are made with a nutrition profile specifically crafted to support a child’s growth and development.

All schools serve only whole grain, a daily meatless option (vegan or vegetarian), lean meats, zero trans fats, limited saturated fats and sodium, low fat or fat free dairy, and nothing fried in intentional and varied menus.

USDA Requirements

The USDA breaks school meals into 5 components: protein, grain, fruit, vegetable, and dairy.

Students must take one fruit with each breakfast, and a fruit and vegetable with each lunch.



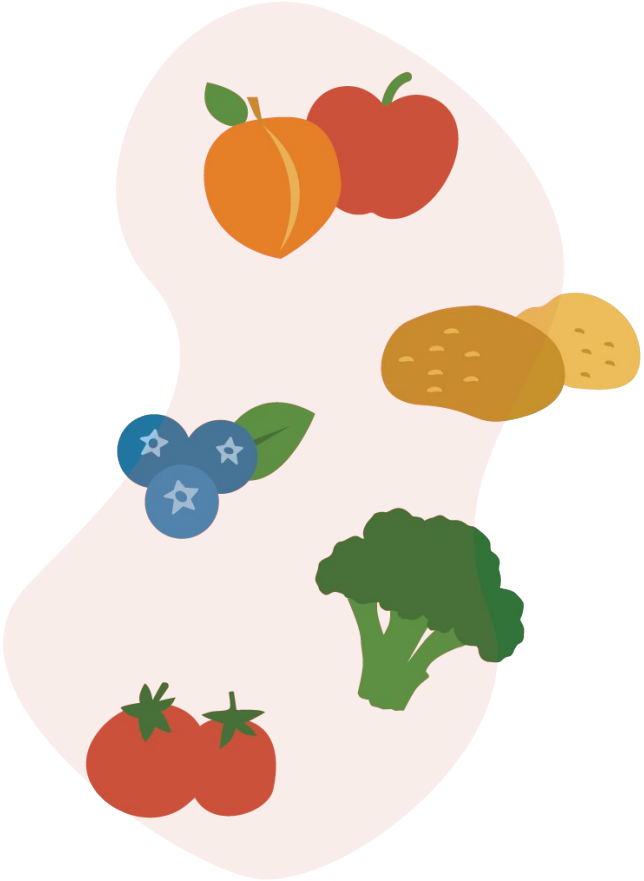
Local Ingredients and Scratch Cooking

Our scratch cooked offerings include:

- Vegan chili, marinara sauce, taco meat, mashed potatoes, hummus, falafel, muffins, yogurt parfaits, and seasonal offerings integrating local and school garden produce

We feature local items in season or in sauces:

- Strawberries (Fairwind Farms), tomatoes and zucchini (Liberation Farms), milk (Oakhurst), apples and peaches (Brackett's), tofu (Heiwa), cheese (Pineland Farms), pizza crust (Amato's) and beets (La Joie Growers)



Local Ingredients and Scratch Cooking

We participate in the Maine Harvest of the Month program:

- Each ingredient is featured on our menu and showcased on our social media and other communication channels to promote the use of seasonal, local products.

School garden produce is highlighted in varied seasonal menu offerings.

Meal Production

Our production model prioritizes the ability to serve scratch made meals and adapt to individual needs.

Meal Production

Much like a large-scale catering company, we serve all elementary schools through meals prepared at our Central Kitchen facility.

We also supplement Middle School kitchens with scratch made meals like our homemade sauce, taco meat, hummus and vegan chili.

With supportive oversight, PPS high school kitchens operate with more independence over purchasing and preparation to provide students with customized options.

Elementary Schools

Students have typically come into the cafeteria to choose their meal and eat together. We offer 3 meal choices at lunch: a main entrée, a vegan option, or a sunbutter and jelly bundle, and always include a whole grain, fruit, veggie and milk.

In response to community needs, our new vegan line has replaced our vegetarian option with choices like vegetable chili, lentil sloppy joes, falafel, and tofu rice bowls.

Middle Schools

Students receive 3 options for lunch entrees, including one vegan or vegetarian option.

We have typically always highlighted a full salad bar, and include a whole grain, fruit, veggie and milk.

