

Healthy School Meals for All (HSM4A) Evaluation Results: What we have learned from the first years of implementation

1. Key Benefits of HSM4A
 1. Increased breakfast and lunch participation
 2. Decreased stigma
 3. Decreased household food insecurity
 4. Positive attitudes towards HSM4A policies among parent and students
 5. Growing evidence showing improved attendance, academics, and school environment
2. Complementary policies that enhance HSM4A effectiveness: going from “good to great”
 - a. Strategies to successfully increase school meal consumption
 - i. Sufficient time to eat
 - ii. Recess before lunch
 - b. Investments in schools
 - i. Kitchen infrastructure
 - ii. Workforce development, recruitment, retention
 - iii. Adequate reimbursement
 - iv. Local procurement and Farm to School
 - c. Effective communications with parents and students

TIP: Plan ahead for future evaluations

1. Consider a broad range of stakeholders’ needs, concerns, interests
2. Consider an evaluation plan integrated into future policies/legislation
 - i. Consider existing data sources for policy evaluations (baseline, outcomes of interest)
 - ii. Sample evaluation plan from UC NPI is summarized at the top of this brief: https://ucanr.edu/sites/default/files/2025-04/USM%20Evaluation%20Overview.FINAL_4_accessible.pdf

Resources (all publications to date may be found at):

Child Nourish Lab School Meals for All evaluation webpage:

<https://www.childnourishlab.org/healthy-school-meals-for-all>

University of California Nutrition Policy Institute School Meals for All evaluation webpage:

https://npi.ucanr.edu/School_Meals_for_All/

Center for Ecoliteracy website - Time to Eat Strategies and other resources:

<https://www.ecoliteracy.org/article/seven-proven-strategies-increase-time-eat>