EAB

High School Open Campus Lunch Policies

District Leadership Forum

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1) Executive Overview

Terminology

Open campus lunch policy: This report defines an open campus lunch policy as a school policy that permits students to leave the high school campus during the lunch period.

Closed campus lunch policy: This report defines a closed campus lunch policy as a school policy that does not permit students to leave the high school campus during the lunch period.

Open campus lunch: This report defines open campus lunch as any lunch period during which students may leave the high school campus.

Closed campus lunch: This report defines closed campus lunch as any lunch period during which students may not leave the high school campus.

Key Observations

To decide between an open or closed campus lunch policy, contacts consider which policy will best promote student success. Contacts consider the risk of safety concerns such as vehicle accidents and exposure to crime during open campus lunch, as well as health concerns such as access to illegal substances during lunch. Contacts also consider the risk of attendance concerns such as increased absences and tardiness after lunch.

Contacts reduce negative effects of an open campus lunch policy through student eligibility requirements for open campus lunch. The open campus lunch eligibility requirements at **Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School** and **Marietta High School** require that students maintain good attendance, arrive to class on time, and remain in good academic standing. **Massabesic High School**'s open campus lunch policy does not permit students to drive other students in their vehicle during open campus lunch. This may further reduce vehicle risks due to distracted driving or vehicles over-capacity.

Contacts consider whether an open campus lunch policy will help their students learn to manage time and responsibly exercise freedom. School A contacts express that an open campus lunch policy is critical in student development during high school because it prepares students to make positive decisions as they gain independence. In contrast, contacts at **School B**, **School C**, and **School D** express that the risks of attendance problems, absences, car accidents, and behavioral issues associated with an open campus lunch policy outweigh the gains in student development. School B contacts report that students can learn to manage freedom through other channels (e.g., off-campus career academy classes and volunteer opportunities during the school day).

Administrators at *School B, School C,* and *School D* communicated the closed campus lunch policy transition timeline and rationale to stakeholders, but did not consider community input in their decision. Contacts at **School C** and **School D** report that explaining safety benefits as a motive for the closed campus lunch policy reduced stakeholder opposition.

Administrators expand cafeteria facilities, designate additional eating areas, and reorganize the lunch schedule to accommodate the increase in students who eat lunch on campus during closed campus lunch. Contacts at **School B, School C,** and **School D** report that their transition to a closed campus paralleled either a cafeteria expansion or new high school building construction. **School B** and **School D** administrators invited local food vendors and restaurants to sell their food on campus when they transitioned to a closed campus lunch policy.

Contacts adjust but do not significantly increase existing security measures after transitioning to a closed campus lunch policy. Contacts who transitioned to a closed campus lunch policy report no major security infrastructure changes (e.g., construction of a fence) to prevent students from leaving campus. Instead, **School B, School C,** and **School D** administrators dedicate entry and exit points to control the flow of students in and out of campus. **School D** contacts report that the school positions approximately 75 security cameras in the cafeteria, inside the school, and around the building's perimeter to monitor students.

2) Considerations for Open Campus Lunch Policies

Overview

Contacts Base Lunch Policy Decision on How to Best Promote Student Success, but Define Success Differently

Contacts at **School A**, **School B**, **School C**, and **School D** report that both open and closed campus lunch policies involve tradeoffs. To decide between campus policies, contacts consider which model will best promote student success. For example, contacts at School B, School C, and School D report that a closed campus lunch best promotes student success by improving student safety and attendance. In contrast, contacts at School A report that an open campus lunch policy best promotes student success by fostering student development. The below chart reviews profiled schools' characteristics and primary motivations for the current campus lunch policy.

Characteristics, Campus Lunch Policies, and Motivation for Campus Lunch Policy at Profiled Schools[1,2]

School	Locale	Enrollment	Percent Free/ Reduced Lunch	Campus Lunch Policy	Primary Motivation for Current Campus Lunch Policy
School A	Town: Remote	900	16%	Open	• Student development
School B	Town: Fringe	1,300	53%	Closed in 2009	• Attendance • Safety
School C	City: Small	2,000	35%	Closed in 2012	• Attendance • Safety
School D	City: Midsize	1,200	29%	Closed in 2013	• Attendance • Safety
Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School	City: Small	2,000	12%	Open	N/A
Crescenta Valley High School	Suburb: Large	2,700	15%	Open	N/A
Lincoln High School	City: Large	1,500	93%	Closed	N/A
Marietta High School	Town: Fringe	800	47%	Open	• Student development[1]
Massabesic High School	Rural: Distant	1,000	40%	Open	• Student development[2]

The following section outlines key factors for consideration when deciding whether to maintain an open campus lunch policy. The below graphic includes sample questions when deciding whether to maintain, modify, or discontinue an open campus lunch policy.

