

## EQUIPMENT TIPS FOR SERVING MEALS IN THE CLASSROOM

### A GUIDE TO SOCIALLY DISTANT MEAL SERVICE IN SY20-21

As schools plan for the 2020-21 school year, it is anticipated that students will consume more meals in classrooms while also practicing social distancing. This resource was created to offer guidance as schools consider how to handle meal delivery, whether to the classroom or to other areas on campus. It also offers suggestions as to what equipment may be needed.

Before implementing a meals in the classroom delivery model, it can help to survey school stakeholders such as teachers and custodial staff to find out what they would need to make this system work. It would also be helpful to gather feedback from students about what they would like to see on the menu. In this current situation, gathering feedback may be via email, using social media to survey students, or setting up a virtual call.

**GETTING STARTED** - Determine what equipment you may need. [Equipment list for meal service SY 20-21](#) can help get you started.



**Transport:** of food from the cafeteria to the classroom: rolling coolers, thermal bags, bins for food storage, and travel carts.

**Classroom:** items needed include placemats for each desk, separate trashcans for classroom trash, and cleaning supplies for students/teachers.

**Tracking:** train staff (teachers) to accurately count/claim students. A Point of Sales (POS) system can be used to track participants for reimbursement by scanning student IDs, or using student rosters.

**REUSING & REPURPOSING EQUIPMENT** – Think about the equipment that you already have on hand and how you can repurpose it to serve meals on campuses. Repurposing equipment is cost effective and also avoids possible lengthy wait times for delivery. The following is not an exhaustive list of ideas, but meant to be a guide of what is possible. It was intended to encourage FNS teams who have a history of being creative and innovative to continue to think outside the box.



## TIPS

Check your inventory to figure out creative ways to reuse and repurpose what you already have:

- Repurpose carts – find other ways to use salad bars (e.g. turn into grab and go carts and food storage carts). If your district was already using breakfast carts, and sheet pan racks (pictured above) both be used to deliver meals (both breakfast and lunch) to the classrooms or other locations.
- Use what you have - rolling ice caddies and mobile milk boxes can be used to roll meals out, also smaller refrigeration units can be repurposed to store items temporarily, and red milk dollies can be used to transport items to classrooms. Ice cream freezers can be used to keep milk cold.
- Add wheels to items that you already own (e.g. shelves and milk crates) to transport food to needed locations.
- Check inventory in your catering department to see how you can utilize that equipment (e.g. containers for food can be used to store items).
- Cut costs by finding items that can fill the same need (e.g. use a clear shower curtain as a divider instead of plexiglass, use milk carts with casters).

- ✓ Add wheels to make equipment mobile.
- ✓ Check inventory to determine repurposing needs.
- ✓ Share ideas with colleagues and other districts.
- ✓ Package items for delivery.
- ✓ Use carts and coolers.

**GRAB-N-GO (GNG)** – Students pick up meals from a conveniently located cart or kiosk, usually at school entrances. Students can eat in the classroom or in a common area. During the Coronavirus pandemic GNG sites have been set up in various locations on and off school campuses.

**Food storage:** GNG uses portable equipment to temporarily store food such as carts, kiosks, or tables. Maintaining safe food temperatures for food safety.

**Extra trash cans:** for hallways and classrooms can assist with trash disposal for custodians. If students are eating in the classroom, you will need to provide classroom supplies (listed on page 1).

**Point of Sales (POS) system:** is most convenient with this model. Find a tracking system that works best for your district/school with a touchless method (e.g. using cotton swabs instead of fingers).



**PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)** – with the importance of social distancing, PPE will be needed for safe food service delivery models to succeed. Needed items can include: masks/shields, gloves, plexiglass, signage (notifying anyone on campus of social distancing guidelines and where those markers are), hand sanitizing stations and/or hand sanitizer, as well as safety equipment for monitoring temperatures. Another key element will be new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) describing SY20-21 systems of operation.



**PACKAGING** – this year packaging of food items has become vital for safe meal delivery. Some items to consider will include: bag sealers, and bags designed to withstand hot and cold temps., packing equipment (e.g. package sealer to rent or for purchase), and using disposable items (e.g. Cam Go Boxes, clamshell containers, paper plates, utensils etc.). Individually wrapped items could be the norm during this FY20/21 school year. See packaging section in [Equipment List](#).



### PURCHASING TIPS

Once you have determined your equipment needs, your next step is to determine the appropriate quantities.

- Keep in mind that the cost of each piece of equipment and set of supplies will vary depending on whether the equipment is new or refurbished, the number of items you purchase, and your geographic location.
- Familiarize yourself with your district's purchasing policy. When possible, buy equipment in bulk, especially if you are implementing delivery in multiple grades and classrooms.
- Finally, connect with grant-making organizations that promote school breakfast/in the classroom models, such your local [Dairy Council](#), for additional support.

For more information and resources on back-to-school planning, visit the No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices website: <http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/>

### ONLINE ORDERING

- ✓ Students in secondary grades are used to the convenience of online APPs. – have them “skip the line” and order online.
- ✓ It can cut the line, without slashing sales.
- ✓ It can allow ease in processing orders and managing menus.
- ✓ There are a variety of online systems to choose from including but not limited to Google forms [Lunch App](#). and more.