



The School Food Modernization Act

Giving schools the right tools to prepare healthy, delicious meals

Overview

Children spend more time in school than anywhere else except their homes. And 3 in 5 students—more than 30 million children—eat one or two school meals daily. Clearly, by serving healthier meals and snacks, schools can help American children establish sound nutrition and eating habits for a lifetime.

The good news is that the vast majority of schools in every state are meeting stronger national nutrition standards and serving meals with more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and less fat, sugar, and salt. Many schools are preparing wholesome, delicious meals despite having inadequate cooking facilities that lack the right tools. Instead, they rely on costly and inefficient workarounds to create meals because their outdated kitchens were designed to do little more than reheat prepackaged items. Schools need facilities and staff capable of robust and cost-efficient cooking with healthier, fresher ingredients.

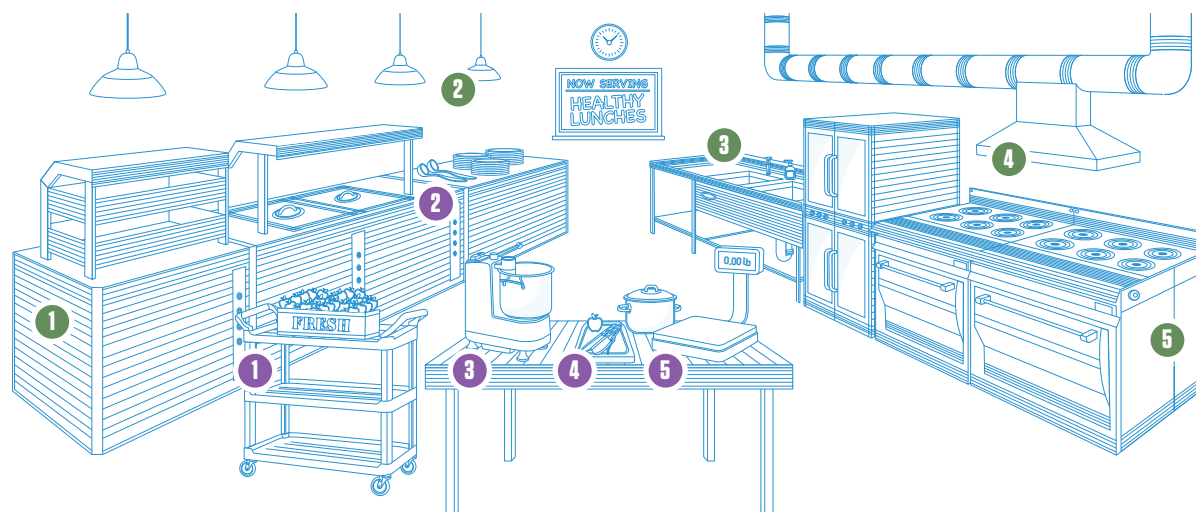
To help school districts serve nutritious and appetizing food, Pew supports the School Food Modernization Act. This bipartisan legislation, authored by Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND), would expand schools' access to modern kitchen equipment and infrastructure and strengthen workforce training.

95% Share of public schools nationwide that participate in and receive reimbursement from the National School Lunch Program.

How it would work

- **Establish a loan assistance program** within the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help schools acquire new equipment. School administrators and other eligible borrowers could obtain federal guarantees for a portion of the loan in order to construct, remodel, or expand kitchens, dining facilities, and food storage infrastructure.
- **Provide targeted grant assistance** to give school administrators and food service directors the seed money for less extensive infrastructure upgrades or purchases of high-quality, durable kitchen equipment such as commercial ovens, steamers, and stoves.
- **Strengthen training and provide technical assistance** to school food service personnel, many of whom need additional skills and expertise to prepare healthier meals. The proposed legislation would authorize USDA to furnish support on a competitive basis to highly qualified third-party trainers to develop and administer training and technical assistance.

What does a school kitchen need?



88% of districts need at least one piece of kitchen equipment. The items most in demand are:

- 1 **Utility carts** to transport items within a kitchen or cafeteria.
- 2 **Serving utensils** to determine appropriate portion sizes.
- 3 **Large-capacity food processors** to prepare many different foods, including fruits and vegetables.
- 4 **Knife sets with cutting boards** to prepare fresh food.
- 5 **Industrial scales** to weigh bulk ingredients.

55% of districts need kitchen infrastructure changes. The top challenges are:

- 1 **Physical space:** Additional room for storage, preparation, or serving.
- 2 **Electrical capacity:** Increased amps and voltage and more outlets.
- 3 **Plumbing:** Modified water supply or relocation of sinks and drains.
- 4 **Ventilation:** Exhaust hoods or fire suppression systems.
- 5 **Remodeling:** Facility compliance with local health code standards.

For further information, please visit:

pewtrusts.org/kitchen-equipment

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