

Hunger Doesn't Take a Break When School Does

The Issue

Children typically eat $\frac{1}{3}$ of their daily required calories while at school, but unfortunately this doesn't always carry over to the summer time for some students.¹ While the Summer Nutrition Program (SNP) is a program that works to offer meals to children over summer, access to these sites can be very limited for those living in rural communities.

Background Information

Minnesota is currently ranked 12th for number of children served in the SNP.² By increasing access to SNP, more kids will be getting nutritious meals during the summer months as well as educational and social activities and interaction. Over the summer, students might lose any physical activity improvements that they may have made during the school year and black, hispanic and overweight and obese children tend to experience faster weight gain.³⁻⁴

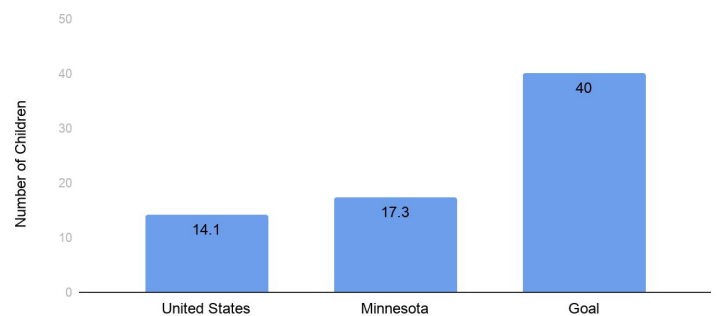
The nutrition that is provided by schools is important in keeping the diet and habits of children steady. Increased participation also helps fight food insecurity among at risk populations. Many families living in rural communities face barriers to getting their children to the sites to receive a meal during the summer. Some of these barriers include parents/guardians working all day and being unable to drive their child to the site, living too far away from the site for the child to walk or ride a bike, little or no public transportation access, not being aware of where the site is, etc.

Missed Opportunities in MN

- Decreased participation for 3 consecutive years²
- 80% of school-aged children who are at risk for going hungry are not able to take advantage of meal programs⁵
- Missed opportunity to lessen the “summer slide” or loss of academic skills and knowledge that tends to happen over summer



Number of Children Who a Received Summer Lunch for Every 100 Low-income Child Who Received a School Lunch



Adapted from Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report . (2019).

If Minnesota reaches the 40:100 ratio, they could get an additional \$4,936,825 from federal reimbursement dollars²...

Ideas to Bring Students to Summer Meal Sites⁶

- Provide students with **local bus passes** for easier access to summer food sites. Schools could work with public transportation to distribute bus passes to students and parents prior to the beginning of summer vacation.
- Team up with school bus companies to organize **call-to-ride** services. Parents would call a bus service company to register for rides on any given day for their students to attend a summer food service program.
- Partner with **volunteers** to provide rides to students. You could offer volunteers with mileage reimbursements. Other parents can create carpools with other students in the area to transport students to feeding sites, or offer volunteer opportunities to faith-based organizations to sign up for a day to drive to students to sites.
- Borrow local organizations' buses or transport vehicles to **shuttle students** to food serving sites. Many faith-based organizations or long-term care settings have shuttle buses for their residents. Summer Food Service sponsors and sites could partner with these places to borrow the bus for their students to get to the location.
- Expand **school bus service** to provide rides during the summer months. Contract with bus services to continue driving along school routes to bring students in all areas to the service sites.



[Program Spotlight:](#)

Starkville, MS - Student Pick-up

The Starkville Parks and Recreation in Mississippi collaborates with the Southern Foundation for Homeless Children to increase access to summer meals through a partnership with the local SMART bus system and Mississippi State University. They charter buses to pick up students from different locations and drop them off at the meal site.⁸

[Program Spotlight:](#)

Huntsville, AL - Bus Pass Program

The city of Huntsville, Alabama, provides students and parents free shuttle rides to and from summer meal sites. During the final week of school, students are given free bus passes for the summer. This gives students an opportunity to learn about local transit. The program served 98,000 meals in its inaugural year of the program and they continually strive to increase their outreach each year.⁷

[Program Spotlight:](#)

Effingham County, IL - Call-to-Ride

Through the Effingham County Public Transportation, the students in Effingham County, Illinois can register for free bus rides to school. The students are encouraged to schedule at least one day in advance and indicate which days they will be able to attend.⁹

Ideas to Bring Meals to Students ¹⁰

- Partner with local **UPS** sites to have meals directly transported to students. Food banks can prepare and pack meals in coolers that are then loaded onto a UPS delivery vehicle to be taken to students on their delivery routes.
- Refurbished school buses can be transformed into **traveling cafeteria**. These mobile meal sites can pick students up from their home or a designated location and serve the meals directly on the bus.
- Form **volunteer groups** to drive meal packs to multiple locations within the community. These volunteers could be community members, school staff, or parents. Most volunteer groups are eligible to receive reimbursement for mileage.
- Team up with local **summer camps** to deliver meals to their locations. Camps or recreation programs can pre-order their meals and have them delivered on-site and then they distribute them to the students.
- Broaden the **school's** reach by continuing to cook meals throughout the summer. Schools are often a central location for most students, so they could either consume the meals at school or meals could be distributed via unused school busses.

Program Spotlight:

Chapel Hill, NC - Traveling Cafeteria

Chapel Hill's summer food service program, Food for the Summer, partnered with the mayor's office, 3 school cafeterias, cafeteria staff, food banks and volunteers to prepare hot meals. Volunteers delivered meals to sites, along with fun buckets filled with jump ropes, balls and chalk to encourage daily physical activity. The opportunity to volunteer qualified for service learning for high school students.¹¹



Program Spotlight:

Browning, MT - Food Truck

The Browning Public Schools made hot meals in cafeteria sites and distributed them using food trucks. The food truck stopped at 4 locations in the community and stayed at each location for an hour to allow students to eat their meals on site, interact with other students and participate in organized activities. The delivery of food was done solely on volunteers in the community.¹²

Program Spotlight:

Humboldt County, CA - UPS Delivery

Humboldt County, CA Food for People Food Bank collaborates with the UPS and delivers summer meals to students living in the rural areas of the county. The food bank prepares meals, stores them in coolers and UPS delivers them up to an hour outside the city. UPS donates over 12,000 miles each summer.^{6,10}

Challenges

Cost of vehicle maintenance and gas

Increase in administrative requirements and time to train staff

Supervision of Students

Student's lack of interest in leaving home

Solutions

Collaborate with transportation services, parents and faith-based organizations to provide opportunities for recruitment of volunteers, potential use of unused vehicle and mileage reimbursements.

Use existing tool-kits, staff resources, volunteers, and program champions. Using train-the-trainer models, incorporating responsibilities into current positions, and getting volunteers can lessen the burden of requirements and time on school administrators.

Reach out to local nonprofit organizations, parents, faith-based organizations, or high schools. These partnerships can be a useful resource for volunteers during the summer!

Provide fun and interactive activities for students and caregivers to engage in at sites. This could be done by having the site be at a playground and park or by having soccer balls, frisbees, footballs, etc.

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