1) "Open Lunch? Weighing Pros & Cons." *Marietta Times*. September 21, 2013. Accessed September 12, 2017. http://www.mariettatimes.com/news/local-news/2013/09/open-lunch-weighing-pros-cons/
2) "Massabesic High School Open Campus Lunch Request." Maine Principals' Association. Accessed September 12, 2017. https://www.mpa.cc/images/open_campus/MassabesicOpen_Campus_Lunch.pdf

Example Questions when Deciding whether to Maintain, Modify, or Discontinue an Open Campus Lunch Policy[3]

Do we want to modify our current open campus lunch policy, or do we want to discontinue our open campus lunch policy?

Administrators may eliminate some negative effects of an open campus through policy redesign. For example, **School A** ended open campus lunch for ninth graders because those students exhibited behavioral and attendance issues during open campus lunch at a greater rate than upperclassmen.

What are the largest challenges on my campus?

Some schools experience severe truancy and academic performance issues, and administrators may not feel comfortable with the risk that open campuses may contribute. But for schools whose students are sufficiently performing well academically and in which student attendance and behavior are manageable, open campus lunch may provide an opportunity to teach life skills and support student development outside the classroom.

Is a closed campus lunch policy going to address the root cause of the largest challenges on my campus?

Administrators may decide to close campus as a way to mitigate significant attendance, behavior, and safety problems. However, closing campus may not eliminate the root cause of such problems. The **Lincoln High School** principal notes that while its closed campus transition contributed to attendance improvements, other concurrent student support initiatives also contributed. For example, district teachers can earn extra money for serving as case managers who check in with students at risk of truancy and other academic risk factors.[3]

Student Safety

Consider Risk of Car Accidents during Open Campus Lunch

Contacts at **School A**, **School B**, **School C**, and **School D** report that most students drive to restaurants during open campus lunch. Contacts at School C and School D report frequent minor car accidents when they maintained an open campus lunch policy. Contacts at School B note that the school's brief lunch period in combination with its distance from restaurants did not allow enough time for students to leave and return to campus safely. Further, contacts report that the single lunch period facilitated minor accidents due to dozens of cars exiting and entering the parking lot simultaneously. School C and School D administrators implemented a closed campus lunch policy to proactively prevent student injury and death from students driving during open campus lunch. Similar to contacts' concerns, a 2005 study found that car accident risk was significantly higher during open campus lunch than any other time of day, and higher than the control group of a county with a closed campus lunch policy. The study analyzed four years of data from three counties in North Carolina.[4]

Contacts at School A acknowledge the risk of accidents, but report that students driving during the school's open campus lunch does not significantly increase student vehicle accidents. Contacts report approximately two to three accidents per month, and estimate that one third of total accidents occur during lunch. Contacts believe that more accidents occur at the start and end of the school day because more students drive to school than leave campus during lunch. Further, administrators may

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3) "Closed Campus Best for Some." *The Denver Post*, March 4, 2007. Accessed September 12, 2017. http://www.denverpost.com/2007/03/04/closed-campus-best-for-some/
4) Miura, Marlo. "Off the Map: Extracurricular School Food, Open Campus Lunch." Public Health Advocacy Institute. Accessed September 12, 2017. http://www.phaionline.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/otm_open_campus_lunch.pdf

enforce open campus lunch policy restrictions to reduce vehicle accidents during open campus lunch.

Safeguards to Reduce Risk of Vehicle Accidents during Open Campus Lunch[5,6]

Extend lunch period

Contacts at **School B** report that many students drove unsafely from and back to campus during open campus lunch because they did not allot enough time for food service and traffic delays. Longer lunch periods may reduce unsafe driving behaviors and minor vehicle accidents caused by students rushing back to campus.

Restrict students to nearby restaurants

Students walking or driving to restaurants and stores adjacent to campus may reduce vehicle accidents caused by students driving too quickly back to campus. **Massabesic High School**'s open campus lunch policy limits students to eating at approved establishments and requires all students who left campus to show their meal receipt.[5]

Limit driver distractions

Massabesic High School's open campus lunch policy does not permit students to drive other students in their vehicle during open campus lunch.[6] This may further reduce vehicle risks due to distracted driving or vehicles over-capacity.

