



TIPS FOR PLANNING A PROGRAM SITE VISIT

One of the most powerful ways you can demonstrate the importance of the food and nutrition programs you are connecting kids to is by simply letting key stakeholders and the media witness the program firsthand, in action.

Whether you are working to get more schools to implement a Breakfast in the Classroom program, expand the number of summer meals sites and sponsors, or switch from an afterschool snack to meal program, seeing the programs successfully implemented will help to better tell stakeholders the story of why they should consider these programs and why the media should cover the program/issue. Here are ten tips for organizing a successful site visit:

- 1. Identify a “superstar” program or site.** Choose a site that has effectively and successfully implemented a program and had a positive experience doing it. This will help to inspire stakeholders to consider implementing it if they see how well the program is run. This will also leave a good impression on media if they attend and will encourage them to write a positive story about the program which will also help your outreach efforts.
- 2. Identify and work closely with the leader of the program/site to organize the visit.** Identify who the best person is to be working with to set up the site visit (school principal, school nutrition director, site sponsor, etc.) and provide them information about why you are hoping to do this, who will be coming and why the publicity will be good for their program. In order to make a site visit successful, you will need their full support. Also be sure to send them a thank you note afterwards!
- 3. Find out what meals or snacks are being served on the day of the site visit.** Check with the site to see what is on the menu for the day so that you and the site can be prepared to answer questions stakeholders and the media might have with regard to the USDAs nutrition guidelines.
- 4. Have a photographer (and videographer if possible) on hand to capture the program in action.** These kinds of photos will be great to use in your materials and to share online with stakeholders. If you do not have a budget for a professional photographer, consider asking a fellow colleague to photograph/film it or ask your local community college or university’s photography/PR department if a student might be interested in covering it for a project.
- 5. Put together a minute-by-minute agenda of how the site visit will run.** This should include logistics for participants (address, time, where to meet, etc.), schedule of which programs you will be observing and at what time (with room numbers), and staffing assignments for who is responsible for what on the day of the site visit.

6. **Set the context.** Set the context of the No Kid Hungry Campaign, the work being done in your state, and the specific needs in the community you are visiting. Be sure to explain to the participants how this one site reflects the work being done across the state (and the country). Make it clear that what they are seeing (i.e.: a breakfast program, a summer meals program, or an afterschool program) is just one piece of a comprehensive strategy to end childhood hunger.
7. **Limit the number of participants and media in attendance.** In general, you should be selective about who you are inviting to attend because often times classrooms and sites are small and too many people and cameras may overwhelm teachers, sites and kids. Consider the space and then invite only select stakeholders and media outlets to attend. A good starting point for media is to invite the statewide daily or community newspaper, one radio outlet (NPR affiliate) and a local network TV affiliate (ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, PBS) to attend. Pitch it as an “exclusive” look at the program and they’ll be hooked.
8. **Have media releases on file for every student who is being photographed or videotaped.** You must have permission from parents or guardians to photograph or film their children. If you plan to use the photos or video footage for any reason, work with the school to send a media release form home to parents to sign. A word of advice: if the kids do not have media releases, they should not be in the room. It is too hard to decipher who has a release and who doesn’t. Some schools or programs have students sign one at the beginning of the school year. Ask your contact. *Note: Share Our Strength has a media release form which we can provide you.*
9. **Do a walk through “trial run” the day before the event.** This will ensure that you have worked out all the possible kinks and have a good sense of what it will be like for other participants on the official site visit. Adjust the minute-by-minute agenda based on anything that comes up in your trial site visit.
10. **Prepare the site/program leader with potential questions they may be asked.** This is especially important if you are inviting media to attend as they may want to interview them about their experience with the program and specifics about the program (cost, challenges, kids’ experience with the program). Consider preparing a few key talking points for them if they seem uneasy about talking about their experience.

A few more notes:

- Share Our Strength is always looking for powerful content that demonstrates the importance of these programs and your work. If you conduct a site visit, please consider sharing your experiences, photos and videos with Share Our Strength which we can share with our powerful network across the country.
- We encourage you to invite media to attend site visits because of the in-depth reporting that comes out of them. If you would like more tips on how to work with the media for a site visit or are not sure how to do this, please contact Kelli Dieterich at kdieterich@strength.org or 202-478-6553.