



## Fact Sheet: Trends in School Lunch and Youth Nutrition

- According to the USDA, since 2000, federal school meals have increased by 25 percent, but growth has largely been driven by breakfast programs. In fact, lunch programs have decreased by 1.38 million in 5 years.
- But this trend is slowly reversing, as many school foodservice operators report ADP is increasing for the first time in three years. In many cases, increases are due to more updated, trendy menu offerings, and better foods. For example, many operators have added salad bars and build-your-own stations similar to those offered by national chains like Subway and Chipotle.
- According to a study by Technomic Inc., Top K-12 industry concerns include rising food costs (73 percent), meeting new healthy eating regulations (67 percent), excessive food waste (67 percent), and meeting lowered sodium targets (67 percent).
- Overall, most students who can afford to bring lunch from home or are given a chance to go off campus opt out of the K-12 school meal programs.
- Student feedback is vital to school meal program success. To that end, many foodservice directors spend time talking to students to learn about what they desire and giving taste tests of potential new menu items.
- Lunch trends currently focus on fast casual-style foods and ethnic influences. Ethnic options such as Indian- and Asian-inspired cuisine are gaining popularity and interest among students, especially those in higher grade levels. Spicy foods are also gaining traction among all age groups.