Consider Risk of Crime and Violence during Open Campus Lunch

Administrators consider the safety and crime rates of school surroundings when deciding whether to maintain an open campus lunch policy. A closed campus lunch policy may increase student safety at schools in high-crime areas (e.g., urban areas). For example, **Oakland High School**'s principal ended its open campus lunch policy in response to crime against students (e.g., robbery) during open campus lunch. Since implementing the closed campus lunch policy, the principal reports a reduction in reported student crime and robberies.[7] **School D** contacts report occasional incidents of students experiencing sexual harassment, panhandling, and robbery while off campus for open campus lunch. Contacts at **School B** and **School C** do not report crime or violence as a primary factor in their decision on whether to maintain an open campus lunch policy.

Health

Consider Risk of Illegal Substance Use during Open Campus Lunch

Contacts at **School B**, **School C**, and **School D** report that a small percentage of students engaged in substance use (i.e., alcohol, tobacco, marijuana) during open campus lunch. All contacts at the above schools anecdotally report a reduction in substance use incidents during the school day after discontinuing the open campus

5) "Massabesic High School Open Campus Lunch Request." Maine Principals' Association. Accessed September 12, 2017.
   https://www.mpa.cc/images/open_campus/MassabesicOpen_Campus_Lunch.pdf
6) Ibid.
7) Marszalek, Diana. "Free-Range Lunch Period? Schools' Open-Campus Policies Vary." *Times of Wayne County*, July 15, 2017. Accessed September 12, 2017.
   http://www.waynetimes.com/national/free-range-lunch-period-schools-open-campus-policies-vary/

lunch policy. All contacts at these schools note that a minority of students continue to use substances at school regardless of the lunch policy. However, contacts report satisfaction that a closed campus lunch policy reduces substance abuse opportunities during lunch.

Contacts at **School A** estimate that less than one percent of students use substances during open campus lunch. Contacts report that students who would use substances regardless of the open campus lunch policy cause the majority of the school's lunchtime substance use incidents. In contrast to contacts at School B, School C, and School D, contacts at School A report that the overall benefits of open campus lunch outweigh the drawback of the small number of substance use incidents.

Students May Consume More High-Fat, High-Sugar, and Low-Nutrient Food during Open Campus Lunch than Closed Campus Lunch

Schools may choose a closed campus lunch policy so that students eat healthier lunch food. A 2005 study of over one thousand Minnesota high school students found that students at high schools with an open campus lunch policy were significantly more likely to choose fast food or pre-made convenience store meals than were students at a closed campus.[8] The higher cost of healthy food may lead students to purchase low-cost, low-nutrient food during open campus lunch.[9] Contacts at **School A**, **School B**, **School C**, and **School D** did not report food or nutrition as a factor in their decision on whether to maintain an open campus lunch policy.

> !
>
> **Open Campus Lunch Policy May Highlight Income Disparities between Students due to Money and Vehicle Access Required to Eat Off-Campus**
>
> Contacts at **School A** and **School B** report that students who qualified for free- or reduced lunch were slightly more likely to remain on campus under an open campus lunch policy. These students may stay on campus because they cannot afford to eat at a restaurant, or cannot go home for lunch because of food insecurity at home. In addition, campuses without restaurants within walking distance limit off-campus lunch participation to students with a vehicle. However, contacts at both schools report that cafeteria lunch did not stigmatize students and did not report this as factor in their decision.

Attendance

Consider whether Open Campus Lunch will Facilitate Afternoon Truancy and Tardiness

Administrators at **School B, School C**, and **School D** report that after-lunch absences decreased after they implemented a closed campus lunch policy. Administrators at **Lincoln High School** report an eight-percent increase in freshman afternoon attendance after a transition to closed campus lunch: the school's freshman afternoon attendance rate increased from 83 to 91 percent between academic years 2005 and 2006.[10]

8) Miura, Marlo. "Off the Map: Extracurricular School Food, Open Campus Lunch." Public Health Advocacy Institute. Accessed September 12, 2017.
   http://www.phaionline.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/otm_open_campus_lunch.pdf
9) Ibid.
10) "Closed Campus Best for Some." *The Denver Post*, March 4, 2007. Accessed September 12, 2017. http://www.denverpost.com/2007/03/04/closed-campus-best-for-some/

Contacts at School C and School D emphasized after-lunch tardiness as one of the largest drawbacks of open campus lunch. Contacts at School D estimate that after-lunch classes lost up to 15 minutes of instruction time due to students' late arrivals. In addition to attendance improvements, contacts at School B, School C and School D report tardiness reductions after they implemented a closed campus lunch policy.

