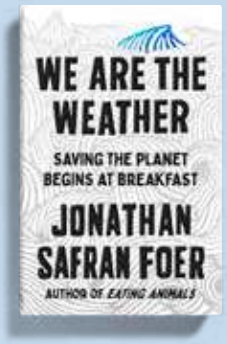
ON THE MENU:
Saving the Planet

YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO BRINGING CLIMATE-FRIENDLY MENUS TO YOUR SCHOOL



INSPIRED BY

Jonathan Safran Foer's

We Are the Weather

balanced

EJF PHILANTHROPIES

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in advocating for climate-friendly foods that are healthier for you and your campus community. We are thrilled you're here! Before we dive into the campaign materials, we want to share our collective mission.

In an effort to fight climate change and the public health crisis, Balanced and EJF Philanthropies have crafted a toolkit tied to the central message of Jonathan Safran Foer's new book, *We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast*. He believes — as do many researchers — that we cannot save the planet unless we significantly reduce our consumption of animal products, and **his book is an argument for a collective act to eat differently - specifically, no animal products before dinner.**

> **We cannot keep the kinds of meals we have known and also keep the planet we have known. We must either let some eating habits go or let the planet go.**
>
> – Jonathan Safran Foer

Changing our food choices is the single most impactful action that an individual can take in the efforts to mitigate climate change and meet the goals set out in the Paris accords. In addition to sustaining the health of our planet and the variety of life that inhabit it, eating a plant-forward diet keeps individuals healthier, longer. And since everyone in the world is hours away from a meal, we are also just hours away from an opportunity to immediately participate in the reversal of climate change and diet-related disease.

If it's that impactful for one individual, imagine then the impact of your whole school campus making that change.

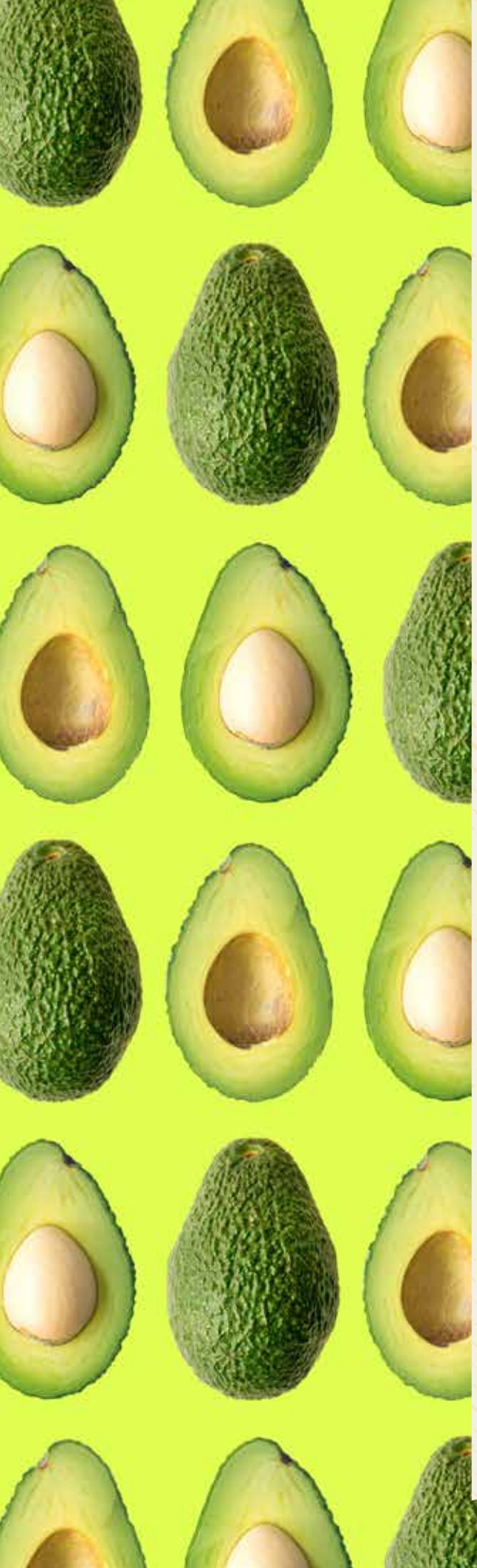
Up until now, efforts to improve diets have focused primarily on the individual. In order to make these changes to your food choices, however, you first need access to them.

If we want healthier, more sustainable diets, we need healthier, more sustainable food environments - like cafeterias and restaurants on campus.

We curated this toolkit to empower you to demand more plant-based options be provided on your campus for breakfast and lunch, planting the seed that allows an individual action to transform into a collective one. By influencing food environments on campus, your efforts will have an impact that is far greater than your individual habits or educating your peers—you will help save lives and the planet we all call home.

Connect with the Balanced team at advocate@balanced.org today to get started!

– THE **EJF PHILANTHROPIES** AND **BALANCED TEAMS**



OUR SUPPORT

You might be asking yourself how you're actually going to actually take on this advocacy work. Don't worry! We're here to make this as easy as possible. Here's just some of the ways we can help:

ADVOCACY GUIDE AND TOOLKIT

In the toolkit (including this guide!) you'll find all the guidance you may need as your campaign progresses, like examples, how-to guides, and templates to make it quick and easy.

1-ON-1 COACHING AND SUPPORT

Our team is here to answer your questions and help you become a stronger advocate for your school's (and our planet's) health. You are free to use the guide and toolkit on your own, or reach out to us for personalized guidance and support throughout the entire process.

