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life

Canteen management

Effective management

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› Effective management

In addition to providing the school community with nutritious and affordable foods, the canteen should be based on good management practices and be financially self-sustaining.

Experience shows that, with good management and marketing practices, a canteen can provide healthy foods and also be financially viable.

The school canteen is a small business. Like any business, it requires good management practices to be efficient and successful. Effective canteen management requires that:

- everyone involved knows its goals and objectives and is familiar with its policies
- canteen staff and committee develop an implementation plan to achieve policy goals
- day-to-day operational procedures are structured and enforced
- staff are adequately trained and supervised
- staff carry out efficient stock management, accounting and financial procedures
- staff are familiar with and comply with relevant legal requirements regarding food safety and occupational health and safety standards.

› Role of the school council

The school council has, through the *Education Act 1958*, the authority to operate a school canteen.

This authority can also be delegated to a club or association that is not a subcommittee of the school council, or it can be sub-leased to a private contractor under a licence. This licence is obtained from the Department of Education & Training.

The school council oversees the operation of the school canteen, including its policies, employment of staff, the disbursement of any profits and the recoupment of losses. The day-to-day operations of the canteen are managed either by a paid worker or a volunteer. School councils usually form a canteen committee to manage canteen issues. All profits from the canteen are transferred to the school council. Income from the canteen must be adequate to meet expenses incurred including provision for staff superannuation, sick leave, annual leave and other benefits and depreciation.

If a school canteen is sub-leased to a private contractor, the school council should ensure that the contract specifies that food be sold in accordance with the *'Go for your life' Healthy Canteen Kit – Food Planner* and the *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia*. It should also ensure that the operation (including stores, stocktaking, trading, profit and loss statements) of school canteens and other school food services is consistent with the information provided in section 7.17 of the *Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide*.

Many school councils are now recognising that an important aim of the canteen, in addition to being financially viable, is to provide nutritious foods and promote healthy eating. This aim should be acknowledged in the canteen policy.



› General business structure of canteens

School canteens may operate under a variety of management structures, depending on the individual characteristics and needs of the school. Most canteens in schools are run under the direction of, and are accountable to, the school council. Schools may decide to provide a food service to students in several ways.

Scenario 1: Full-time paid canteen manager plus paid staff and/or volunteers

The canteen manager is present at all times and their work is supported by paid staff and possibly volunteers.

Scenario 2: Part-time paid canteen manager plus volunteer staff

The canteen manager will attend the canteen in the morning to allocate tasks to volunteer staff, and return in the afternoon to finish operations for the day.

Scenario 3: Fully staffed by volunteers

The canteen is staffed by a volunteer canteen manager with volunteer staff. It may alternatively be staffed by a group of volunteers, each of whom is rostered and responsible for the operation of the canteen on particular days.

Scenario 4: External food services management company

Management of the canteen is contracted to an external food services management company, which is responsible for staffing the canteen.

Scenario 5: External off-site caterer

Schools without their own canteens may order food from an off-site caterer, such as the local milk bar, sandwich shop or canteen lunch specialist caterer.

When deciding a management structure for the school food service, school councils should consider the type and extent of the food service the school needs. For example, a small school wanting to provide a canteen service once or twice a week may be able to do this with volunteer support or external catering. However, a secondary school requiring a more extensive food service, including breakfast, may need to employ a full-time canteen manager.

Formal management agreement

A formal management agreement detailing the terms and conditions of the management structure should be drawn up and signed by the relevant management parties, which will usually be the school council and principal, or the school council or principal and private contractor.

Management agreements

The management agreement between the parties should state clearly how any profits made from the canteen are to be distributed. There are a number of options that should be considered.

- The school council pays profits to the school for inclusion in the annual school budget and expenditure is in accordance with school priorities established by the school community in the school charter and plan.
- The school council pays profits to the school but they are not included in the annual school budget. The school and school council determine the use of profits together. This option allows for some of the canteen profits to be invested back into the canteen so that healthy changes can continue to be made.
- External catering contractors pay a set annual payment per head of student population or pay an agreed percentage of profits back to the school council.
- It is important that food services that are externally contracted or ordered from off-site businesses are involved in, aware of and follow the school's canteen policy. It is a good idea to stipulate guidelines within the canteen policy, for example regarding nutrition and promotion of healthy foods, within contracts and tenders with external caterers.

Employing staff

Employing canteen staff is the role of the school council with approval from the principal. When employing paid and voluntary canteen staff, it is important to follow good staff management procedures:

- following the correct industrial award or agreement
- having a formal job description and interview process
- drawing up an official employment contract
- providing a staff supervisor
- having a performance review process
- providing adequate training
- establishing a complaints resolution procedure.

For more information on employment and management of staff for school canteens, including job descriptions, pay rates, employer entitlements and relevant awards, contact the Australian School Canteens Association. Contact details of the Association are provided in the resources section of this manual.

