

How to Host an In-House Cafeteria Field Trip

A field trip to the cafeteria is a fun and engaging way to get the school year off to a positive start by making time for students to meet the cafeteria staff and learn what they do. The cafeteria field trip also gives staff the opportunity to convey a commitment to school values in the cafeteria and model expectations for cafeteria behavior.

The first step in planning a cafeteria field trip is to gather together the team of adults who have a role in managing the cafeteria and set an agenda and schedule so students have a chance to hear from everyone and practice the procedures you teach them. You may choose to have only the students who are new to the school do a field trip, or you may want to have every class participate to refresh students' memories each year and set everyone up for success.

Below is a sample framework for a cafeteria field trip:

- **Teacher:** Convey importance of having healthy meals for school success and introduce the field trip plan. Walk with students to the cafeteria and stay with class to facilitate discussion if students have questions.
- **Principal:** Welcome students to cafeteria; introduce key concepts that create success in the cafeteria (school values framework, social/emotional learning and experiences); introduce cafeteria staff presenters.
- **Paraprofessional/Duty:** Explain the cafeteria flow and transitions (where to line up for entering/exiting cafeteria); introduce specific behavior management tools, rules, and procedures (e.g., signals for quieting down, when it's OK to leave one's seat), and have students practice; convey that these expectations are intended to create a pleasant eating environment for everyone.
- **Food Service Staff:** Show how school meal procedures work and have students move through the cafeteria as if they were getting a lunch; talk about salad bar etiquette and making healthy food choices (e.g., try new foods, select a rainbow of foods); create a welcoming presence and encourage students to eat school meals.
- **Custodian:** Explain clean-up procedures and expectations (tables and floors); demonstrate how waste station works by showing examples of different items and teaching what goes where (compost, garbage, recycling); explain how to move through the waste station efficiently.
- **Teacher:** Show students how to leave the cafeteria at the end of lunch and guide students back to class.