CAMPAIGN ASSETS AND MATERIALS

We've found the most effective advocates have a few supplies ready: a website, a petition, a press release, and compelling handouts and posters. Our team will assist in the creation of these assets and tailor them to meet your needs.

Step One: Getting Started

The importance of thorough preparation for good advocacy cannot be overstated.

In this section, we'll show you how to lay a solid foundation for your advocacy that will set you up for success.

> **When a radical change is needed, many argue that it is impossible for individual actions to incite it, so it's futile for anyone to try. This is exactly the opposite of the truth: the impotence of individual action is a reason for everyone to try.**
>
> – Jonathan Safran Foer

DID YOU KNOW?

1. We know for sure that we cannot address climate change without addressing animal agriculture.

2. Not eating animal products for breakfast and lunch has a smaller CO2 footprint than the average full-time vegetarian diet.

STEP 1

What you will need

1 SCORE YOUR MENU

The first step in your advocacy is to get a sense of the current state of affairs. Analyze your school's menu and find out its grade at **balanced.org/score**.

2 SET A GOOD GOAL

The goals you set for change at your institution are a crucial part of your advocacy; they determine what you'll ask for and how you'll need to proceed.

3 DO YOUR RESEARCH

The backbone of every advocacy campaign is solid preparation. Don't skip this step or you may find yourself in over your head!

4 FIND YOUR SUPPORTERS

In order to make a strong case to decision makers, you'll want to have a lot of supporters on your side ready to advocate with you for the change your community needs.

5 PREPARE YOUR CASE

Once the time comes, you'll need to be ready to make the case to decision makers that the change you're requesting is necessary and doable.

6 GET SUPPORT

Leading the way for change can be a long and difficult process, but you don't have to do it alone. Our team is here to support you by answering your questions, providing personalized guidance, and more. Learn how to get support by emailing **advocate@balanced.org**.

STEP 1

Assessing Menus

Before you get started advocating for healthier meals, it's a good idea to figure out where the food served on your campus currently stands. Our organization has created an easy way to assess the healthfulness of institutional menus called the Balanced Scorecard, graded from excellent A to failing F.

To learn more and evaluate your menu, go to balanced.org/score.

Identifying the Decision Makers

Before you start advocating for change, you will need to figure out who has the power to make the change your school needs. Start by looking for who is in charge of food service decisions on your campus, like a cafeteria director.

While this step may seem pretty obvious, it's important to take the time to consider all the key stakeholders you have to influence. Reach out to as many decision makers as you can and set up a time to meet once you're ready.

STEP 1

Digging a Little DEEPER

Before diving into contacting decision makers, it's a good idea to get to know a little more about them and the institution you are seeking to change.

Here are some key things to know before you proceed to the next step:

- **Is their food service run by a third party provider or are menu items prepared in house?**
- **How many people are served by this institution every day?**
- **Are there any policies or initiatives that focus on sustainability or climate change?**
- **Who are the top leadership at this institution?**
- **Are there any potential allies who work there? They could be other students, environmental activists, professors, or student interest groups.**
- **Are the people served by this institution generally happy with the food they are provided? You can try checking Google or Yelp reviews for testi**monials.

NEED HELP? SPREADSHEET TEMPLATES FOR YOU TO USE WHEN COMPILING YOUR RESEARCH ARE AVAILABLE IN THE TOOLKIT!

STEP 1

Setting a GOAL

Once you have an idea of your starting point for the school's menu, you'll want to establish a realistic but ambitious goal. This is an absolutely critical part of the advocacy process because it determines what outcomes you want to achieve for your school.

Your ask could be reduction of unhealthy products like meat and eggs, or increase of healthier ones like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes - or a combination. We recommend a combination as a way to maximize the benefits of the change.

REDUCE

menu items high in saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium

REPLACE

with fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains

ADVOCACY TIP #1

Stay Positive

Even in the most supportive environments, change can be tricky. Getting the outcomes you want may require accepting baby steps along the way.

The best and most productive way to approach advocating for change is to partner with the decision makers and work together as a team. So be patient and stay positive — together, you'll achieve far more than you would alone.

Keep working on your powers of persuasion, stay positive, and never lose sight of the end-goal. We know you'll win in the end!

> No one who isn't us is going to destroy Earth, and no one who isn't us is going to save it. We are the flood, and we are the ark.
>
> *– Jonathan Safran Foer*

Step Two: Making the Case

When you're ready to start advocating for change, you'll need to be prepared to show why you're asking for change and what exactly you want.

In this section, we'll show you how to make a convincing case for change with key decision makers.

> **Changing how we eat will not be enough, on its own, to save the planet, but we cannot save the planet without changing how we eat.**
>
> – Jonathan Safran Foer

DID YOU KNOW?

1. Nine of the ten warmest years on record have occurred since the first YouTube video was posted in 2005.

2. According to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, if cows were a country, they would rank third in greenhouse gas emissions, after China and the United States.

STEP 2

Contacting Leadership

Use this flowchart to help navigate how to proceed from each communication.

You've prepared all your research, and now it's time to start reaching out to the key decision-makers at your school.

FIRST EMAIL

- briefly introduce yourself
- clearly state your purpose
- make a compelling case
- request a time to meet
- be inviting of collaboration

HOW DID THEY RESPOND?

YES! → PREPARE FOR THE MEETING

NO → 2

SECOND EMAIL

- reference your first email
- request a meeting again
- remind them you feel this is an urgent mattermention your supporters

YES! → PREPARE FOR THE MEETING

NO → CALL

CALL

- reference your emails
- request a meeting & schedule it on the call
- Keep calling and be persistent. Your concerns deserve to be heard!