› Stock management

The purchase of goods is a significant canteen expense and therefore it is critical that this process is organised and efficient. It is important to:

- buy products at the best price
- buy appropriate quantities
- ensure safe, high-quality products
- order at the appropriate time.

Who should be responsible for ordering stock?

Only one person in the canteen should be responsible for ordering stock, which includes foods, drinks, packaging, utensils, first aid and cleaning materials. Ideally this will be the canteen manager, or a person who oversees most of the canteen and has the largest time involvement. Allocating this responsibility to only one person is important as it prevents confusion and over-ordering, maintains consistency and ensures maximum efficiency.

Canteens generally return higher profits when they restrict the number of suppliers and range of stock.

Restricting the number of suppliers can be beneficial as it allows canteen staff to develop management rapport with a supplier. This can also result in special services and treatment, such as discounts and better quality of service.

Minimising the range of stock assists in reducing slow turnover items, which can lead to spoilage. It will also allow you to use employees and volunteers with less training given there are less products to work with.

Both of these practices will also result in more efficient ordering with fewer orders needing to be placed.

It is important to ensure that when minimising the range of stock in a canteen the range and variety of nutritious foods, such as fruit and vegetables, is not reduced.

How do I choose a supplier?

The following pointers should help you in selecting a good supplier. An ideal supplier:

- is located locally
- has been recommended by other school canteens
- delivers frequently, and will do so at a convenient and suitable time for the canteen
- delivers stock in good condition, for example ice-cream which is always frozen and fruit and vegetables which are always fresh
- delivers stock with the maximum shelf life
- follows appropriate storage, handling and food safety requirements, such as adequate refrigeration for chilled and frozen goods and shade and cover for fresh produce
- uses adequate packaging and handling procedures to ensure products are not damaged
- offers an adequate range of products
- communicates well, keeping you informed of price changes, specials and product availability
- offers competitive prices, as well as specials, discounts and incentives
- offers taste-testing opportunities or free samples to trial
- provides free promotional material in line with your healthy canteen policy, such as posters promoting healthy food products
- offers incentives, such as equipment rewards
- offers convenient and acceptable payment procedures, including method of payment and settlement terms.

HINT: *Never select food or drink products that fail to reflect nutrition standards detailed in the canteen policy even if the supplier can offer a lucrative deal, such as bargain prices or equipment rewards.*

When to order

It is important to maintain the lowest level of stock while at the same time having sufficient stock to use or sell. This reduces the risk of stock spoiling while in storage and also allows the canteen to potentially be earning interest on money in the bank instead of invested in stock sitting on shelves. It is also important to aim to have as little stock as possible left over by the end of term to prevent spoilage over term holidays.

How often your canteen needs to order stock will depend on:

- how long it takes for the supplier to deliver the order
- how regularly your supplier delivers – rural schools or canteens using infrequent suppliers may need to order products with a longer shelf life
- the shelf life of the product – order less items more frequently to reduce wastage of perishable stock and aim to use fresh fruit and vegetables by the end of the week to prevent spoilage and decrease in quality over the weekend
- storage space – this will vary according to seasons, for example refrigeration will be used more during warmer weather, so more regular ordering of chilled items may be required at this time.

Check the stock currently in the canteen. By using an ordering list containing information on each supplier and their products, you can quickly view current stock and record what items need to be reordered. Keep a record of all orders and note when it was requested.

When determining how much stock to order for your canteen, it is important to take into consideration the following:

- whether individual products are selling well
- whether your supplier is offering discounted items and sales on products you usually stock
- any changes in the canteen menu
- popularity of certain items due to seasonal changes
- special days, awareness weeks or cultural events that might affect the types of foods being sold and bought
- upcoming special events and functions, such as open days and sporting days, which may affect the sales figures for those days
- additional catering requirements such as providing for committee meetings
- class excursions that may result in either an absence of lunch orders or the need for additional catering
- class absenteeism, especially during key times such as Year 12 pre-exam period, or when year levels are located at alternative campuses for a term

- public holidays and curriculum days where the canteen is closed
- term holidays.

HINT: Stock orders for special events should be kept separate from the stock order tally for canteen sales. If not, the mark-up schedule for the canteen will be incorrect, as products ordered have not actually been sold through the canteen.

Receiving stock

- Check the delivery docket and supplier's invoice against the order placed.
- Check for price increases and update the supplier ordering list. Don't forget to adjust the canteen selling prices accordingly.
- Check the quantity and quality of stock, for example whether refrigerated products are adequately chilled or frozen.
- Ensure that products are intact and not damaged.
- Check use-by dates.
- Put chilled or frozen products away immediately.
- When restocking refrigerators and shelves, place the new deliveries at the back to ensure that older stock is used first.

Using stock

Products approaching their use-by dates may need to be used up quickly to prevent wastage, especially before weekends and term holidays. Strategies to use up stock quickly include:

- reducing the price of slow-selling stock
- introducing a recipe of the week to use up ingredients
- offering specials
- including products or fresh fruit in meal deals.