Administrators at **School A** do not report higher attendance and tardiness issues due to an open campus lunch policy. As with substance use during lunch, contacts at School A report that the students who return tardy or who do not return after open campus lunch exhibit broader attendance problems regardless of open campus lunch. Similarly, the **Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School** principal reports few abnormal attendance issues related to an open campus lunch policy, and that students with broader truancy issues commit the majority of lunch-related absences.[11]

Require Students to Meet Open Eligibility Criteria to Mitigate Negative Effects on Behavior and/or Attendance

Some high schools tie open campus lunch eligibility to attendance and behavioral criteria to reduce the negative effects of open campus lunch. **Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School** administrators revoke the open campus lunch privilege from students with unexcused absences.[12] **Marietta High School** only allows students who meet the following criteria to qualify for open campus lunch:

- 95 percent attendance
- No F grades
- No out-of-school suspensions[13]

The Marietta High School principal reports that the eligibility system encourages students to exhibit and maintain positive behaviors.[14]

At **Massabesic High School**, students must meet the below behavioral and academic criteria to qualify for open campus lunch:

- Clean disciplinary record (includes safe driving, substance use, and tardiness)
- One or zero class tardies
- Academic eligibility[15]

11) Marszalek, Diana. "Free-Range Lunch Period? Schools' Open-Campus Policies Vary." *Times of Wayne County*, July 15, 2017. Accessed September 12, 2017. http://www.waynetimes.com/national/free-range-lunch-period-schools-open-campus-policies-vary/
12) Ibid.
13) "Open Lunch? Weighing Pros & Cons." *Marietta Times*. September 21, 2013. Accessed September 12, 2017. http://www.mariettatimes.com/news/local-news/2013/09/open-lunch-weighing-pros-cons/
14) Ibid.
15) "Massabesic High School Open Campus Lunch Request." Maine Principals' Association. Accessed September 12, 2017. https://www.mpa.cc/images/open_campus/MassabesicOpen_Campus_Lunch.pdf

Open Campus Lunch Eligibility Criteria at *Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School*, *Marietta High School*, and *Massabesic High School*[16,17,18]

A+

Academic Performance
Pass all classes

On-Time Arrival
One or zero tardy arrivals to class

Attendance
Zero unexcused absences

Behavior
Zero out-of-school suspensions

Student Development

Open Campus Lunch May Help Students Learn to Manage Time and Responsibly Exercise Freedom

School A contacts express that an open campus lunch policy is critical in student development during high school because it prepares students to make positive decisions as they gain independence. Contacts at School A observe that open campus lunch teaches students to make better decisions in other aspects of their time at school, such as to use a free study period productively. Similarly, **Massabesic High School**'s open campus lunch policy claims that open campus lunch "give(s) seniors the ability to take Massabesic's Code of Cooperation and put it into play."[19]

Contacts at **School B**, **School C**, and **School D** express that the risks of attendance problems, absences, car accidents, and behavioral issues associated with open campus lunch outweigh the gains in student development. Contacts at both School B and School C agree that open campus lunch can help motivated students learn to manage time responsibly, but note that some students require more boundaries than open campus lunch provides.

Contacts at School B state that open campus lunch does not provide enough structure to effectively teach students to manage their time. Contacts report that their students learn to manage freedom in equally-effective, lower-risk ways such as off-campus career academy classes and volunteer opportunities during the school day. While School C contacts report satisfaction with their choice to implement a closed campus lunch policy, they recognize that the policy means students will experience a larger adjustment to independence after graduation.

To Prevent Policy Abuse, Communicate Open Campus Lunch as a Privilege Rather than a Right

Contacts at **School A** emphasize that open campus lunch is a privilege, and that students may perform better if administrators communicate the purpose of open campus lunch (e.g., to help them make good decisions in their free time). For example, **Massabesic High School**'s open campus lunch policy clearly states the

16) "Massabesic High School Open Campus Lunch Request." Maine Principals' Association. Accessed September 12, 2017. https://www.mpa.cc/images/open_campus/MassabesicOpen_Campus_Lunch.pdf "Open Lunch? Weighing Pros & Cons." *Marietta Times*. September 21, 2013. Accessed September 12, 2017. http://www.mariettatimes.com/news/local-news/2013/09/open-lunch-weighing-pros-cons/

17) Marszalek, Diana. "Free-Range Lunch Period? Schools' Open-Campus Policies Vary." *Times of Wayne County*, July 15, 2017. Accessed September 12, 2017. http://www.waynetimes.com/national/free-range-lunch-period-schools-open-campus-policies-vary/

