

# Cafeteria Spruce-Up

## Overview

When you walk into your school's cafeteria, what's your first impression? Is the space bright and clean, with walls featuring colorful murals and student artwork, and showing healthy foods? Students visit the cafeteria on a daily basis, so it's a perfect place to promote healthy choices and physical activity messages, creating an environment where students can enjoy healthy eating.



## Take Action

Spruce up your cafeteria by incorporating some of these health promotion strategies:

- Brainstorm a few ideas and present them to your school administration and food service manager. Speak their language! Focus the conversation on how sprucing up the cafeteria supports school wellness policies (it encourages students to eat better and move more) and may even increase the number of students eating school meals (resulting in more money for the school meal program).
- Form a 'redesign' team of administrators, food service staff, teachers, parents and students to discuss cafeteria needs, develop a vision and put a plan into place for the cafeteria spruce-up.
- Budget for resources. [Host a healthy fundraiser](#) to raise money for paint and supplies. Consider community resources, such as local hardware and paint

stores or community arts organizations, to help have supplies donated. Don't forget your district facilities department. They will likely have resources to support your efforts, too.

- Planning on painting? Schedule the spruce up over the weekend or during a school break to allow time for the mural to dry.

## Tips



Get your art, photography and ceramics teachers on board. What role can they play?



Get students involved by surveying them to see what they'd like on the mural, or hold a school-wide poster contest where students create the design and vote on winners!



Instead of painting a mural on the wall itself, consider having students/artists paint pieces of the mural on separate canvases, then screw the canvases together. This makes the murals portable.



Sprucing up the cafeteria doesn't have to be a large or costly undertaking - sometimes it's as simple as moving furniture around so the space feels more open and welcoming and including music.



Recruit volunteers for a day of community service to help paint the cafeteria mural.



Ask local community leaders to be present for the painting or unveiling event. Submit a press release to the local media to generate positive PR about your work.



Celebrate the space! After painting, [host a taste test](#) or [healthy carnival](#) to showcase your redesigned cafeteria

## Resources

[Smarter Lunchrooms \(United States Department of Agriculture\)](#)

[Color Days Guide \(United States Department of Agriculture\)](#)

## Related Activities

### Food and Beverage Marketing at School

While it can be a significant funding source for schools (particularly for athletic programs), advertising less healthy foods and beverages can send conflicting messages to students that have been learning about good nutrition in the classroom.

### Nutrition Promotion

Take a look around your school building. How does your school promote good nutrition? Nutrition promotion can take place across the school, formally and informally, inside and outside of the classroom — in the cafeteria, in the hallway and at school events.

### Pricing Strategies to Encourage Healthy Eating

Offering healthy foods for sale at school is sometimes not enough to get students to eat better. Pricing healthier options so they are cheaper than their less healthy counterparts is one way to do this.

### Smarter Lunchrooms

Is your school lunchroom lively and colorful? If not, it's time to make your lunchroom smarter by making small changes like hanging student artwork or rearranging food in your cafeteria to encourage students to eat more of the foods we want them to eat.