YES! → PREPARE FOR THE MEETING

NO → 3

FINAL EMAIL

- reference your emails & calls and restate your ask
- reiterate desire to meet & implement change
- inform them you'll be launching a campaign

YES! → PREPARE FOR THE MEETING

NO → PREPARE TO CAMPAIGN

NEED HELP? EMAIL TEMPLATES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE TOOLKIT!

STEP 2

Meeting with DECISION MAKERS

Prior to meeting with any key decision maker, it's important you do your research. Knowing why your proposed changes will benefit you, your peers, and the school will set you up for success. Knowing how your school will make the change is less important initially - and it's something you and your food service director can figure out together!

There are many reasons to balance the menus wherever food is served on campus, whether it is food cost savings, improved classroom or work performance, or cheaper health insurance premiums. But we've found the most compelling and effective argument for doing so is community health.

CHECK OUT THE FULL TOOLKIT FOR RESOURCES TO HELP YOU MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MEETING!

ADVOCACY TIP #2

Be Persistent

If you find the decision makers are hesitant to make changes, don't give up. You deserve to be heard!

Change takes time and a shift this major may require you asking multiple times, in different ways, with different people.

The good news is you've got the facts on your side there's huge momentum toward plant-forward menus in institutions across the country.

Your community is depending on your leadership so stay in the fight and don't get discouraged!

> There are only two reactions to climate change: resignation or resistance.
>
> *– Jonathan Safran Foer*

Step Three: Promoting Your Cause

If the decision makers didn't immediately agree to your request in your meeting, it's time to start convincing your community to join your cause.

In this section, we'll show you how to ramp up pressure for change and win big for community health.

> **The ways we live our lives, the actions we take and don't take, can feed the systemic problems, and they can also change them.**
>
> – Jonathan Safran Foer

DID YOU KNOW?

1. Of the four highest-impact things an individual can do to tackle climate change, only plant-based eating immediately addresses the most urgently important greenhouse gases.

2. One individual not eating animal products for breakfast and lunch saves 1.3 metric tons per year. Now imagine the impact your whole campus can make!

STEP 3

Encouraging OTHERS

If other students are already on board with your proposed changes, encourage them to speak up! Organize a student meeting with the food service director or other decision maker, have them drop a note to institution leadership, or highlight specific examples of support when you're talking to key decision makers. **The more voices in support of the change, the more likely it is to happen.**

For any students, faculty, or parents who don't yet know the impact the school's menus are having on their health, take the opportunity to share what you've learned. You could **host an educational meeting**, host an informational **table at an event** on campus, or **post to social media** to educate your community. We've found that most people want to eat better, but feel limited by what is available. Help your peers make the connection between healthier menus and healthier choices!

STEP 3

USING *Technology*

THE FASTEST WAY TO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT YOUR CAMPAIGN TO IMPROVE THE MEALS AT YOUR INSTITUTION IS BY GETTING ONLINE.

There are a myriad of ways to advocate for change, but we have found the best advocates take advantage of online tools like petitions, hosting a campaign website, and utilizing social media to recruit new supporters, communicate with followers, and pressure decision makers to negotiate a change.

WEBSITE: Hosting your own advocacy website makes it easy to spread the word about your advocacy, direct people to sign your petition, and encourage them to get more involved. Contact our team if you'd like help building and hosting a website.

PETITION: Petitions are a great way to show decision makers that you have a broad base of support for your cause. We can help you write your petition and host it on a custom website too!

SOCIAL MEDIA: Social media helps you recruit new supporters and spread the word about your cause. It's also an easy and effective way to show decision makers how much this issue matters to your supporters.

{ **CHECK OUT** THE TOOLKIT FOR DIGITAL CAMPAIGNING HOW-TO GUIDES! }

STEP 3

Getting Active ON CAMPUS

Now that you have spread the word digitally, it is the time to start organizing members of your school community to take action on campus.

There are lots of ways to get your community involved in your advocacy work. Here are just some ideas:

* **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**
* **ORGANIZING A DEMONSTRATION**
* **DOOR-TO-DOOR CANVASSING**
* **REACHING OUT TO LOCAL MEDIA**
* **DISTRIBUTING LITERATURE**
* **SPEAKING AT PUBLIC MEETINGS**

The media

is more likely to cover a grassroots demonstration than online organizing, and it increases the pressure on decision makers to negotiate a resolution.

NEED HELP? CHECK OUT OUR HOW-TO GUIDES FOR STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES.

ADVOCACY TIP #3

Keep in Touch

Communication is an essential component of good advocacy. Throughout the process of your campaign for healthier menus, you'll need to be in touch with several groups of people, including your supporters, the school's decision makers, and even members of the media.

It's best practice to update your supporters regularly so they know what is going on and what they can be doing to help.

The same goes for decision makers. Keep them updated on all the work you are doing to build support for your cause in your community. Once they see how many supporters you've earned, they just might be willing to talk again!

> In order to contribute to the creation of the world, rather than its destruction, an individual must act on behalf of the collective. Humankind takes leaps when individuals take steps.
>
> *– Jonathan Safran Foer*

WHEN YOU WIN

You persuaded the key decision makers at your school to commit to balance their menus—congratulations!

Give yourself a pat on the back—all your hard work advocating for change has finally paid off, and your community will now reap the benefits of more health-promoting menus!