18) "Open Lunch? Weighing Pros & Cons." *Marietta Times*. September 21, 2013. Accessed September 12, 2017. http://www.mariettatimes.com/news/local-news/2013/09/open-lunch-weighing-pros-cons/

19) "Massabesic High School Open Campus Lunch Request." Maine Principals' Association. Accessed September 12, 2017. https://www.mpa.cc/images/open_campus/MassabesicOpen_Campus_Lunch.pdf

purpose of the open campus lunch policy, its status as an earned privilege, and its role in student development.[20] To communicate open campus lunch behavioral expectations to parents and students, some districts require parent or guardians to complete permission slips before their students can participate. **Crescenta Valley High School** officials reported a reduction from 18 to 11 lunchtime suspensions after implementing open campus lunch parent permission slips for one semester in 2012.[21] In contrast, **School C** contacts report that the permission slip for open campus lunch eligibility did not significantly reduce attendance and tardiness challenges.

Sample Language from *Massabesic High School*'s Open Campus Lunch Policy[22]

"Off campus lunch privileges are just that, a privilege, not a right. Administration may revoke the off campus lunch privilege of any student that does not maintain good standing in the following areas…"

"The goal of off-campus lunch is to give seniors the ability to take Massabesic's Code of Cooperation and put it into play. In order to receive this privilege and maintain it throughout the year, the students must show respect and responsibility in meeting the Off-Campus expectations.

This allows students to purchase lunch elsewhere, return to class on time, and gives them the opportunity to exhibit responsible, adult behavior outside of school."

Limit Open Campus Lunch Privileges to Older Students to Manage Behavioral Issues among Freshmen

To adjust for maturity and judgment developments as students get older, some high schools limit open campus lunch privileges to upperclassmen. Contacts at **School A** and **School C** note that freshmen behave more disruptively than any other grade during open campus lunch. After a School A data analysis showed that freshmen committed the most truancy and tardiness under the open campus lunch policy, school administrators limited open campus lunch privileges to 10th through 12th grade students.

Facilities and Food Service

Consider the Effect of Fewer Student Cafeteria Customers on Facilities and Finances

Contacts at **School A**, **School B**, **School C**, and **School D** report that fewer students purchase cafeteria food at schools with an open campus lunch policy. School B, School C, and School D administrators report that the open campus lunch policy allowed their food service facilities to accommodate enrollment growth without expanding the cafeteria.

A school administrator from Bridgman, Michigan who was profiled in a *New York Times* article noted that the transition to a closed campus lunch enabled his high school's food program to profit for the first time to his knowledge. The administrator also reported a 10 percent increase in cafeteria sales after implementing a closed

20) "Massabesic High School Open Campus Lunch Request." Maine Principals' Association. Accessed September 12, 2017. https://www.mpa.cc/images/open_campus/MassabesicOpen_Campus_Lunch.pdf
21) Corrigan, Kelly. "Student Discipline at CV High Drops after Open Lunch Policy Change." *Glendale News-Press*, September 21, 2012. Accessed September 12, 2017. http://articles.glendalenewspress.com/2012-09-21/news/tn-gnp-0921-student-discipline-at-cv-high-drops-after-open-lunch-policy-change_1_lunch-policy-open-lunch-student-discipline
22) "Massabesic High School Open Campus Lunch Request." Maine Principals' Association. Accessed September 12, 2017. https://www.mpa.cc/images/open_campus/MassabesicOpen_Campus_Lunch.pdf

campus lunch policy.[23] Similarly, lunch sales at **Smithtown Central School District** increased by 22 percent in the first four months of its district-wide closed campus lunch policy.[24] However, contacts did not report food service revenue concerns due to an open campus lunch policy.

Logistics of Eligibility Safeguards

Administrators Identify Truant and Tardy Students to Prevent Abuse of Open Campus Lunch Policies

Contacts at schools with open campus lunch eligibility criteria maintain a system to track eligible students. The **School A** secretary creates a list of eligible students at the beginning of each year. Students ineligible for open campus lunch (e.g., freshmen) must check in to the cafeteria to prove that they remained on campus. The administration then follows up with students absent during lunch. Under **School C**'s prior open campus lunch policy, administrators marked student IDs with a stamp to denote open campus lunch privileges. Students showed their stamp to school staff when they exited the building. **Massabesic High School**'s policy requires all students leaving for open campus lunch to check in and out at the front desk, and requires all students to carry their ID so that security staff can verify eligibility for open campus lunch.[25]

Contacts at School A and School C note the challenge to accurately verify hundreds of students leaving simultaneously during open campus lunch. Contacts emphasize that the combination of the large volume of students who leave campus and resource limitations (i.e., a limited number of security guards and school resource officers) makes it difficult to ensure that every student remains in school. Thus, School A's open campus lunch enforcement focuses on following up with students who did not check into lunch, rather than on preventing students from leaving campus. Similarly, **School B** administrators identify truant students after lunch when those students arrive late or do not attend class. Contacts at School B report that it would be too resource intensive to create checkpoints to verify eligibility for all students leaving campus.