For more ideas on turning stock over quickly, refer to Promotion and marketing on page 38.

Stocktaking should be done on a regular basis so that the canteen can account for all stock, including items which have been sold or discarded.

HINT: Increase the turnover of short-shelf-life products by extending hours of operation (without necessarily increasing the cost of operation), for example afternoon tea could be offered to students or teachers.

› Financial management

In order for a canteen to be financially viable, income from selling food must either be equal to or greater than the expenses involved in running the canteen.

Accurate costing of foods plays a very important part in determining income. A financially successful canteen also requires efficient management of all canteen resources.

The following section details why it is important to:

- account for all canteen money
- account for all stock
- determine the cost price of pre-packaged items and recipes
- determine the selling price of pre-packaged items and recipes per serve.

Accounting for canteen money

The canteen needs to ensure that all canteen money can be accurately tracked at all times. Management of money involves:

- running off cash registers at the end of each trading period during the day (if applicable)
- counting money and balancing cash registers at the end of each day
- maintaining a standard float
- banking each day and keeping minimal money in the canteen
- accurately recording payment of all orders and invoices
- accurately recording all cheques
- accurately recording all petty cash expenses.

It is recommended that all stock should be paid for by cheque or electronic transfer, with petty cash being used only for the purchase of items of a minor or unexpected nature. Only a small petty cash float should be kept.

School Canteens and the GST

School-operated canteens are non-profit bodies under GST legislation and can choose from two GST methods for reporting their transactions for tax purposes – input taxed or 'fully taxed GST'.

The Department recommends that schools that operate profitable canteens use the input taxed method.

Under this method schools code all **purchases** as CASES21 GST Code **G13** and all **sales** as CASES21 GST Code **G04**.

Schools using the input taxed method do not need to report any GST-inclusive transactions on the Business Activity Statement (BAS) to the Australian Taxation Office.

Where costs, such as electricity, cleaning, insurance, etc., are jointly used by both the school and the canteen these costs will need to be 'split' between the school and the canteen. For example, where a bill is for the whole school, no input tax credits can be claimed on the portion of costs that relate to the canteen.

In these instances the invoice should be split charged with the school share charged as GST inclusive or G11 and the canteen share charged as input taxed or G13.

More detailed information on school canteens and the GST is available from www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/tax/gst/azgst/

Accounting for stock

The canteen should be able to account for stock numbers, so that incoming stock always balances outgoing stock. This ensures that an accurate income can be recorded. Records should include goods which are disposed of due to being past their expiry date, items used in meal deals, taste testings and freebies. It is important to check deliveries to ensure that all stock ordered has been supplied. Accurate monitoring of stock should allow you to determine if stock is missing.

Determining the cost price of pre-packaged items and recipes

The cost price of a pre-packaged item is the amount it costs the canteen to purchase that item. Selling prices of items can easily be determined using the wholesale price of the goods, especially as this price generally does not change.

HINT: Inform the school community of price changes in the school newsletter. You don't necessarily need to wait until the menu is altered to change individual prices.

Changes in price can be due to:

- seasonal availability, particularly of fruit and vegetables
- bulk purchase
- discounted items and sales
- competitive prices
- incentives
- taste-testing opportunities or trial of free samples.

The cost price of recipes is the amount it costs the canteen to make a meal, snack or drinks which use a variety of ingredients and packaging. To determine the cost price of recipes, the cost of all ingredients and packaging is taken into account. Many canteens also include overhead costs, such as wages, electricity, gas, water and equipment expenses. The canteen may also wish to take into account specials, discounts and equipment subsidies that are provided by the supplier.

It is important for the canteen to have standard recipes with strict quantities of ingredients and standard serving sizes in order to accurately price recipes, for example a consistent quantity of filling each time for sandwiches.

HINT: Using portion-control equipment assists in making serves of foods and drinks accurate and consistent according to the recipe. This could be as simple as using a tablespoon instead of a 'handful' of sultanas.

A template that you can use to determine the price of recipes is provided on page 21. This template provides space for you to list each individual ingredient, serving size, cost of each ingredient per serve and recipe instructions. Please note that this manual only takes into account ingredient and packaging expenses.

Remember to cost out recipes accurately by including all ingredients, even the butter or chutney which is used in sandwiches. Underestimating the cost of recipes – even for small quantities of ingredients – can affect profits in the long term.

The recipe template can help work out the cost price of prepared foods, and help identify whether or not foods can be prepared more economically. Some recipes may need altering across seasons in order to keep their cost price the same. For example, try varying the fresh fruit used to make smoothies if the usual fruit ingredient becomes too expensive.

HINT: Avoid unnecessary packaging and wrapping. This not only reduces the cost of products but also helps the environment.



› Staff and volunteers

The school canteen manager plays a vital role in the coordination and management of the canteen's volunteers.