Say Thanks!

It's important to thank the decision makers for agreeing to your campaign requests. A nice way to do that is to send handwritten thank you letters to each of them, along with a small, meaningful gift as a token of your appreciation. In general, the more personal you can be, the more meaningful the thanks. Showing your appreciation makes it easier to stay in touch and ensure the changes get implemented in the future.

Be sure to thank your volunteers, petition signers, local media outlets, and any other supporters you earned during the campaign as well.

GET SUPPORT

OUR ORGANIZATION EXISTS TO SUPPORT HEALTHY FOOD CHAMPIONS LIKE YOU!

At any point in the process, you're welcome to contact our Advocacy Team for support.

We're available to help troubleshoot problems, share extra resources, and provide customized guidance and support so that you can make change happen as soon as possible--even with your busy schedule!

Our team is ready to help you with whatever questions you have. Don't hesitate to reach out today!

CONNECT WITH US: ADVOCATE@BALANCED.ORG

THANK YOU

On behalf of the EJF Philanthropies and Balanced teams, thank you for taking on the critical work of improving your school's menus. Your advocacy will save lives and our planet!

CONTACT:

balanced.org
info@balanced.org
816.945.4037

Facebook:
@getbalancednow
@jsfoer

Instagram:
@getbalancednow
@wearetheweather

Twitter:
@getbalanced_now
@watwbook

#eatdifferently

STUDENT ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

RESEARCH CHECKLIST

While it may seem like you know everything about your school, it's worth putting the time in to do some thorough research before moving forward with advocating for change. You might be surprised what comes up!

The following is our most thorough checklist to help guide you through this research. Feel free to only research what is most relevant to you.

RESEARCHING YOUR SCHOOL

- Links to the school's website and social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, and Google and Yelp review pages (as relevant)
- School's location: What major metropolitan areas, public transit centers, landmarks, or other popular attractions is it near? Is it near any landmarks, public transit centers, or other popular attractions? What is the surrounding area like?
- Motto, mission statement, and any other relevant taglines, phrases, or quotes by the institution and its leadership (pay extra attention to anything that emphasizes health, wellness, or being "eco-friendly")
- Who provides the school's food service (is it done in house or by a third party company?)
- Number of meals and/or people served
- Any health- or environment-related policies, initiatives, or partnerships, and a list of news articles, press releases, and other content covering them
- Information about any other groups or advocates already working for change
- President's or other leaders' salary
- Awards the institution has received
- Upcoming events you could attend for outreach

STEP 1

RESEARCH CHECKLIST

When you're preparing to negotiate with key decision makers, it's helpful to gather as much information as you can find about the top leadership at your school so you can build a relationship and connect what they care about with your cause.

RESEARCHING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

- Who are the school's top leaders?

  Find as much info as possible about the top 1 or 2 leaders at the institution. Do they serve on the board of another company or institution? Are they involved with any nonprofits or groups in their local community? Where did they go to college? What is their degree in? Look at their LinkedIn and look for any news coverage of their work to get to know them better.

- Leadership Salary

  This information isn't always available, but in many cases it can be useful — e.g., *"School's President makes $x million a year; they could afford to put their students first"*.

- Environment and Sustainability Professionals

  Look for titles like "Director of Sustainability" "Sustainability Officer or Coordinator" etc.

- Potential allies in the institution

  See if there are any health- or environment-related employees at the institution, such as a professor of nutrition or environmental studies, a faculty advisor for a health-focused or environmental student interest group, campus physicians or nutritionists, sports medicine providers, and more.

SAMPLE POLICY ASK

Given the current state of planetary health, wherein collectively, we have just a few remaining years to reverse course before we experience irreversible climate destruction, there is an urgent need for the foods served in our schools, offices, universities, and hospitals to be more climate-friendly and in line with the advice of leading climate and nutrition experts. With an increasing number of meals being served outside the home, and the many mandated food programs at universities, food service companies and their contract institutions have a responsibility to quickly address the health and environmental crisis to which too many of their foods contribute.

The volume of food served by food service companies and their institutions puts them in a prime position to have a massive, widespread positive impact on the lives of their customers and the planet more broadly. This is why we're calling on them to commit to a meaningful nutrition policy aimed at balancing their menus to be more in line with the recommendations of leading healthcare organizations, nutrition and public health experts, and environmental advocacy groups with the eventual goal of serving entirely plant-based breakfasts and lunches. Knowing that nearly 90% of Americans don't get the amount of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains recommended for optimal health, and that animal agriculture is a leading cause of global warming, there is no excuse for continuing to serve so many meat, dairy, and egg products every day.

SAMPLE TEXT

> *Our ask is that your institution issues a public statement outlining a commitment to replace at least 20% of the meat, poultry, and egg products purchased and served with health- and climate-friendly fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and other plant-proteins over the next two years. Further, they should commit to the eventual goal of serving completely plant-based breakfasts and/or lunches by 2025.*

STEP 2

CONTACTING LEADERSHIP

FIRST CONTACT

Hello (NAME),

I hope this email finds you well. My name is (NAME) and I am (DESCRIBE YOURSELF).

Given the current state of the climate crisis along with the public health epidemics of diseases like heart disease and diabetes, I have no doubt you're already aware of the growing interest in, and demand for, healthier and more planet-friendly alternatives to animal-origin foods high in cholesterol, saturated fat, and sodium. The need for improved options on menus around the country and here in (LOCATION) is of particular concern at this moment in time because of the substantial impact that food choice has on the health and wellness of our community and our planet.