23) Hu, Winnie. "Fatal Accidents Erode Perk of Off-Campus Lunches." *The New York Times*, May 6, 2008, sec. N.Y. / Region.
https://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/06/nyregion/06closed.html
24) Ibid.
25) "Massabesic High School Open Campus Lunch Request." Maine Principals' Association. Accessed September 12, 2017.
https://www.mpa.cc/images/open_campus/MassabesicOpen_Campus_Lunch.pdf

3) Transitioning to a Closed Campus Lunch Policy
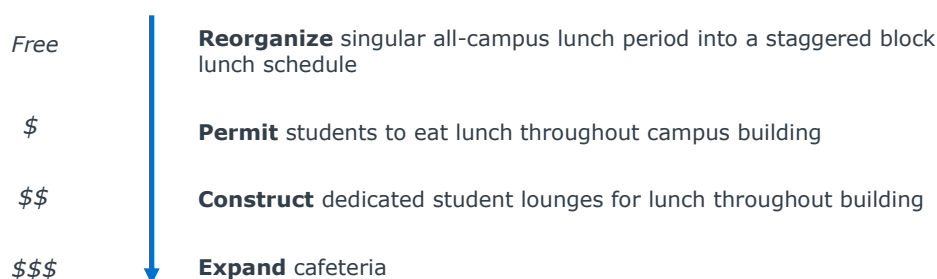
Logistical Considerations

Expand Student Eating Areas and Add Lunch Periods to Accommodate All Students for Lunch

Transitioning from an open to a closed campus lunch policy significantly increases the number of students who eat lunch on campus. Contacts at **School B, School C,** and **School D** report that their transition to a closed campus lunch policy paralleled either a cafeteria expansion or new high school building construction. Contacts report that they would have preferred to transition to a closed campus lunch policy earlier, but had to wait until cafeteria expansion and new construction provided space to simultaneously serve more students at lunch.

School D funded cafeteria renovations through a taxpayer-funded safety and security bond. School C's cafeteria expansion occurred via the construction of a new high school building, which the district funded through a local property tax increase.

Schools that cannot expand food service facilities may accommodate a closed campus lunch policy by allowing students to eat throughout the building. For example, School C administrators allow students who bring their own lunch to eat in designated indoor common spaces and student lounges across the campus. Alternatively, administrators can reorganize the lunch schedule from one all-campus lunch to a staggered, block-schedule with multiple lunches. School D contacts report little difficulty with the transition to a block schedule.

Strategies to Adapt Facilities to Accommodate a Closed Campus Lunch Policy

Free	**Reorganize** singular all-campus lunch period into a staggered block lunch schedule
$	**Permit** students to eat lunch throughout campus building
$$	**Construct** dedicated student lounges for lunch throughout building
$$$	**Expand** cafeteria

Profiled Schools Reallocate, But Do Not Expand, Existing Security Measures after Transition to Closed Campus Lunch

Contacts who transitioned to closed campus lunch report no major campus facility changes (e.g., construction of a fence) to prevent students from leaving campus during lunch. Contacts at **School A**, **School B,** and **School C** report that their schools use security cameras to monitor students leaving campus, but primarily use them as a verification tool for truant students who claim they did not leave campus. **School D** contacts report that the school positioned approximately 75 security cameras in the cafeteria, inside the school, and around the building's perimeter to monitor students. Contacts report that the closed campus frees security guards to monitor the cafeteria and campus exits rather than to physically patrol the perimeter of the school.

Dedicate Campus Entry and Exit Points to Easily Monitor Students Who Leave Campus

To minimize opportunities for students to leave and to better verify students leaving legitimately, **School B, School C**, and **School D** dedicate official campus entry and exit points. School B contacts report that students enter and exit campus for career center classes, athletic facilities nearby, and volunteer opportunities at a nearby elementary school. Administrators instruct these students to leave through the front door or else administrators will assume that they are skipping class. Contacts report that approximately 90 percent of students who leave campus do so legally. Similarly, contacts at School C report that few students attempt to leave the building for lunch despite the closed campus lunch policy.