Volunteers can be:

- parents
- people from the wider community
- students.

Reasons for volunteering

- Contributing to, and being part of, the school community.
- Giving something to the school.
- Learning about food and nutrition.
- Increasing knowledge and skills in the areas of cooking and food preparation, food hygiene and safety, nutrition, customer service and cash handling.
- Making new friends and enjoying opportunities to socialise.

What to expect

- Allow volunteers time to adjust to their role, gain confidence and improve their skills.
- Be realistic – be prepared to do most of the work yourself.
- Be a good role model.
- Communicate clearly.

Student volunteers

Students can help design posters and flyers promoting healthy eating or they can help to think of new menu ideas. Talk to teachers to see if students can work on developing promotional materials as a class activity. Get students to write a letter to parents requesting volunteer help – you could use these student articles in the school newsletter.

Student volunteers need adequate supervision. It is also important to make sure that volunteering does not interfere with their studies.

Coordinating a volunteer program

Coordinating a volunteer program involves:

- recruiting
- retaining
- recognising and rewarding.

Recruiting volunteers

- Identify how many volunteers you will need to make a regular commitment and how many you will need only to provide casual assistance. It's a good idea to plan for the year, keeping in mind special days or events when additional volunteer assistance will be required.
- Assume that volunteers will come and go. Develop a list of interested volunteers who will fill casual positions and prevent an unexpected shortage of assistance.
- Plan rosters so that volunteers know how much time is required and the length of commitment expected.
- Develop a job description for the volunteer positions available so that volunteers know what is expected of them. This should include a list of specific tasks involved, skills and training required, level of responsibility, and personal attributes which would be looked upon favourably, such as own transport.
- Offer a range of tasks or jobs to choose from so that volunteers have options. For example, a volunteer may not feel comfortable dealing with customers but is happy to be involved with food preparation. Some voluntary jobs may also allow volunteers to assist in their own time, for example researching new recipes or assisting with promotion and marketing.

HINT: Include a canteen roster when advertising for volunteers that indicates which gaps need to be filled. This enables readers to see what the commitment involves.

Advertising

It is important to advertise regularly and widely to keep the community informed and aware of volunteer opportunities. Avenues for advertising include:

- weekly school newsletters
- school website
- school orientation information for new parents
- orientation evenings
- parents' evenings
- local newspaper.

Advertisements can be targeted at:

- students' parents and families
- churches
- Senior Citizens' Association
- RSL clubs
- Volunteering Australia.

Retaining volunteers

Once volunteers have been recruited, it is important to provide a positive and rewarding working environment so that they feel comfortable and appreciated. It is important that volunteers are welcomed and introduced to canteen and school staff on their first day, given a tour and have policy and procedures explained.

Provide new volunteers with a volunteer's canteen information kit which should contain:

- an introductory letter (including contact information for the canteen)
- the roster
- the canteen policy
- the canteen menu
- food hygiene information.

Volunteers should be provided with information about:

- the layout of the canteen
- how to operate machinery and equipment
- food hygiene requirements
- emergency drills and evaluation procedures
- how to handle difficult students.
- how to manage customer complaints and feedback
- procedures to follow if they are ill when rostered on
- where the roster is located
- where to locate contact numbers, including emergency contacts
- school times, including lunch and recess.

HINT: Discuss any times when the volunteer is not able to assist, for example during holidays or because of medical appointments or special occasions so that you can plan ahead.

Layout of the canteen

- Provide schedules on the wall which outline time-based tasks, for example when to place pizzas in the oven.
- Keep instruction books near equipment for easy reference.
- Place food hygiene reminders around the canteen.
- Provide recipe information on the wall, for example how long a sandwich should be toasted for and serving sizes of sandwich ingredients.
- Label drawers and cupboards with their contents. This will cut down the amount of time a volunteer may take to search for items.

Management of volunteers

- Maintain confidentiality of their personal details.
- Be sensitive to their current level of knowledge and skills.
- Ensure that volunteers feel confident in all aspects of their duties, such as food hygiene regulations. Be aware that they may be reluctant to ask for clarification, so keep a check and be ready to ask if there is anything they need help with.
- Keep volunteers informed of changes and developments in the canteen and school, such as decisions made at canteen committee meetings.
- Include volunteers in decision making.
- Provide volunteers with the opportunity to share their knowledge and skills.

Maintaining volunteer involvement

- Ensure that volunteers have adequate breaks.
- Provide volunteers with a variety of tasks.
- Provide the opportunity for volunteers to develop additional skills to increase their job satisfaction and prevent boredom.
- Introduce a 'buddy' system, such as pairing volunteers to prepare sandwiches together. Working in pairs or in a team can be rewarding, contribute to team building and prevent isolation. It is also a great way for new recruits to work with more experienced volunteers.
- Run a 'Bring a Friend' day.
- Organise social occasions, such as sitting down for lunch together, or organising a larger-scale function such as a dinner out.

