

# What's Cooking



## Federal Per-Child Spending Falls to 10-Year Low

The amount of federal money spent on children under age 19 is at its lowest level in a decade, according to a recent report from The Urban Institute, a

nonprofit research organization that has tracked this data since 1960. In the current edition of its annual *Kids' Share* report, the Institute found that

spending fell to approximately \$6,200 per child in 2018, driven by a reduction in spending in both education and nutrition programs, as well as a temporary decrease in child-related tax credits. The decline in spending is expected to affect all working families with children in the United States.

The Urban Institute also projects spending on children in the future. Although there's a projected increase of \$1.5 trillion in federal spending over the next 10 years, the report estimates that children's programs—led by Medicaid, the child tax credit and the earned income tax credit—will only receive 3 cents of each dollar. If there are no changes in laws, the overall federal budget share for children is projected to fall from 9.2% to 7.5% over the coming decade. In fact, within the next year, by 2020, the U.S. government is projected to spend more on debt interest payments than it will on children, according to the report.

**Read More:** *Kids' Share 2019: Report on Federal Expenditures on Children through 2018 and Future Projections*, The Urban Institute, [www.tinyurl.com/federalspending-SNmag](http://www.tinyurl.com/federalspending-SNmag)

## Meet the Next Generation of Fast Casual Eateries

Any savvy school nutrition professional knows that the surest way to increase cafeteria participation is to mimic what students see at their favorite restaurants. A new report from Y-Pulse examined the latest trend in fast casual dining, the emergence of "marketplace fast casual," marked by the increase in popularity of farmers markets and food halls. If you're interested in tapping into this trend in your school meals program, consider how you might apply these findings from Y-Pulse:

» **Atmosphere is everything.** According to the report, 62% of consumers ages 18 to 34 say that a visit to a food hall or farmers market can be characterized as much as a social event as it can a mere shopping or dining trip. Find ways to encourage relaxed socializing in the various lunch areas at your school sites, and you might see higher participation.

» **On full display.** Marketplace fast casual locations often showcase the preparation of the customers' meals—a smart choice, given that 72% say they like to watch their food being made. Consider adding a made-to-order station to the serving line every so often to give your students a bit of a show.



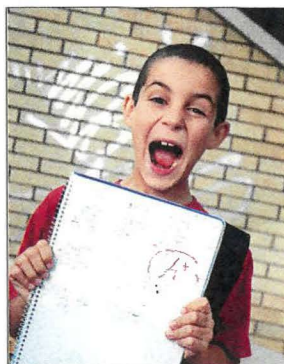


## Universal Free Lunch Linked to Higher Test Scores

A new study has found that offering free lunch to all students in a district improves academic performance. Researchers noted a “statistically significant” bump in both reading and math state test scores for students who didn’t previously have access to free meals, adding that the improvement was equal to 6 to 10 additional weeks of learning.

The researchers looked at middle schools in New York City that implemented universal free lunch between 2010 and 2013. Surprisingly, the biggest improvements in test scores came from students who were from low-income families. This could be because these students were more likely to already receive free or reduced-priced meals. Additionally, the study authors noted, students who didn’t previously qualify for free or reduced-price meals may have struggled with hunger, as they noted that “non-poor” students who were granted access to free meals came from families that “barely” exceeded the 185% mark of the federal poverty line.

The research, published in July, follows a 2018 study out of California that found that improving the nutritional value of school meals led to modest gains in test scores. Read More: “Let Them Eat Lunch: The Impact of Universal Free Meals on Student Performance,” Syracuse University’s Maxwell School Center for Policy Research, [www.tinyurl.com/universalfreelunch-SNmag](http://www.tinyurl.com/universalfreelunch-SNmag)



### BY THE NUMBERS

# \$960,105

The amount of cash left at airport security checkpoints between October 2017 and September 2018, according to the Transportation Security Administration. The unclaimed money is put toward training for agency employees.



## HANGRY? What About Hindecisive?



When a person is hungry, there is a tendency for them to feel irritable and impatient—hangry—due to low blood sugar. If that isn’t enough of a reason to take steps to stave off hunger, recent research from the University of Dundee in Scotland ups the ante. It found that hunger also makes you *hindecisive* (well, we might have just made that term up), affecting your ability to make decisions.

In the study, participants initially answered a questionnaire a few hours after they ate and then completed the questionnaire once again after fasting for 10 hours. Following each activity, they had the option to immediately receive a small reward (food, money or a music download) or wait for a bigger reward later. When the participants were hungry after fasting, they were more likely to choose the immediate reward, whether or not it was food-related. This indicates that people who are hungry will make decisions that provide quicker gratification rather than looking at what’s best overall.

To avoid getting both hangry and hindecisive, keep a couple of nutritious snacks in your bag, locker or desk. Pick snacks that are higher in protein, fat and fiber, all of which are more likely to satisfy you than something sugar- or carb-heavy. Smart options include jerky, trail mix, almonds, roasted chickpeas or whole-wheat crackers and peanut butter. Read More: “Healthy Eating: Recognizing Your Hunger Signals,” University of Washington, [www.tinyurl.com/hungersignals-SNmag](http://www.tinyurl.com/hungersignals-SNmag)

» **Customized and fresh.** Another benefit to a made-to-order station: Students can choose the extras they want (within reason) on their food. Nearly 90% of consumers say they are more likely to purchase a menu item they can customize. Additionally, marketplace fast casual eateries tend to focus on fresh produce and natural ingredients.

» **Flexible ordering.** Has your program invested in a mobile app yet? What about touch-screen kiosks? Plenty of marketplace fast casual locations already have, and 62% of young adult consumers say that using technology to order food is easier than ordering from a person.

» **Connection to vendors.** Consumers might prefer technology for ordering, but they still enjoy putting a face to the name of the people who grow and sell their food. Nearly 70% of consumers say they love talking to vendors at farmers markets who are passionate about the food they produce. Read More: “Five Things to Know About Marketplace Fast Casual,” *Restaurant Development + Design*, [www.tinyurl.com/marketplace-SNmag](http://www.tinyurl.com/marketplace-SNmag)