I believe that, like myself, you too are committed to meeting student demand for alternatives to foods associated with climate change such as meat, dairy and eggs. Would you be willing to set up a time to meet to discuss any policies you have for reducing these ingredients in the meals you serve at (SCHOOL)?

I look forward to your response.

SECOND CONTACT

Hello (NAME),

Following up about an email I sent last week seeking to connect about (SCHOOL)'s commitment to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions while promoting better student health. It's important we schedule a time to talk in the near future - I'm happy to accommodate your availability. If I don't hear from you by (TIME), I'll give your office a call.

STEP 2

CONTACTING LEADERSHIP

THIRD/FINAL CONTACT

Hello (NAME),

I am writing to inform you that despite repeated emails, phone calls, and attempts to schedule meetings with you, I have been unsuccessful in securing a time to talk with anyone at (SCHOOL) about your nutrition and environmental initiatives. The evidence for decreasing the amount of unhealthy foods you serve, specifically disease-linked foods like meat, poultry, and eggs, is undeniable.

Students like myself are increasingly aware of the science and nearly everyone is impacted personally by the devastation that diet-related disease, illness, and premature death cause. Unfortunately, without being able to connect with a leader on your team to discuss opportunities for making more climate-friendly and healthier foods more available, and given the urgency these issues require, I will be launching a public awareness campaign aiming to educate members of the school community about this issue.

We deserve to know the impact the food they're being served is having on their health and the planet, especially when we have no choice in the matter, and (SCHOOL) has a responsibility to our community to serve fewer foods known to contribute to climate change and cause heart disease, diabetes, high-blood pressure, and even cancer.

Until (SCHOOL) makes a public commitment to reduce the amount of unhealthy foods it serves, specifically meat, poultry, and eggs by at least 20% and replace them with healthier plant-based alternatives at breakfast and lunch, I will continue to work tirelessly to ensure this community knows the true price of meals served in your cafeterias.

I would prefer to resolve this issue privately and will cease my campaign efforts in the event that (SCHOOL) works to address the glaring issues with its meal offerings. I welcome the opportunity to speak with your team to begin moving forward. I will be in touch as our efforts continue.

STEP 2

GIVING A PRESENTATION

All the researching, communicating, and preparing has finally paid off—it's time to make your case to a decision maker for why your community needs more plant-based menus.

A good presentation does three things in a clear and concise manner:

1. **makes a compelling case for your ask**
2. **clarifies how it benefits the decision maker**
3. **addresses potential barriers**

Plan to give your presentation during your first meeting with decision makers. In your presentation, be sure to communicate that you are seeking to work with the institution's leadership to make these changes. The best way to move forward is as a team, so be polite and positive!

Be prepared to answer questions about cost savings associated with serving more plants and fewer animal products, how the change will impact public perception, how the food staff can implement the change, and how to set a timeline for implementation.

DON'T WORRY!

The team at Balanced can help you prepare your case and walk you through everything you'll need to know to get decision makers on your side. Get in touch for 1-on-1 support at **advocate@balanced.org**

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Use these resources to build your own knowledge as you make the case for replacing meat on the menu.

FOR CLIMATE INFORMATION

We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast by Jonathan Safran Foer

HELPFUL NUTRITION WEBSITES

Nutrition Facts, NutritionFacts.org

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, PCRM.org

PEER-REVIEWED STUDIES

The Journal of American Osteopathic Association, "Is Meat Killing Us?"

New England Journal of Medicine, "Association of Changes in Diet Quality with Total and Cause-Specific Mortality"

For additional peer-reviewed studies, please email info@balanced.org

HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATION STATEMENTS

American Medical Association Resolution 406

American College of Cardiology Resolution, “Planting a Seed: Heart-Healthy Food Recommendations for Hospitals”

The MAYO Clinic, "Boiling Down the Dietary Guidelines"

CDC, “Making the Connection: Dietary Behaviors and Academic Grades”

Brookings, “How the Quality of School Lunch Affects Students' Academic Performance”

STEP 3

DRAFTING A PETITION

The petition is the foundation of your campaign; it's how you're going to show your decision makers that your community wants and demands these changes.

A good petition does three things clearly and concisely:

1. **describes the problem**
2. **provides the solution**
3. **explains why it's needed**

TIPS

Be **specific** and **clear** in your proposed solution and who has the power to make it happen

Make it **personal** and *briefly* explain why this issue is important to *you*

Share it on social media & email, with flyers, and with your school and local media

Get support from us at **advocate@balanced.org**!

STEP 3

BUILDING A WEBSITE

Your campaign website is an important tool that you can share to spread the word about your solution to the issues, direct people to sign your petition, and encourage them to get more involved.

The simplest way to do this is to contact the Balanced team for help at **advocate@balanced.org**! We will take care of the design, hosting, and technology work for you so you can focus on advocating.

If you want to make your own website, we recommend it have the following four things:

1. **a description of the problem**
2. **the solution that's needed**
3. **a link to the petition**
4. **ways folks can get involved**

TIPS

Make the "ask" very clear and towards the top of the page. For example, provide a link to your petition within the first few lines.

When in doubt, less is more. Be concise and simple—we're all busy, so your site is more likely to be read if it's short and to the point.

Ensure the site works on both desktop and mobile. That way, you can reach everybody who needs to see your message.