Recognising and rewarding volunteers

Recognising and rewarding volunteers is vital if they are to feel valued and appreciated. It is also important to provide incentives to keep volunteers motivated. These actions will result in better service and will encourage longer periods of commitment. Discuss with the school principal the idea of applying for external volunteers' awards and funding.

Strategies to reward volunteers could include:

- thanking volunteers for their assistance on a daily basis
- acknowledging volunteers in the school newsletter, at assembly and at school events
- providing formal acknowledgement of their assistance with a certificate at the end of each year and perhaps a personal letter or small gift
- pinning up photographs of volunteers in the canteen with their name (if they wish)
- providing professional development and training opportunities, such as attending canteen expos
- offering a complimentary healthy lunch
- planning special events during Volunteers' Week
- ensuring the canteen is a happy, pleasant place to work.



› Promotion and marketing

Promoting and marketing the canteen and the healthy foods it sells is essential if the canteen is to be a success.

Using simple promotion and marketing strategies will:

- assist student acceptance of these healthy changes
- help increase the numbers of students purchasing healthy food choices
- keep canteen sales and income healthy.

Before deciding how to market the canteen and healthy food choices, it is important to identify the key customers and their wants and needs. This will change over time, so it is important to gather and update this information regularly.

An understanding of student interests, lifestyles, ideas and the latest 'fads' will help to develop successful marketing activities. There are a number of different ways to source this information.

- Chat with students, teachers and parents about food and eating preferences.
- Watch TV shows, listen to radio programs and read magazines that appeal to your school's age group.
- Ask the SRC representative of your canteen committee for ideas.
- Conduct a student market survey, including questions like 'What is your favourite fruit?'
- Provide a suggestion box where students can place ideas about food choices.

The different aspects of marketing healthy food choices in school canteens can be described by the 4 Ps:

- product
- place
- price
- promotion.

Product

When considering the product, consider not only the foods that are sold in the canteen, but the image of the canteen as a whole – the service, the canteen environment, how foods are promoted, and how well connected the canteen is to the school community.

Create an image

Creating a positive image for the canteen gives it a higher profile in the school community. For example, give the canteen a catchy name, such as the 'Snack Shack', the 'Kool Kids' Cafe' or the 'Tuck In'. This gives the canteen an identity or a 'brand' which can be used for advertising and marketing. The name can be printed on lunch bags and staff aprons and be linked to meal deal specials.

HINTS:

- *Involve students in naming the canteen by running a naming competition.*
- *Design a symbol or picture to accompany the name – this will help it appeal to students.*
- *Develop a motto for the canteen – a good way to promote the canteen's image and communicate its goals and services in a catchy way. For example, 'Healthy Foods, Healthy Learning', 'Foods that are healthy and taste good too!' or 'Serving healthy foods for healthy children'.*

Supporting your 'branding'

- Carefully choose fresh fruit and vegetables. If possible, use a small local greengrocer as they usually provide more advice on best quality and price based on seasonal availability and they may be able to deliver regularly to ensure a fresh supply.
- Serve foods and drinks at an appropriate temperature. Hot foods should be piping hot and cold items should be very chilled.
- Follow food safety and hygiene guidelines.
- Use standardised recipes and serve sizes for consistency. Pin up recipes and serving-size guidelines in an obvious place to assist staff and volunteers preparing and serving foods.

Food presentation

- Use parsley and vegetable garnishes for sandwiches and platters, and around the foods in the cold display cabinet.
- Display fruit in an attractive basket or bowl by the counter where it is easily reached.
- Ensure that fillings in foods such as sandwiches and wraps can be seen clearly.
- Clearly label and price foods, including whole fresh fruit. The absence of a price will often discourage sales.
- Make sure that foods are packaged in such a way that they can be easily eaten by students and that serving sizes are appropriate to the age and appetite of students.

Seasonal availability

Consider the season when promoting foods. Usually, hot foods such as soups and toasted sandwiches are more popular in winter and cold foods such as salads and wraps are more popular in summer. Promoting fruit may be easier to do in summer as more exotic varieties, like stone fruits, are available. Fruit is versatile and can be served chilled or even frozen like grapes.

Place

'Place' refers to the canteen environment and the way in which foods and drinks are arranged within the canteen. These are important aspects to consider when creating a positive image for a canteen. The canteen should be an attractive, appealing place that everyone enjoys visiting. When planning the layout and appearance of the canteen consider if it is easily accessible and spacious, clean and attractive.

Placing some tables and chairs and plants near the canteen creates a nice eating atmosphere. Design and technology students could be involved in construction of such furniture. Many schools provide a separate eating area for senior students. Some schools have created an outdoor eating area with chairs and tables under umbrellas or a sail. Utilise any spare ground near the canteen for a small herb or vegetable garden, or use pots. This not only provides a nice environment for eating, but provides quick and easy access to fresh herbs when preparing foods.

