



bell institute
OF HEALTH & NUTRITION
General Mills

U.S. CHILDREN ARE GETTING THEIR MOST NUTRITIOUS MEALS AT SCHOOL

Kids who eat school meals get more whole grains, milk, fruits and veggies during meal times AND have better diets overall compared to kids who don't eat school meals.¹



The most nutritious foods kids eat are from schools!²

School meals are essential to the health of the children in our country. Compared to foods from the grocery store, restaurants and other sources, school meals give kids more whole grains, fruits, greens and beans, and less sugar sweetened drinks, refined grains, added sugar and saturated fat.

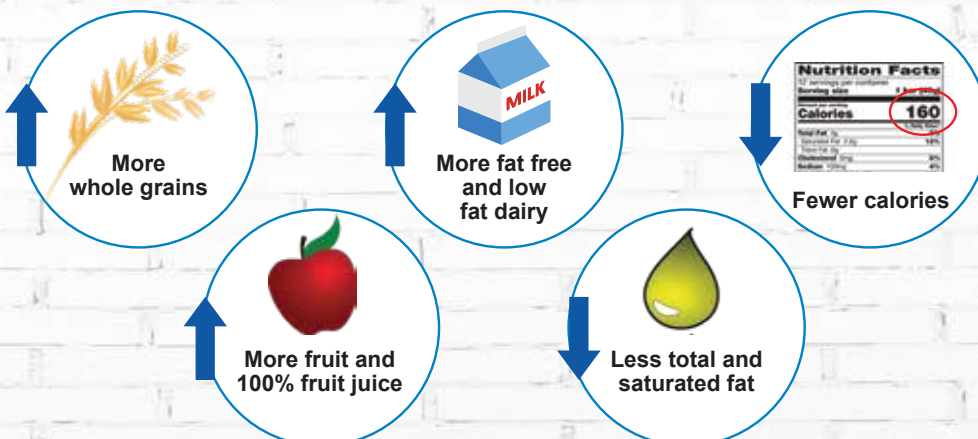


A CLOSER LOOK

The USDA's School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study compared dietary intakes of kids participating in school breakfast and lunch to students not participating. Here's a look at a few key findings.³

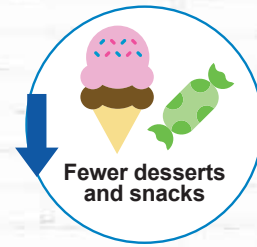
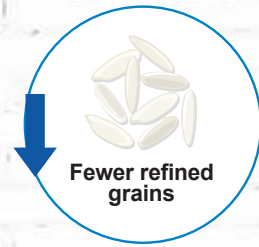
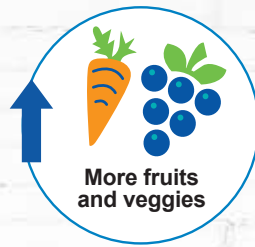
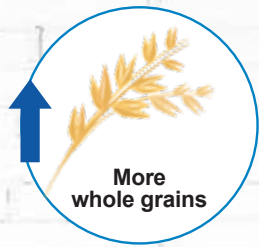
SCHOOL BREAKFAST

KIDS WHO EAT SCHOOL BREAKFAST GET:

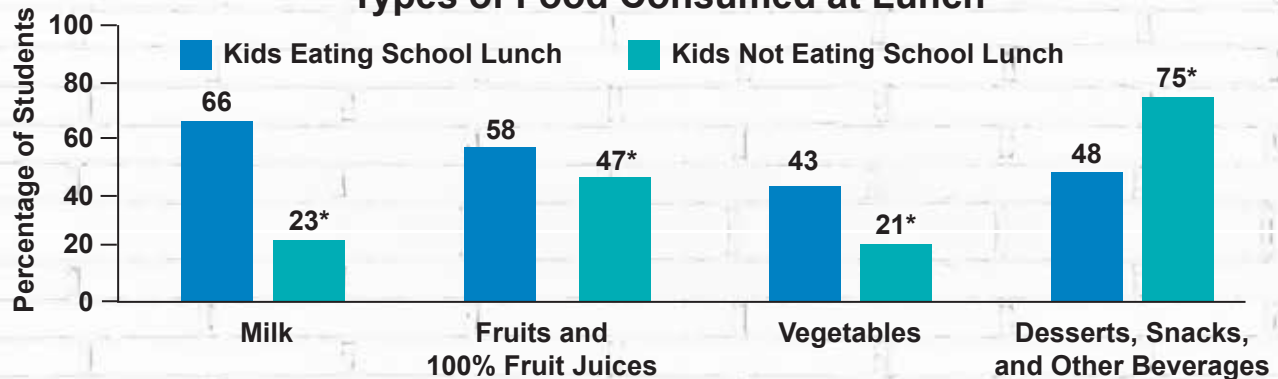


SCHOOL LUNCH

KIDS WHO EAT SCHOOL LUNCH GET:



Types of Food Consumed at Lunch



Source: USDA, SNMCS Final Report 4, Table 7.1. *Difference between school lunch participants and nonparticipants is significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level.



Regularly eating school meals can boost diet quality & nutrient intake!⁴

- Kids, age 4 – 15, who ate school breakfast every day vs kids who ate it 0 to 4 days had more fruits, vegetables, fiber, whole grains, dairy and calcium.
- Kids who ate school lunch everyday vs those who ate it less frequently consumed more dairy and calcium.

Universal free school meals provide nutrition benefits and more for students!⁵

A recent study found that universal free school meals were associated with:

- Increased school meal participation
- Improved diet quality and food security
- Healthier body weights
- Improved academic performance
- Fewer behavioral incidents



1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. School Meals. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/npao/schoolmeals.htm>

2. Na M. Disparities in Diet Quality in School-Age Children—Opportunities and Challenges. JAMA Netw Open. 2021;4(4):e215358. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.5358

3. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study, Final Report Volume 4: Student Participation, Satisfaction, Plate Waste, and Dietary Intakes. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/SNMCS-Volume4.pdf>.

4. Au LE, Gurzo K, Gosliner W, Webb KL, Crawford PB, Ritchie LD. Eating School Meals Daily Is Associated with Healthier Dietary Intakes: The Healthy Communities Study. J Acad Nutr Diet. 2018 Aug;118(8):1474-1481.

5. Cohen, J.F.W. et al. Universal School Meals and Associations with Student Participation, Attendance, Academic Performance, Diet Quality, Food Security, and Body Mass Index: A Systematic Review. Nutrients 2021, 13, 911.