

Small Stations, Big Impact

A Quick-Start Guide to Launching School Nutrition Programs

Why Create Stations?

- Meet evolving student preferences (coffee, smoothies, grab-and-go)
 - Increase participation for breakfast and lunch
 - Generate more revenue for the school
 - Build excitement and improve program perception
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Station Types

Coffee Café

- Milk-based drinks can count toward reimbursable meals
- Great for high schools and staff sales
- Opportunity for student workforce programs

Smoothie / Power Stations

- High demand items
- Boost breakfast participation

Snack Bars / A La Carte

- Flexible operations before, during, or after lunch

Food Trucks / Mobile Service

- Use for events, summer feeding, or campuses without kitchen access

Alternative Breakfast (After-the-Bell)

- Grab and go carts, classroom breakfast, or hallway service
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Core Setup Essentials

- **Location matters:** high-traffic areas drive success; repurpose existing spaces when possible
- **Start with basics:**
 - POS system (tablet/laptop)
 - Hot/cold holding equipment
 - Small footprint carts or kiosks

How to Get Started (Proven Approach)

1. **Start Small (Pilot First)**
 - Test 1-2 locations or items
2. **Build Buy-In**
 - Partner with Administrators and Principals
 - Engage students early
3. **Track and Adjust**
 - Participation (ADP)
 - Be mindful of waste and feedback to be able to better adjust
4. **Scale Strategically**
 - Expand after proof of success
 - Modify staffing/equipment as needed

Keys to Success

- ✓ Strong branding (logos, cups, signage, social media)
- ✓ Create a “destination” not too far away for students to go to on property
- ✓ Ensure compliance with meal regulations
- ✓ Continuous improvement using data

Common Challenges (and Tips)

- **Staffing shortages** → cross-train and implement student programs
- **Startup costs** → pilot first / leverage grants
- **Equipment delays** → plan contingencies
- **Buy-in struggles** → show revenue and participation impact

Key Takeaway

Start small and build something students want, not just something that serves them.