- Is there adequate lighting?
- Is it colourful with bright décor and designs that appeal to younger people?

Get the visual arts department involved. Students could design and paint murals on the walls and colourful menu boards and construct and decorate sandwich boards. Alternatively, special menu blackboards can be purchased that are designed to have semi-permanent writing and pictures, but can have the prices changed easily. Removable plastic lettering and numbering, makes it easy to update the menu boards as well as providing a professional image. A clear, well-placed menu will make it easier for students to select foods and will make the canteen serving process more efficient. Also consider playing music in the waiting and eating area.

- Does the canteen look professional?

Requiring workers to wear a uniform can help to brighten the canteen environment and add to its image and professional appearance. The uniform may be quite casual, for example jeans with a brightly coloured uniform T-shirt bearing the canteen's logo. Uniform aprons also provide a professional image, as well as being important for maintaining hygiene.



Product positioning

- Place healthy choices at students' eye level. For example, have fresh fruit within arm's reach and position several rows of bottled water at eye level. Try placing some salad tubs, fruit salad or yoghurt in the drinks refrigerator as well, to encourage last minute purchases
- Make sure there is a well-stocked display of pre-prepared healthy foods, for example salad tubs and rolls and wraps, to encourage impulse purchases.
- Rotate the position of products regularly to generate interest. Try stocking foods in multiple places to encourage optimal sales.

Distribution

Most canteens sell directly to their main target market – students – via one outlet: the canteen counter. Consider whether there are other ways in which, with minimal extra effort, the service can be extended to a wider market and increase your sales.

- Consider selling at both the canteen and via pre-orders. Pre-ordering may make it easier for canteen staff as it will enable easier preparation and planning for stock. Promote pre-ordering to students as a way of getting priority service at lunch.
- Have a pre-ordering and delivery service for staff as well. Take a selection of food items over to the staff room at meal times.
- Provide a catering service for morning and afternoon teas for staff meetings and other external meetings or events that may be held at the school, for example afternoon tea at \$4.00 per head. Market this service as robustly as other canteen services.
- Consider extending a catering service for other school events, for example school sports days and school excursions and camps.
- Consider the canteen operating hours. Could these be easily extended? Do they enable staff and senior students to use the canteen at any time? Could a breakfast service be added before school? Some canteens develop a whole breakfast menu, but it could be as simple as offering a small selection of appropriate foods already on the canteen menu.

Price

- Ensure that the canteen offers a selection of low-cost, filling, nutritious items such as raisin toast, sultanas, dinner rolls or small corn cobs that students can buy with their small change.
- Price food simply, for example \$1.50 instead of \$1.45, so that it is easier for students to pay and easier for the staff to give change.
- Before trialling a new product, compare the price of your product with the prices in other local shops and check prices with students to see what they think.
- Make sure healthier options are affordable.
- Offer reduced prices to promote slow-selling items or include these items in a meal deal which is priced for value.
- Sell cheaply towards the end of lunchtime or at afternoon tea-time in the staff room and increase sales as well as reduce costs from wastage.
- Use competitive prices as the focus point for advertising, for example stocking 50c snack packs.
- Advertise products as representing good value for money.
- Design a 'What you can buy for this' poster for the canteen, listing healthy items available for 10c, 20c, 50c, etc. Use pictures of the money and food items if dealing with young students.

Promotion

Promotion of healthy choices is all about communicating to customers and encouraging them to buy healthy foods. It is very important that promotions are simple and positive and concerned only with healthy foods.

Planning

- Always advertise new products or specials.
- Advertise old favourites or slow sellers.
- Advertise regularly.
- Consider the target market, and use that market's language level and style.
- Reach the right people often enough. Seek students' input to establish key vantage points for advertising.
- Ask students to design posters and flyers promoting healthy foods or a specific special day or meal deal. These can be placed in a variety of places around the school, including notice boards, staff rooms, reception, corridors and classrooms.
- Flyers are a great way to communicate advertising the canteen's catering service, new healthy products, special meal deals or healthy theme days to the wider school community. Fliers distributed prior to the event are the key to generating interest and making the event more successful. These can be distributed widely, for example in mail-outs to parents, in new parent orientation packs, in classrooms, in lunch bags, left at the front desk or canteen counter or in the staff room.
- There are also colourful posters and flyers available from various organisations that promote healthy eating and look great in the canteen.

Newsletters and the school's website

The school website and weekly newsletter are both great ways to let parents and the wider school community know that the canteen offers healthy, nutritious and tasty foods that are good value for money. Include the canteen menu, canteen updates, new menu items, news of specials or theme days, price changes, general nutrition facts and photos and pictures of healthy foods available. Ask for ideas and feedback.

Announcements

New healthy products or specials can be announced over the school public address system or at morning assembly. This is a good method for last minute promotions and is also good reinforcement advertising, as it can be done on a regular basis. Administrative staff in charge of PA announcements can read from a script. The canteen manager could also be given a regular spot at school assembly.