Timing

Capitalize on a Natural Transition Point to Implement the Policy and Mitigate the Challenge of the Cultural Shift

Contacts at **School B**, **School C**, and **School D** report that the transition to a closed campus lunch policy requires administrators to lead a school cultural shift because of the entrenched tradition of open campus lunch. Contacts at School B report that many students' parents and siblings also attended the school, and these alumni advocate for the open campus lunch tradition. School B transitioned to a closed campus lunch policy mid-year once the high school's new building opened in the spring semester. The open campus lunch transition at School C and School D paralleled a cafeteria or a building expansion, which created a natural point of time to adjust culture.
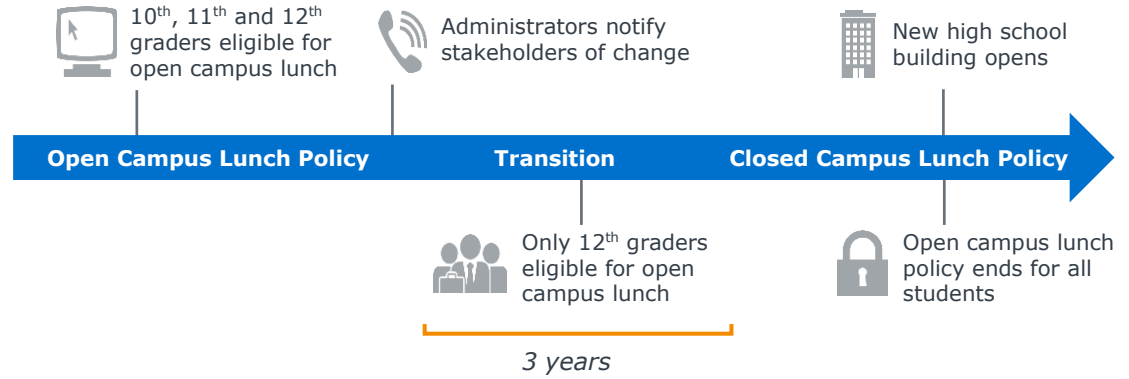
Contacts at **School A**, which maintains an open campus lunch policy, report that a tragedy during open campus lunch such as a student death or injury often sparks dialogue around the policy. Such a tragedy may also lead administrators to enact a closed campus lunch policy. However, no profiled administrators who ended the open campus lunch policy report a major incident (i.e., a student injury or death) as the impetus to transition.

Gradually Implement the Change to Ease Students into the New Policy and Reduce Opposition

School B contacts report that major student opposition to closed campus lunch ended approximately two full academic years after the change initiated, as more students who had attended the school under an open campus lunch policy graduated. School B contacts report that overall opposition was weaker than anticipated.

A gradual transition to a closed campus lunch policy may further reduce student resistance. **School C** first restricted open campus lunch eligibility from all sophomores through seniors to only seniors. For the next three years, School C administrators permitted each senior class to participate in open campus lunch. The fourth year, administrators ended open campus lunch for all students. However, contacts at School C note that the first year of the full transition proved hardest. Those seniors were the first class who had observed other seniors enjoy open campus lunch, but then did not qualify once they became seniors.

Closed Campus Transition at *School C*

10th, 11th and 12th graders eligible for open campus lunch	Administrators notify stakeholders of change	New high school building opens

Open Campus Lunch Policy → **Transition** → **Closed Campus Lunch Policy**

Only 12th graders eligible for open campus lunch

Open campus lunch policy ends for all students

3 years

Communication

Communicate Policy Change One Year in Advance to Prepare Students and Families for the Transition

Administrators at **School B**, **School C**, and **School D** did not consider community input in their decision to implement a closed campus lunch policy. Rather, stakeholder communication focused on the timeline and rationale for the change to students, local community, and parents. Both School D and School B administrators notified stakeholders one year in advance of the transition.

School D transitioned to a closed campus lunch as part of a district-wide initiative to discontinue open campus lunch. The district communications division managed the messaging through communication channels such as parent and student forums, emails, website updates, and phone calls. For example, the district auto-called students and parents to inform them of the upcoming policy change. The district also created a dedicated voicemail inbox to receive the high volume of stakeholder calls. However, the district did not centralize its response to feedback and handled it as it arose. To further ensure transparent communication, the division held an open community forum at each high school in the district to share reasons for the transition to a closed campus lunch policy, new food options, and the timeline. Contacts report that approximately 100 to 150 students and parents attended School D's forum.