High Schools

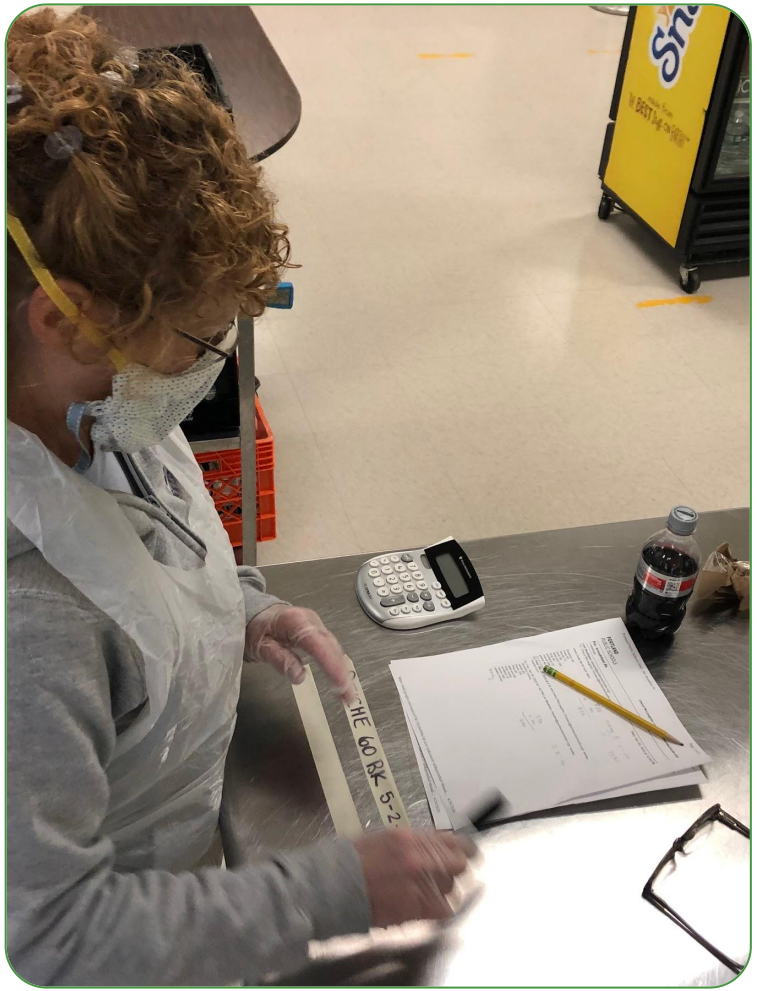
At the High School level, students have an open campus option for lunch and schools prepare their meals on site.

At Portland and Deering High, students receive a main entrée and typically have access to a mirage of options including a deli bar, hot and cold sandwiches, and a full salad bar.

At Casco Bay High School, students receive 3 meal choices at lunch: a main entree, a vegan entree, or a sunbutter and jelly bundle, and always receives a whole grain, fruit, veggie and milk. Our new vegan line has replaced our vegetarian option here as well.

Pricing Structure and Benefits

Meals are priced as free, reduced or paid.



Pricing Structure and Benefits

We have elementary and secondary prices which are set at a local level and approved by the school board. Reimbursements come from a combination of state and federal government.

- Based on each student's eligible meal benefit level, school lunches, breakfasts, and snacks are reimbursed by the federal government.
- 57% of Portland Public School students are eligible for Free & Reduced (F&R) Meals (2018-19).
- Families apply using a F&R Application sent out annually by PPS or through information provided by the Department of Health and Human Services.
- In the state of Maine, all students who qualify at the reduced level receive their meals for free. The state reimburses the district for their reduced meal charge.

USDA Federal Nutrition Programs

We participate in a variety of federally funded nutrition programs in addition to the National School Lunch and National School Breakfast programs.

USDA Federal Nutrition Programs

Afterschool Snack Program (ASSP)

- After School Snack Program available to schools based on their F&R percentage and after school programming.
- Schools in Portland currently participating: Lincoln, King, Moore, Portland High.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) also known as Super Snack

- "... CACFP is a federal program that ...provides reimbursements for meals served to children and youth participating in afterschool care programs." (USDA definition)
- Schools in Portland that currently participate: Ocean Ave, Rowe, East End, Reiche, Talbot, Presumpscot.

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

- A provision based on data from the Department of Health and Human Services that provides meals to all students in a school free of charge. School districts must reapply every 4 years to participate.
- Schools in Portland that currently qualify: East End, Reiche, Talbot, Presumpscot.

Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program (FFVP):

- Offers students fruits or vegetables that they may not be exposed to at home.
- The state invites schools that qualify to participate (based on their F&R percentage). Districts can then apply for the program.
- Cannot be served in conjunction with the school meals program, so it is served in the classroom between meal periods.
- Schools in Portland that currently participate: East End, Reiche, Talbot, Presumpscot.

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

- PPS Food Service provides meals at various schools and community sites across Portland during the summer months.

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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