STEP 3

LEVERAGING MEDIA

Having media coverage to spread the word about your campaign can provide a big boost to your advocacy efforts. Here are some tips for success:

WHAT TO SHARE WITH MEDIA

- Introduce yourself and in 1 or 2 sentences, briefly explain your cause and your campaign (the why, what, and how)
- Share any pushback or response you've gotten from decision makers
- Include a link to your campaign website and petition
- Let them know you're eager to set up a time to connect
- The best way to bring attention to your campaign is by doing a bit of research, drafting a sincere submission email, and reaching out to reporters and news outlets directly

NEWS SOURCES TO CONTACT

- Local newspaper (print/digital), TV news stations, and radio stations (especially NPR affiliates or other news/talk stations)
- Campus media outlets like a student newspaper, radio stations, and more
- Whenever possible, do your research to identify the right program and reach out to the producers online, through email, or via social media

HOW TO REACH MEDIA OUTLETS

- Check their website for a submission form or a general "contact us" form
- Find reporters who have written pieces covering health, schools, or other personal interest stories and contact them directly
- Get on Twitter. Many reporters and news outlets use Twitter to stay up to date on important news, and it's a direct line to many influential reporters
- If you're struggling to get coverage from reporters, try writing an op-ed or a letter to the editor. Some reporters don't have the bandwidth to cover every campaign, but many editors are eager for quality submissions

STEP 3

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
(DATE)

(CITY, STATE)—Monday, students at (INSTITUTION), launched a campaign to get healthier, more climate-friendly foods served in (INSTITUTION). The students called on (INSTITUTION) to provide more servings of fruits, vegetables, legumes, and grains, and fewer servings of the meat, dairy and egg products that have been linked to climate change. The students note that dozens of food service companies like Chartwells and other institutions around the country have already made this change, but (INSTITUTION/ INSTITUTION'S FOOD SERVICE PROVIDER) has yet to do so.

This campaign comes shortly after the EAT Foundation and the United Nations both issued statements calling for the urgent reduction of meat, dairy and egg products consumed in an effort to fight climate change. In addition to these organizations, the students point to leading environmental organizations like Greenpeace, Sierra Club, and Friends of the Earth who have also called for a reduction of animal-source foods as part of a comprehensive strategy to fight climate change. The students say (INSTITUTION)'s menus, which do not reflect these groups' dietary recommendations or the leading environmental evidence.

"When it comes down to it, the food served in our dining halls at (INSTITUTION) falls short of the dietary recommendations made by top environmental, healthcare, nutrition, and public-health organizations," [student leader] said. "In the face of our global climate crisis, balancing our menus is something that must happen before it's too late. Our ask - swapping 20% of the meat, eggs, and dairy served in favor of more plant-forward proteins and other foods —is a simple change (INSTITUTION) can make that will have a positive and meaningful impact on the future of our planet."

(STUDENT ORGANIZERS) encourage individuals who want to support this effort to get involved at their website, (www.WEBSITE.com).

About Student[s]