Closed Campus Lunch Transition Communication Strategies at *School D*

Email parents and students

Host information nights to communicate motivations and expectations for the closed campus transition

District communication office

Post information on high school and district website

Use software to auto-call parents districtwide with an announcement about the closed campus

Frame Closed Campus Lunch Policy as Strategy to Improve Student Wellbeing

Contacts at **School C** and **School D** emphasized student safety and attendance benefits when communicating the transition to stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, local business owners, School Board). School C administrators collected student attendance and tardiness data to demonstrate that a closed campus lunch policy could improve attendance. Contacts at both profiled high schools consider a closed campus lunch policy as a proactive safety measure and report that explaining safety benefits as a motive for discontinuing open campus lunch reduced stakeholder opposition.

Easing the Transition

Improve Facilities to Provide a Relaxing Environment for Students during Lunch on Campus

Contacts report that students enjoy the mental break of going off-campus during their school day. To replicate that experience with a closed campus lunch policy, **School C** and **School D** administrators added cafeteria improvements such as TVs and an enclosed courtyard for seniors. Additionally, School C allows students to eat in dedicated student lounges or bleacher-seating common areas. Contacts also report that the student lounges enable students to complete assignments during lunch if they so choose. While contacts report trash and lunch clean-up as a drawback of allowing students to eat outside the cafeteria, contacts report that it is important and a popular option among students.

Expand Food Options to Alleviate Student Pushback about Limited Choices

Contacts report that students typically purchase food from nearby stores and restaurants during open campus lunch. Students may oppose the change to a closed campus lunch policy due to limited food choices. After the transition to a closed campus lunch policy, contacts at **School B** and **School D** invited local food vendors and restaurants to sell their food on campus to ensure food variety on campus. Administrators at School B open a bidding process with local vendors each year to determine who can sell on campus. School D contacts report that the cafeteria no longer hosts vendors due to strict school nutrition requirements, but that the vendors' presence reduced student pushback after the transition to a closed campus lunch policy. After implementing a closed campus lunch policy, School B also added a full salad bar, which contacts report is popular among students.

Inviting vendors to campus may also reduce business community opposition to a closed campus lunch. When School D discontinued its open campus lunch policy, some local business owners feared financial losses because students comprised a key customer base.

However, some businesses may prefer a closed campus lunch policy. Although high school students provide steady business during open campus lunch, they may decrease other customers' interest in those restaurants during lunchtime. Contacts at School B suggest that the student rush and their behavior drove other customers away from stores and restaurants. When School D transitioned to a closed campus lunch policy, some local business owners noted that the lack of student customers brought back higher-paying adults to the restaurant.

Sample Cafeteria Vendor Options at *School B* and *School D*

Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
Chinese food	Pizza	Chicken patty sandwiches	Sub sandwiches	Ice cream

4) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member school district approached the Forum with the following questions:

- How do open campus policies impact student safety, health, and attendance?
- What safeguards do school administrators implement to reduce any negative effects of open campuses on student safety, health, and attendance?
- What are the primary disadvantages of transitioning from an open to a closed campus?
- What are the primary advantages of transitioning from an open to a closed campus?
- When choosing to transition from an open to a closed campus, what strategies do school administrators use to communicate the change?
- When choosing to transition from an open to a closed campus, what logistical changes do administrators implement?

Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB's internal and online research libraries (eab.com)
- The Chronicle of Higher Education (http://chronicle.com)
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (http://nces.ed.gov/)
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- "Massabesic High School Open Campus Lunch Request." Maine Principals' Association. Accessed September 12, 2017. https://www.mpa.cc/images/open_campus/MassabesicOpen_Campus_Lunch.pdf
- "Open Lunch? Weighing Pros & Cons." *Marietta Times*. September 21, 2013. Accessed September 12, 2017. http://www.mariettatimes.com/news/local-news/2013/09/open-lunch-weighing-pros-cons/

Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed principals and assistant principals at public high schools with an open campus lunch policy or that recently transitioned to a closed campus lunch policy.

A Guide to Schools Profiled in this Brief

School	Location	Approximate Enrollment
School A	Midwest	900
School B	Midwest	1,300
School C	South	2,000
School D	South	1,200
Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School*	Mid-Atlantic	2,000
Crescenta Valley High School*	Pacific West	2,700
Lincoln High School*	Mountain West	1,500
Marietta High School*	Midwest	800
Massabesic High School*	Northeast	1,000

*An asterisk denotes high schools profiled through secondary research.