

This resource is intended to help districts and schools interested in adding peanut butter back to their menu—or expanding their current use of peanuts—while protecting students with allergies to peanut and other foods. Using third-party resources and experiences from real districts, school nutrition professionals can confidently serve peanuts and other common allergens.

## Why are peanuts a good choice for schools?

### **Peanuts are affordable and versatile:**

Peanut products are a cost-effective plant-based protein that can be used in a variety of recipes throughout the school day and has minimal labor investment to prepare.

### **Peanuts are a source of good nutrition:**

A nutritious diet helps support student academic performance and behavior in school. Peanuts contain good fats (14% DV), protein (14%), fiber (9%) and nutrients such as folate (7%), magnesium (12%), potassium (4%) and vitamin E (9%).

### **Peanuts and peanut butter are well-loved foods that can encourage program participation:**

From the classic PB&J to a Thai-inspired noodle bowl, peanut foods deliver craveability for a reimbursable meal.

### **Peanuts allow for diversity in menus:**

Schools have increasingly diverse student populations with an appreciation for cultural foods. Peanuts can be found in cuisines all over the world.

### **Peanuts offer plant-based options for students:**

More students are demanding plant-based options to meet their unique dietary preferences. Peanuts and peanut butter fit into school meal patterns by counting as a meat/meat alternative.

**Current guidelines do not support or encourage bans:** Proper allergy training and protocols are recommended as the standard for managing food allergies in schools instead of food bans, according to 2021 practice guidelines.

## Creating a comprehensive food allergy management plan can make bringing peanuts back to your school easier!

### **Allergen management training for staff**

Train foodservice staff on food handling safety, sanitation and how to avoid cross contact of allergens. All school staff should be trained on how to recognize a food allergy reaction and how to administer emergency epinephrine if necessary.

### **Signage and labeling of foods both stored and being served**

Label all foods clearly on menus, storage items and serving lines to avoid cross-contact or accidental ingestion of allergens. Use “offer versus serve” protocols to offer safe options for all students, regardless of their food allergy or dietary restrictions.

### **Stakeholder buy-in**

Make the case for why peanuts are beneficial for schools to all invested parties. Take time to address concerns from parents, faculty and staff, school nurses and others on the district level. Empathy, compassion and communication are key.

### **Consider universal access to epinephrine**

If a child experiences an anaphylactic allergic reaction, having the proper tools available to manage the reaction is key. Having stock epinephrine injectors accessible at schools with trained staff can ensure a timely response to keep students safe.



## Case Study: Communication & Planning Keys for Reintroducing Peanut Butter in Florida District

Amy Carroll, MBA, RD, Coordinator of Food and Nutrition Services, helped Lee County Schools, a district serving almost 100,000 students, successfully bring peanuts back to their menus. When Amy joined the department, the school district had not served peanuts or peanut products in their schools since 2004. Upon a visit to another district where peanuts were served and very popular, they realized that their district was missing out on opportunities for student participation in the school nutrition program.

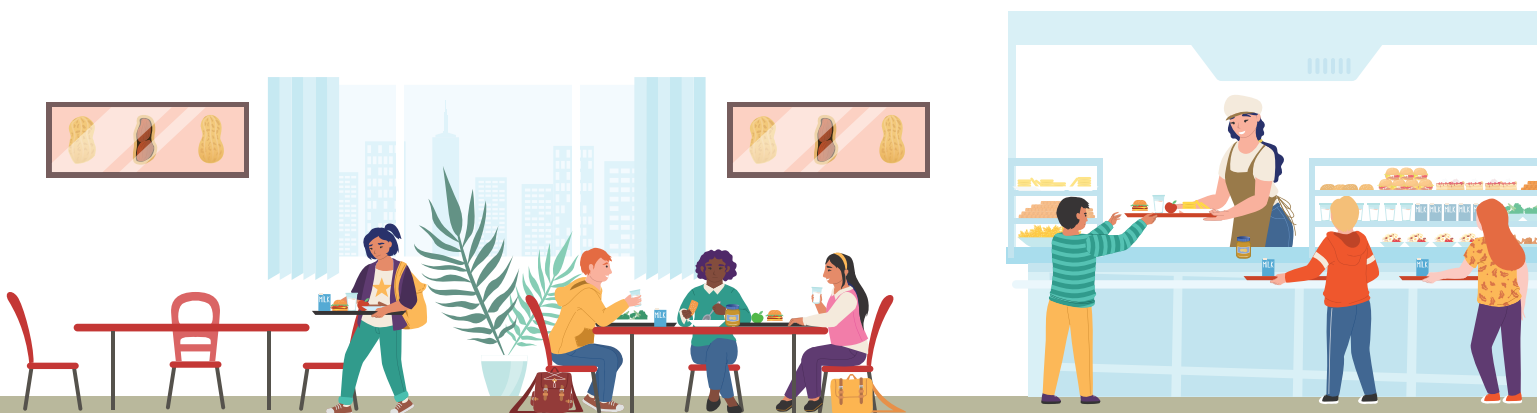
Supply chain issues that increased food prices and limited availability of meat-based entrees during the pandemic created an unexpected opportunity for Lee County. Amy saw peanut butter as an affordable and accessible commodity to bring nutritious meals to students and reached out for support to get peanuts back on the menu. She connected with the National Peanut Board to become more educated about peanut allergy management. From there, she sought internal support from leadership, nursing, school health and others to create an allergen management plan.

Ahead of the reintroduction of peanut butter, her team also created education materials and conducted broad public outreach through podcasts, the web and local media. Amy also took advantage of [EpiPen4Schools.com](https://www.epipen4schools.com) to secure non-student specific emergency medication for all 84 schools in their district. Months later, Lee County was able to menu and serve packaged PB&Js and peanut butter portion cups safely to students. Amy credits this process with making their district a safer space for students with any allergy.

Visit [PeanutsinSchools.org](https://PeanutsinSchools.org) for more of Amy's story and experiences from other school leaders.

### Resources for Bringing Peanut Butter Back and Managing Food Allergies in Schools

[PeanutsinSchools.org](https://PeanutsinSchools.org)  
SNA Food Allergy Hub: [www.schoolnutrition.org/resources/featured-resources/food-allergies/](https://www.schoolnutrition.org/resources/featured-resources/food-allergies/)  
EpiPen4 Schools: [www.epipen4schools.com/](https://www.epipen4schools.com/)  
CDC Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools and Early Childhood Education [www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/foodallergies/](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/foodallergies/)  
Practice Guidelines: [www.jacionline.org/article/S0091-6749\(21\)00223-2/fulltext](https://www.jacionline.org/article/S0091-6749(21)00223-2/fulltext)  
Recipes: [www.nationalpeanutboard.org/recipes/schools/](https://www.nationalpeanutboard.org/recipes/schools/)



Version 1. Published 08/2023.