Contact:
Contact information

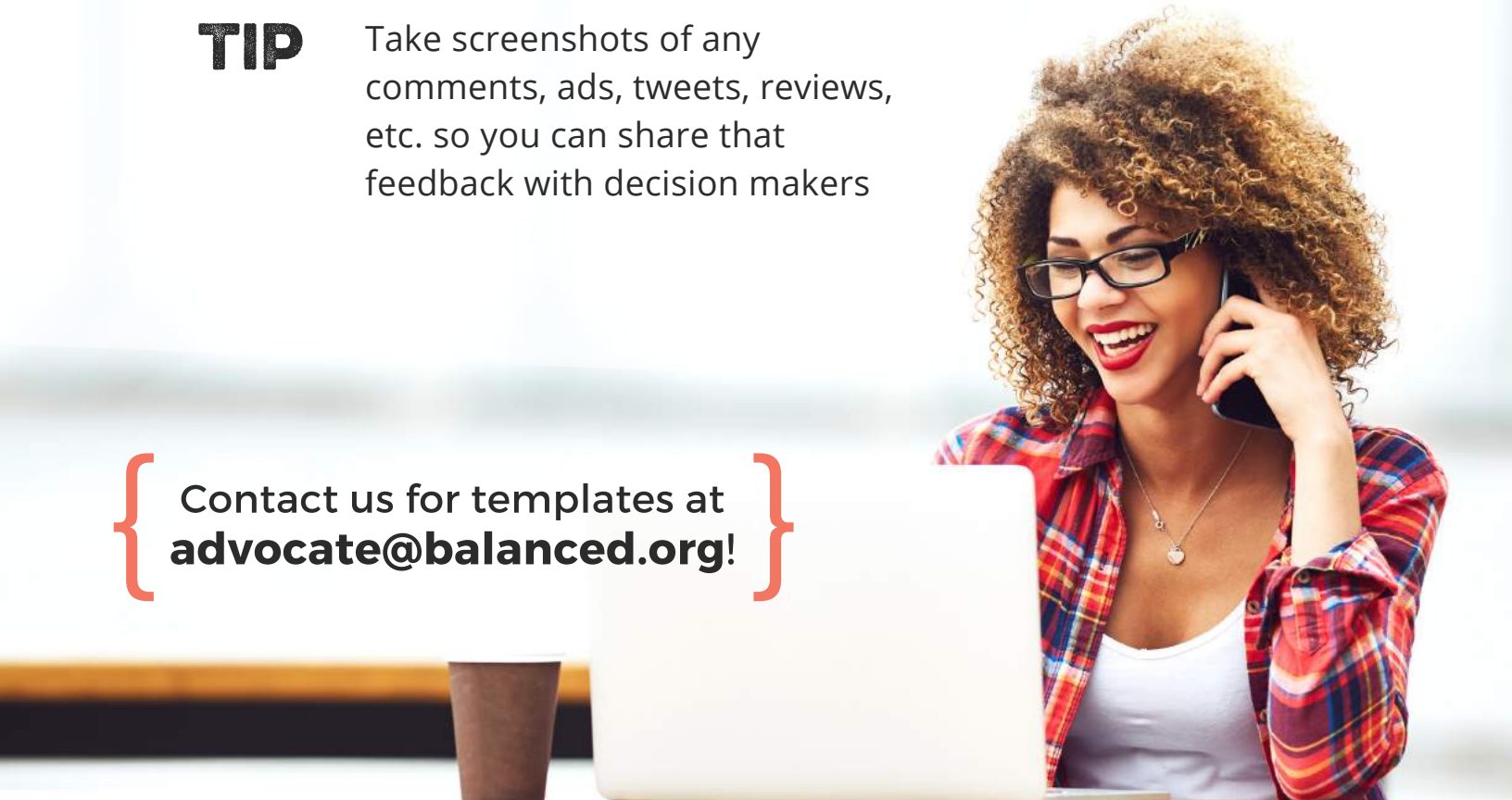
STEP 3

USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a quick and easy way to get the word out about your advocacy. Here are just a few ideas:

- Share graphics/videos
- Share petition & updates
- Recruit new supporters from campus groups
- Write & share blog post, op-ed, or LTE
- Comment on the institution's most recent posts and Live feeds
- Send messages to the institution's page
- Leave a 1-star review on Google or on their page
- Run ads targeting student and/or school leadership
- Host a Facebook/Instagram Live or other video filmed on campus
- Tweet at the institution
- Tweet at top leadership and board members
- Use a free platform for a Twitterstorm

TIP Take screenshots of any comments, ads, tweets, reviews, etc. so you can share that feedback with decision makers



Contact us for templates at **advocate@balanced.org**!

STEP 3

UPDATING DECISION MAKERS

When sending a regular update to a decision maker, be sure to include:

- The current state of the campaign (links to website, news article, etc)
- The momentum you're building, e.g. "*In the time since we last spoke, our team has gathered an additional 200 signatures...*"
- The next phase of your campaign
- Times you're available to meet to discuss the campaign or negotiate a resolution

EXAMPLE

Hello (NAME),

I'm writing to share with you that due to SCHOOL's continued neglect of this pressing public health and environmental issue, my team is entering a new phase of our campaign.

It has now been (TIME) since we first launched our campaign, and we are disheartened that you continue to ignore your students who care deeply about this issue. Since our launch, we have had (#) visitors to our campaign website, with (#) new signatures on our petition demanding (INSTITUTION) prioritize this issue. We have heard feedback from our supporters on social media and on our petition about how important this issue is to them, and I've attached a few samples for you to review.

In the next two weeks, we will be spreading our campaign's message on social media, in person, in the media, and engaging our growing grassroots network to help educate everyone on campus until you and your team commit to making changes.

As I've mentioned before, we would prefer to resolve this issue privately and will cease our campaign efforts in the event that (INSTITUTION) works to take meaningful action towards better public and planetary health through its meal offerings. I welcome the opportunity to speak with your team to begin moving forward. I'm available to meet (TIME).

STEP 3

UPDATING SUPPORTERS

Make sure to keep your supporters updated throughout the campaign process to encourage them to get (or stay!) involved. Each update should include:

A THANK YOU!

Say “thank you” for their support and give a summary of what has been accomplished since the campaign launch or the previous update. You could include the number of new petition signatures, new events or meetings that were organized, or other digital or grassroots campaign efforts that have been made. It is always nice to recognize any accomplishments by stand-out volunteers when appropriate.

> ex: *“This month, your support has helped us make huge progress in our campaign to bring more climate friendly foods to ___!”*

A CALL TO ACTION

- Give a preview of what's coming up for the next month and share 1-3 concrete actions your volunteers can take to continue making a difference.
- Announce any upcoming meetings, protests, or other events.
- Provide a link to the campaign petition along with buttons/links and encourage them to continue to share the petition.

STEP 3

DISTRIBUTING LITERATURE

Distributing leaflets is a great way to get the word out about your campaign and to find potential supporters. Luckily, it happens to be one of the easiest ways to spread the word, too!

All you need is 15 minutes, a stack of leaflets, and a bustling public place to get started. If you've got a few minutes in between classes, you can leaflet!

It can be nerve-wracking to put yourself out there, but try to push through and **remember why you're out here—you're here to save lives and save the planet!** If you need help, it never hurts to bring a friend to join you!

Here are some more tips for effective leafleting:

PICKING A GOOD SPOT

Find a busy, public place to get started. As a general rule, public sidewalks with lots of foot traffic are fair game for leafleting.

Stand in the middle of the sidewalk or foot traffic flow. This will give you the best ability to reach the most people, and it will make you hard to ignore.

MAXIMIZE YOUR IMPACT

Use a quick line, like "Save the planet" or "Better food on campus" to convince people to take the information.

Make the leaflet hard to refuse. Step forward, lean towards them, and extend your arm towards the recipient, placing the leaflet near their hand.

JUST BE FRIENDLY!

Smile and say hi! People are far more likely to take information from somebody who is friendly than not.

Respond with a kind "Have a nice day" if folks say no. That way, the next people will still see you as friendly and will still be interested in taking your information.

