



# SUPPER IN THE CLASSROOM INCREASES ACCESS TO CACFP AFTERSCHOOL MEALS

## WHAT?

The CACFP Afterschool Meals Program allows schools to serve a meal (supper) and/or snack to children as part of an enrichment program. Supper in the Classroom makes this meal a natural extension of the school day, enabling all students to eat and engage in enrichment together in the classroom after the final bell.

- The enrichment could be as simple as reading a book, playing an educational game, or providing homework assistance.
- A supper can be hot or cold, simple or substantial. It just has to have all meal components or food groups: protein, grain, fruit, vegetable, and milk.
- Supper in the Classroom usually relies on packaged or unitized meals, but you can use Offer Versus Serve (OVS) for some or all components.

## WHO?

- All children who are age 18 or under as of the beginning of the school year can get a meal.
- Supper in the Classroom is usually done in elementary schools.
- All meals are reimbursed at the CACFP “free” rate regardless of children’s household income eligibility.

## WHY?

Because one in six children in the U.S. lives in a household struggling with hunger and may not have enough healthy food to grow and learn after school. A quarter of low-income parents worry their kids don’t have enough to eat between lunch and breakfast the next day. But for every 100 lunches served to kids in need, less than six afterschool meals are served. Serving Supper in the Classroom is a proven way to reach more students—schools that have tried it report that more kids eat supper than lunch!

## WHEN?

- Extended-day or expanded learning time schools that operate at least one hour longer than required by the state or LEA can serve the afterschool meal as part of the school day.
- For all other schools, the afterschool meal must be served after the final bell. With Supper in the Classroom, the meal is served as soon as it rings.

## WHERE

- Staff or student helpers deliver meals to each classroom using carts and insulated bags.
- Students may be dismissed to the cafeteria to pick up a meal before returning to the classroom to eat and do an activity. This works well if you don’t have an elevator in the school.

## HOW?

### BUILD SUPPORT

Engage stakeholders early in the process to ensure smooth implementation.

- Involve key people, including the food service staff, district administrators, principals, teachers, and custodial staff.
- Provide statistics and stories. Not every one in the school automatically knows how many kids are eligible for free or reduced price meals or appreciates the need for afterschool meals.

### PLAN FOR PREPARATION AND SERVING

- Apply for grants to offset the cost of additional kitchen equipment or supplies.
- Consider asking your suppliers to make more frequent deliveries to minimize the need for extra storage space.
- Use equipment and storage space strategically to accommodate the additional meals.
- Plan menus to maximize efficiency. Using the same item in a different way at both lunch and supper can save on staff time.
- Serve easy-to-eat foods with few condiments to minimize time and mess.
- Deliver cleaning supplies to each room along with meals to speed up the cleaning process.



Schools that piloted Supper in the Classroom reported 80 percent of all students ate supper on average. At \$3.66\* per supper in reimbursements and commodities, a school with 450 students that achieves 80 percent participation would receive over \$237,000 by serving suppers Monday through Friday during a regular school year.

\*Reimbursement rates for contiguous states in SY 2021-2022. Visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/reimbursement-rates> for more information.

This resource was initially made possible through the support of



### ADDRESS CONCERNS

Some may say that a supper contributes to obesity, increases food waste, or takes the place of family dinner.

- Brand the supper as a “super snack” with minimum portions of cold items rather than a large, hot supper that may replace dinner at home.
- Use OVS or share tables so that students who aren’t as hungry don’t throw away food or eat more than they need.
- Implement the USDA’s guidance allowing students to take a fruit, vegetable, or grain item off-site. Check with your state agency first.

### SCHEDULE IT

Give students 15 to 20 minutes to eat. Young children may need up to 30 minutes. If you don’t have an extended-day school with Supper in the Classroom before the bell, you can create this time by:

- **Changing the final bell time.**
  - Schools that exceed minimum required instructional time can shorten the school day by a few minutes to allow more time for supper before teachers and buses leave.
- **Improving logistics.**
  - Increasing the efficiency of dismissing students and loading buses can provide valuable minutes at the end of the day.
- **Adjusting bus schedules.**
  - Work with the district’s transportation officials to see if the buses can come later to schools with Supper in the Classroom.

### PROMOTE IT

Make sure that parents know about the meal, too!

- Send a letter or flyer home.
- Post the announcement and menu on the school’s website.