



News | Student Nutrition

# Partnering with School Districts to Provide Free Summer Meals for Children

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Great-tasting, nutritious meals are important for school children throughout the year to help them learn, grow, and be at their best. That importance doesn't end once school is out in the summer.

In addition to providing meals to students enrolled in summer school, Aramark Student Nutrition is partnering with many of its districts across the country to provide free meals this summer to any child 18 and younger in the communities in which they serve.

“For many students, the meals they get at school are the most nutritionally balanced of their day,” said Barbara Flanagan, President and CEO, Aramark Student Nutrition. “We are so happy to be able to work with our school partners across the U.S. to provide meals free of charge during the summer.”

## A Whole-Community Solution in Scranton

Pennsylvania's Scranton School District just kicked off their 2024 free summer meals program. Any child 18 and under can receive two free meals daily (breakfast and lunch or breakfast and a snack) Monday through Friday at any of more than 20 locations, including not only school sites but also selected parks, camps, and community centers.

The summer meals program was in effect last year, as well.



“We work to keep food fun, safe, and available all year-round,” said Precious Gilliard, General Manager, Scranton School District, Aramark Student Nutrition. “Depending on weather and participation, we are expecting to serve approximately 800 to 1,000 meals daily between breakfast, lunch, and snacks this summer.”

Meals must be eaten at the collection sites to maintain safety and local standards. This year, students can look forward to a menu that includes:

- Breakfast: Blueberry bread with a fresh pear and milk choice

- Lunch: Breaded chicken Caesar wrap with a fresh orange, cucumber slices, and milk
- Snack: Cinnamon graham crackers and strawberry banana yogurt

During the regular school year, more than 9,000 students enrolled at Scranton School District are eligible for free breakfasts and lunches daily through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program.

Gilliard oversees the summer foodservice team of about 20 people who work between production and service sites. Aleaha Wacker, the Aramark Student Nutrition Registered Dietitian, works on nutritious menu options for the community students. The operations supervisors spend their days traveling from site to site to make sure that all locations served are adhering to safety, service excellence, and other necessary guidelines and principles.

## Summer-Ready in Racine

At Racine Unified School District, the Aramark Student Nutrition team works through the year to provide fresh, healthy, free meals to more than 16,000 students at 24 schools. Racine Unified is one of the largest public school districts in the state.

The district and Aramark Student Nutrition have teamed up to run a free summer meals program again this year as they have done during past summers.

Free lunches are available to any child in the community 18 and under four days a week, except July 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> because of the holiday. The children do not have to be enrolled in the district to receive meals. However, they do have to eat meals onsite at one of eight elementary, middle, and high school locations.



Shelly Gustin, Food Service Lead, working behind-the-scenes at Racine Unified School District

“We are working to grow participation in the program, getting the word out to parents and the community so kids can enjoy the option of nutritious meals and families can save a little money,” said Stephanie Romic, General Manager, Racine Unified School District, Aramark Student Nutrition. “We want to make sure we do right by students and give them the nourishment they need—be it through the school year or in the summertime.”

The free lunch locations stay open one-half hour after summer school lets out so more people in the community can benefit.

School locations are staffed to safely serve menu favorites to more than 2,000 children daily during the summer, including approximately 1,800 students enrolled in summer school this year.

Students enrolled at Racine Unified School District are eligible for free breakfasts, lunches, and snacks daily throughout the school year. The Aramark Student Nutrition team even staffs breakfast carts at school entrances so students can grab a tasty, nutritious breakfast on their way to class.

## Tiger Bites Take Off in Texas

West Texas’ Frenship Independent School District, along with foodservice provider Aramark Student Nutrition, kicked off their seventh annual free summer meal program to provide nutritious lunches to children in the community and help combat child hunger.

Named Tiger Bites, the summer program will run June 3 to July 26, providing one free meal daily Monday through Friday to any child 18 or younger in the Lubbock and Wolfforth communities. Children

are eligible regardless of enrollment in Frenship ISD.

Lunches will be distributed at two designated Tiger Bites locations, and children must eat onsite where games and activities will also be provided.

“The need for children to get nutritious meals doesn’t stop when school is out,” said Ken Robinson, General Manager, Frenship ISD, Aramark Student Nutrition. “We’re proud to partner with the district and the community to help alleviate some food insecurity stress off of parents and families.”



Tiger Bites is part of a larger, ongoing program that provides both federally funded and donation-based food assistance to any child and family in Frenship ISD that needs support. Frenship ISD and Aramark Student Nutrition have worked with community partners to help serve students weekend food bags, holiday meals, and food assistance during school breaks.

During the regular school year, more than 11,500 students attend classes at 15 school locations in the district.

**Related Texas News:** [Pflugerville Independent School District teams up with Aramark to provide free summer meals for kids \(CBS Austin\)](#)

## More Help for Families

Ensuring school-age children have access to healthy, nutritious meals to support their growth, development, and academic success is the goal of Aramark Student Nutrition, the company’s client and community partners, and state and federal entities, including the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The USDA sets nutritional guidelines and standards for school meals to ensure children receive balanced and healthy diets—and funds are made available to schools that comply with enhanced nutritional standards.

Whether it is through providing free or reduced meals through the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, specialty programs to provide milk or fresh fruits and vegetables, or the Summer Food Service Program, the USDA provides funding and reimbursements to schools to support free and reduced-price meals for children.



The USDA has been expanding access to healthy meals for school students in recent years. In [May 2024](#), the USDA launched an historic suite of summer nutrition programs aimed at helping families tackle hunger and improve the healthy eating habits of children.

These [USDA SUN Programs](#) include new grocery benefits for families, in-person meals, and meals to-go to improve food and nutrition security during the summer months.

“Nearly 30 million children participate in USDA’s school breakfast and lunch programs on an average school day, but when school is out, kids lose access to those vital meals,” said U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “USDA’s SUN programs offer more options for families to conveniently access the essential nutrition children need to thrive, learn and grow during summer and beyond.”



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