



Guide to starting a school food service

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So, your school has decided to investigate opening a canteen/food service - this is a great way to encourage healthy eating amongst students and the wider community. To ensure the food service is a financially viable business we encourage you to consider the following steps.

1. School community support

Starting a school canteen/food service requires the support and commitment of the whole school community; parents, students but more importantly, your Principal and parent body. It is imperative to consider the needs and wants of the entire school community. Facilitate a meeting with your school Principal and the parent body to discuss what sort of food service your school should have. For example:

- » onsite canteen/food service operated by the parent body; or incorporated school board
- » management contract
- » licensing agreement
- » local arrangements with external providers such as another school or shop.

Download WASCA's 'Food service options for schools' fact sheet for further information.

2. Form a canteen committee

This is a good time to form a canteen committee, including parents interested in being part of the decision making process for all planning. You should also consider inviting school staff, school health nurse and perhaps some senior students. The canteen committee may also form the core of your parent volunteers in the canteen/food service.

Download WASCA's 'Canteen committee terms of reference' which can be adapted to suit the needs of your school.

3. Survey the school

Send a survey out to the entire school community to gauge their needs, wants and expectations. Find out how many days' parents/staff would like the canteen/food service to operate; spending capacity; who may be willing to volunteer; and popular menu ideas. WASCA is able to provide a sample survey to use as a guide. Consider offering an incentive for completing the survey e.g. raffle draw for a healthy food hamper.

Now that you know the school community will support the canteen/food service the planning can continue. Keep in mind, if there is limited support at this stage, you can always park the idea for a couple of terms and then revisit your options.

4. WASCA membership

Members receive discounts when purchasing resources and are offered reduced registration fees to attend professional development events and training. Members also receive FREE menu assessments and the opportunity to attend and vote at four general meetings per year which often include guest presentations on relevant topics.

Download a membership form from the WASCA website to see what other great benefits members receive.

5. Create an 'action plan'

Once you have collated your survey results and are able to gauge the needs and wants of your school community, you can create an 'action plan'. Identify tasks, develop a checklist, timeline and delegate jobs amongst your canteen committee/parent body. Schedule regular meetings to check in with each other. This will keep the momentum going to achieve all tasks that will lead to the opening of your canteen/food service. Your 'action plan' may include but is not limited to:

- » drafting of a canteen policy
- » audit of canteen facilities and equipment
- » nominate/employ a canteen supervisor
- » 'Traffic Light' and food safety and hygiene training
- » menu planning
- » a plan for launching the canteen.

Planning and organisation is the key to successfully opening your canteen/food service; communicate clearly with everyone involved and keep your Principal informed every step of the way.

If you are planning to employ staff, contact WACSSO for insurance information and their 'Guide to employing staff' as well as Wageline and/or Fairwork about obligations, responsibilities and wages:

- » wacssso.wa.edu.au
- » commerce.wa.gov.au/labourrelations/content/services/wageline/index.htm
- » fairwork.gov.au

6. Develop a canteen/food service policy

A policy is a formal document adopted and endorsed by the school community that sets out the aims and principles of the canteen/food service. It can help to bring about and sustain change and provides guidance for all food and drinks offered in the school setting. Part of compliance with the Department of Education's *Healthy Food and Drink* (HFD) policy requires schools to have a written canteen/food service policy. WASCA is available to review draft policies. Download a 'Sample policy' template which can be adapted to the needs of your school.

7. Audit canteen/food service facilities

Does your canteen/food service have all necessary appliances and equipment to operate? Take an inventory of fridges/freezers, cookware, crockery and utensils to see what your canteen/food service may be lacking before the doors open. Some suppliers provide equipment (e.g. fridges, freezers) as long as you are stocking their products. Other missing items such as spoons, cups etc. may be donated by the school community provided they are in good condition. Small appliances such as blenders and toasted sandwich machines must be purchased new and preferably be commercial grade to ensure warranties are not void.

8. Register with the local council

The canteen/food service must be registered with the local council as a food business. They will also be able to tell you what level of food preparation is permitted in your canteen/food service i.e. if you are permitted to prepare food from scratch with raw produce, such as lean meat. The Environmental Health Officer at the council is a great resource for all your food safety and hygiene concerns and you can expect a yearly inspection from them – as the proprietor, you can always contact them if these visits are not occurring.

9. Training and resources

- a) Before menu planning begins, it is important that 'Traffic Light' training (TLT) be completed. WASCA offers TLT through face to face workshops or it may be completed online: check the training schedule on the WASCA website.
- b) All paid and volunteer staff must complete Foodsafe® Food Handler training or its equivalent. Foodsafe® training packages can be purchased from Environmental Health Australia.

Alternatively, WASCA offers food safety and hygiene training based on Foodsafe® Food Handler training .

- c) There are several 'must have' resources for your canteen/food service – many of which are FREE, or available for purchase from WASCA
 - » Star Choice™ Buyers Guide to assist in sourcing suppliers of canteen approved registered products, colour coded 'green' and 'amber'
 - » Management \$ense Food Sense is an invaluable resource for guidance in the day to day operations of your canteen
 - » What works in my canteen manual - a resource by canteen staff for canteen staff including lots of tips and recipes
 - » Canteen Cuisine cookbook which provides approved, easy to prepare, nutritious recipes.
 - » Big book of menu's – a resource featuring over 50 compliant menu's from local and regional primary and high schools as well as additional tips and recipes
 - » Are you planning on using volunteers? WASCA has just the resource to help you find and keep them. You can download the 'Volunteer Welcome Kit' from the WASCA website.

10. Menu Planning

'Traffic Light' training will have provided you with all of the information you need to create a healthy and interesting menu. By utilising suppliers in the Star Choice™ Buyers Guide and your enthusiastic canteen committee, putting together a menu can be fun and easy.

Things to consider:

- » do you have enough people required to make certain lunch items?
- » packaging – how will items be packaged to go out to staff and students?
- » is the menu taking advantage of seasonal produce?
- » is the menu compliant with the *Healthy Food and Drink* policy?
- » don't forget WASCA members can have their menus assessed for FREE.

You will also need to develop a pricing formula specific to your school to ensure you cover all overheads associated with operating the canteen/food service. The Management \$ense Food Sense manual is a valuable resource for assisting with this.

WASCA also offers Profitability training. Please check the training schedule on the WASCA website for dates.

11. Launch day

The launch of your canteen/food service is an exciting time! Ensure that the whole school community is involved by opening the doors on a school assembly day or plan a special celebration to mark this momentous occasion.

Not only will this generate excitement amongst students, parents will want to be a part of it too so hopefully it will generate lots of volunteers! Canteen/food services are an integral part of the school community, not only do they provide students with nutritious food throughout the day and the opportunity to learn to make healthy food choices, they are a place where parents of the school community can come together to socialise whilst doing their bit for the school. Strive to make the canteen/food service a place devoid of negativity and gossip, and committed to providing healthy food and drink choices for staff and students.

12. Review and evaluate

Part of the 'action plan' should include a plan to review and evaluate the canteen/food service. Consider if the canteen is financially viable; that the menu is achievable and popular; and the pricing is sufficient to cover operating costs.

We hope this information has been useful and we look forward to working with you in the future. Good luck!