Notice boards and sandwich boards

- Use notice-boards and sandwich boards to promote specials, theme days, new healthy options and interesting nutrition facts, or to advertise tomorrow's menu.
- Place the boards in a variety of areas, including outside the canteen, near where the students queue, at the front of the school, inside reception or in strategic areas in the playground.
- Utilise existing notice boards in the school to pin up information and advertising about the canteen. Ask school administration for a designated section on the main school notice board to display regular information updates and promotions.

Student order forms and menu boards

- Make sure student order forms and menu boards are clear, bright and attractive.
- Position healthy choices at the top of the list.
- Use bold, brightly coloured fonts to make the healthy choices stand out from other items on menu boards.
- Include pictures of the healthy items.
- Place smiley faces beside the healthy items to identify healthy choices.

In the canteen

- Place an attractive display of a healthy food special deal beside the cash register.
- Display colourful posters and flyers to promote healthy choices. Ensure that only healthy options are promoted – be wary of supporting promotions for unhealthy choices run by food companies.

Role modelling

- Ask teachers to promote healthy foods or special theme days in the canteen through general classroom discussion.
- Encourage teachers and canteen staff to act as role models by purchasing and eating healthy products.

Creative names

- Describe healthy choices using fun, imaginative words to excite and appeal to children, for example 'scrumptious' and 'mouth-watering'.
- Give new healthy menu items catchy titles, like 'Crazy Carrot Sticks' or 'Bananarama Smoothie'. You could try using characters from children's movie and television shows. You could also use sport-themed items like the 'Thorpedo Roll' named after swimmer Ian Thorpe.

Specials

Specials may be special days, special weeks or daily specials (an addition to the regular menu). They can:

- help introduce a new product at a good price to entice buyers
- be used to represent value for money on healthy products and encourage healthy choices
- assist in reducing wastage and maintaining income by helping sell slow sellers, excess or leftover stock.

It is important to price special days or menu items competitively. Remember that a special works on increasing volumes of sales. Money can be saved on the cost of ingredients and labour so mark-ups on each item can be kept lower. Some schools use extra funds from special days to invest in improving the canteen. The school's parents and friends association or SRC might like to join the canteen to help manage and run a special day as a joint fundraiser.

HINT: When planning a special meal deal or theme day be prepared for an overwhelming response! Pre-ordering can help plan for demand and make sure that enough stock is available on the day. A pre-order form could be included as part of the promotional flyer.

Meal deals

2 for 1 deals

These provide an excellent way of reducing product waste at the end of the week, for example 'Buy a small carton of milk and receive a free piece of fruit'.

Lunch and snack packs

A meal deal including a meal item, snack and a drink is a great opportunity to include fruit, vegetables and dairy, ensuring that the meal is in line with dietary guidelines. It is also a great way to make healthier food choices easier for students as the food is sold as a package. Price the meal deal at a slightly lower cost than the combined cost of the individual items and advertise this cost benefit. Give the meal deal a theme or catchy name to appeal to students and keep an eye on food advertising for ideas. For example, if a popular fast-food restaurant is promoting chicken wraps this month promote your own lean version of chicken wraps. An example of a snack pack is the 'Road Runner Pack' which could include:

- a chicken drumstick
- multigrain roll
- banana or orange
- a small carton of milk.

Theme days

Theme days are a great way to trial new healthy items. They may offer a few special menu items or a new special menu as an alternative to the regular menu. This can save time, as canteen staff will only need to prepare a limited range of foods. Often parents who are keen to volunteer but unable to commit to a regular day will be willing to volunteer on special theme days, so advertise widely for help for these days.

Theme days should be planned well in advance in order to allow enough time for promotion. Consider what the promotion is to achieve. Is it to trial a new product, promote fruit and vegetables or dairy foods, or provide children with variety and something new? Focus more on the fun aspects of such promotional days, and less on the healthy food message.

Tie theme days in with the school's calendar. Use sports days and special calendar dates such as religious and cultural events. Health awareness weeks provide an excellent opportunity for promotions. For example, calcium-rich smoothies can be offered during Healthy Bones Week.

Theme days can also be linked to what students are being taught in the classroom, for example history, the environment or international studies.

Draw on current high-profile events such as the Australian Open or the AFL Grand Final or even recently released movies. The possibilities are endless. The manuals and websites listed in the information and resources section of this manual provide many more theme and promotion ideas.

Ideas for themes include:

Commonwealth or Olympic Games

- A 'Go for Green and Gold Day' with green- and gold-coloured foods on the menu.
- A 'Green and Gold Meal Deal' day or an 'Aussie Aussie Week' with a green- and gold-coloured food daily special.
- Ideas for healthy green- and gold-coloured foods:
 - golden corn on the cob
 - popcorn
 - diced pears or green apples with custard
 - yellow jelly with grapes
 - green and gold fruit salad, including oranges, kiwifruit, grapes and diced peaches
 - green and gold mini muffins, using cheese, green capsicum and tomato.