STEP 3

WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Writing a letter to the editor can help inform your community about your issue and bring public opinion around to your side.

Your letter will have the best chance of being published if it is brief, informed, and passionate but rational. The goal is to get your community on your side, not just to air any frustrations. Once you've written your letter, make sure to proofread and go back over it to see if anything can be trimmed or condensed.

HOW TO STRUCTURE YOUR LETTER

1

ADDRESS THE EDITOR

If possible, find the name of the editor and address them in your letter. Otherwise, a simple "To the Editor" is fine

2

GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

Draw the reader in with a powerful opening line that gives them a preview of what they're about to read

3

EXPLAIN THE ISSUE

Explain the issue (in this case, public health and climate change) and why it is important simply and briefly

4

GIVE EVIDENCE

Back up your call for change with the facts. Refer to the Helpful Resources page in the toolkit and *We Are the Weather* for specifics

5

PROVIDE THE SOLUTION

Be specific about the solution you propose and how it will benefit the school (and planet!)

6

SIGN YOUR LETTER

Provide your full name, phone number, and email address so the news outlet can follow up

STEP 3

DOOR-TO-DOOR CANVASSING

Canvassing in your campus dorms or in other areas with lots of students and faculty around is a great way to get the word out about your campaign and hopefully earn new supporters!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- a prepared script to start the conversations
- answers to common questions
- campaign literature with a link to the petition
- comfortable shoes and water
- a canvassing buddy (canvassing is safest and most effective with a partner!)

WHAT TO SAY

We recommend structuring your introduction in this order:

1. who you are
2. the purpose of your campaign
3. the current problem
4. how things *should* be
5. your solution
6. what support you need

ENCOURAGE THEM TO TAKE ACTION!

Once you get through your opening script, just follow the natural flow of the conversation and answer any questions they have. Make sure to give your call to action (sign the petition and get involved!)

If they are willing to sign the petition, encourage them to do it either on a sign-up sheet you've brought with you, or on the phone right away - before they forget!

If they are busy, offer to come back later. If they're not interested or not home, leave a leaflet for them to read later.

{ **NEED ADVICE?** Let us help! Email us at **advocate@balanced.org** }

STEP 3

SPEAKING AT EVENTS

Campus forums and meetings are great opportunities to make your message heard by both decision makers, faculty, and fellow students. With some practice and preparation, you can deliver powerful speeches that rally people and decision makers to your cause.

HOW TO PLAN YOUR COMMENTS

1 **INTRODUCE YOURSELF**

Introduce yourself and make a brief, one-line preview of why you're speaking. For example, you could say "I am here today to request your support on my campaign to get this school to serve more plant-forward menus for our health and for the health of our planet"

2 **EXPLAIN THE ISSUE**

Briefly explain the problem, and frame the issue to show how it will benefit the school, your peers, and the planet. For example, serving fewer animal ingredients could lower healthcare costs for employees *and* reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

3 **ADDRESS CONCERNS**

Plan ahead for any arguments someone might make against you. How would you respond if somebody said what you want is too expensive? Add a line into your speech about the cost-savings for the school if they make this change.

4 **ASK FOR ACTION**

Clearly state what you want people to do about it. For the audience, that may be signing your petition. For the decision-makers, it's to get their support behind your cause.

TIPS

If you are organizing a group, make sure that each person's statements provide something new to the conversation. Nobody wants to listen to the same speech again and again!

Appeals to emotion are important, but it's important to not be combative or overly emotional. Making a reasoned argument will earn you more supporters in the long run.

STEP 3

ORGANIZING DEMONSTRATIONS

Organizing, or even attending, a demonstration can feel intimidating, but with these tips, you'll be a pro in no time!

MAKE A PLAN

Take the time early on to think critically about all aspects of the event—proper planning is what ensures your event is effective!

Set up a planning team: We are all busy, and planning events can take time—so find volunteers who can help you with the details.

Pick a smart location and time: Make sure your location is very accessible and has a lot of visibility to foot and/or other traffic. Pick a time of day that will maximize traffic too, like morning rush hour or lunch breaks.

Follow the rules: Check your local laws and campus rules to find out what is required to hold a demonstration. In many cases, it's as simple as just making sure you're on a public sidewalk, not private property!

Plan your message: Take the time early on to plan the tone and message of the event, both on your signs and in conversation with passersby and media.

STEP 3

ORGANIZING DEMONSTRATIONS

REACH OUT

The next step is of course to find people to show up to the protest with you. Encourage the supporters you already have to show up and help spread the word, and continue doing outreach in your community to build awareness on the issue. You can try sending mass emails out to student lists, distributing flyers and putting up posters, building a buzz on social media, connecting with interest groups on campus, and talking to campus media.

Getting the support of local influential people can be a huge help in getting the word out about your event. They'll lend your event credibility, followers, and likely media attention.

Be sure to invite your local media to attend the event itself. That's a fast and easy way to get your message to as many people as possible!

DOCUMENT YOUR EVENT

On the day of the event, take lots of photos and/or videos. This is crucial to maximize your impact even after the protest is over! Consider going live on social media at your event—it's a great way to get attention while your event is happening, and is a useful link to share with decision makers and media after your event is over.

Share photos and videos of your event on social media. Tag any relevant decision makers, and be sure to share the content with local media. Send photos of your event and materials in your next update to key decision makers to keep up the pressure.

FOLLOW UP

With the increased attention you're likely to get after your event, be sure to engage with newcomers to your cause. You can add them to your email lists and find other ways for them to contribute to the campaigns to keep the momentum going!