AFL Grand Final

Name healthy meal deals or menu items after one of the leading teams or players, for example the Bombers' Burger.

Nutrition Week

Nutrition Week occurs in October and has a different theme each year. Visit: www.nutritionaustralia.org to find out what this year's theme is. Think of special food offers and meal deal names, for example the 'Nuts about Nutrition' meal deal.

Fruit and Veg. Weeks

Promote a different fruit or vegetable each week. Base this on seasonal availability, or work through colours or the alphabet. For example, have a week each for apples, avocados, bananas, berries, capsicum, cantaloupe and so on. Other ideas during this event include:

- offering free taste testing
- offering fruit and vegetables as a meal deal
- including a green vegetable as part of each hot food menu item.

Chinese or Vietnamese New Year

This week could be held in February to trial Chinese and Vietnamese foods. Decorate the canteen with paper lanterns and offer students chopsticks and serve a Chinese or Vietnamese meal deal in a cardboard noodle box, for example:

- vegetable stir-fry
- fried rice plus a rice paper roll or an oven-baked mini spring roll
- Nori rolls (see the Recipe section of this resource).

Summer salad sensation day

On the first day of summer, run a salad bar with appealing salads on offer. Include, for example, chicken and mango salad, roast vegetable salad, sweet potato salad or couscous salad. Allow students to serve themselves, suggesting that they choose a few to fill their plate.

(Adapted from the NSW School Canteen Association High School Meal Promotion Ideas fact sheet available from www.schoolcanteens.org.au)

Competitions and incentives

Competitions, incentives or reward schemes can increase student interest and participation and reward students for trying new foods and choosing healthy options. These schemes are also a way of promoting the idea that healthy eating at school can be fun. Make sure to advertise in the school newsletter to ensure their success.

Check with the school principal to ascertain if the school has a policy in place about the use of competitions and incentives.

- Offer a lucky prize draw. Students who try a particular new menu item, special of the day or meal deal get a ticket to go in the draw for a prize.
- Distribute frequent flyer customer cards. Students get one stamp each time they order certain healthy items.
- Organise a classroom smiley face competition. Reward healthy lunch orders with a smiley face sticker in their lunch bag. The classroom with the most stickers at the end of each week wins a prize.
- Run a competition which involves students entering their ideas for healthy menu items. For example, award prizes for the best new healthy canteen recipes, sandwich fillings, recipes, theme days or meal deal ideas. The prize could be that the winning recipe idea, food name or meal deal is named after the class and is featured on the menu for the week.
- Run a competition which involves students designing posters or flyers promoting healthy foods at the canteen with a prize for the winner.

Taste testing and sampling

Children are more likely to buy new food items if they have tried them before. Try introducing new foods to students in the following ways.

- Provide a sample of a new product free with the purchase of an existing item. Food companies will usually provide samples for free.
- Set up a sampling table in the canteen to determine the most popular variety of certain foods. Students can line up to sample and then mark their votes on a whiteboard.
- Position a taste-testing plate with small morsels of food on the counter. This is a good way of trialing a recipe prepared in the canteen kitchen.

HINT: Yarrambat Primary School has a regular 'Fruitalicious Friday'. This is a taste-testing day where the students have the opportunity to taste different types of fruit and vegetables that they may not have tried at home. This has led to new foods being introduced in the canteen.

Students and teachers

It is important when promoting healthy foods at the canteen to involve students and teachers. This is recommended by the Health Promoting Schools approach. For further information see page 45.

Involving students, teachers and the wider community in promoting the canteen not only helps cement the image of the canteen as a healthy place and increases purchases, but also helps by providing valuable support and resources to strengthen the canteen's promotional activities.

Here are some suggestions for involving the school community in the canteen.

- Plan canteen promotions and menu items to complement any health, nutrition or food issues (or other non-nutrition themes) being taught in the classroom.
- Know when excursions are planned so you can plan for catering.
- If the school has a vegetable patch, find out what is in season and enquire whether excess produce or herbs can be used and promoted in canteen menu items.
- Ask teachers to assist with student classroom activities that support and assist the canteen's promotion and marketing. (See 'Go for your life' Healthy Canteen Kit – Student Learning Activities for ideas.)

HINT: Older students could assist with designing, producing and marketing a healthy meal deal as part of their curriculum activities. The 'Go for your life' Healthy Canteen Kit – Student Learning Activities that accompany this manual can assist teachers in planning a classroom canteen menu assessment activity.

Encourage the principal and teachers to be involved with the canteen as much as possible.

- Introduce yourself to the food technology and agriculture teachers and have an informal discussion about ideas for collaboration.
- Invite teachers to visit the canteen and meet the staff.
- Schedule a regular, brief meeting with the principal or assistant principal each week or fortnight to exchange information on the week's activities.