

Scratch Cooking Training Videos

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Alonso Alonso, Nutrition Services Chef
alonso.alonso@sbcusd.k12.ca.us



Project Summary

In a school district as big as ours, it is very difficult to bring all staff together in one place to do hands-on training, which is why it is important to find innovative ways to bring the training to our staff in a way that is both engaging and informative. Filming recipe videos that show the preparation and cooking process allows us to train our staff more efficiently, and it gives our staff time to watch and rewatch the steps at their own pace. Mounted tablets that are centrally located in the kitchens will also allow staff to review the videos while executing the recipes.



SBCUSD nutrition services staff watching a training video on a tablet



Fresh vegetables

District Background: San Bernardino City Unified School District (CA)

- Located in San Bernardino, CA, about an hour east of Los Angeles
- Composed of 74 schools
- Serves 45,971 students (89.9% socioeconomically disadvantaged, 23.2% English language learners, 82.2% Hispanic, 9% African American)
 - 8th largest public school district in California
- Average daily participation of 36% at breakfast, 69% at lunch, 11% at supper, and 2% for snack
 - 50,000 total meals per day

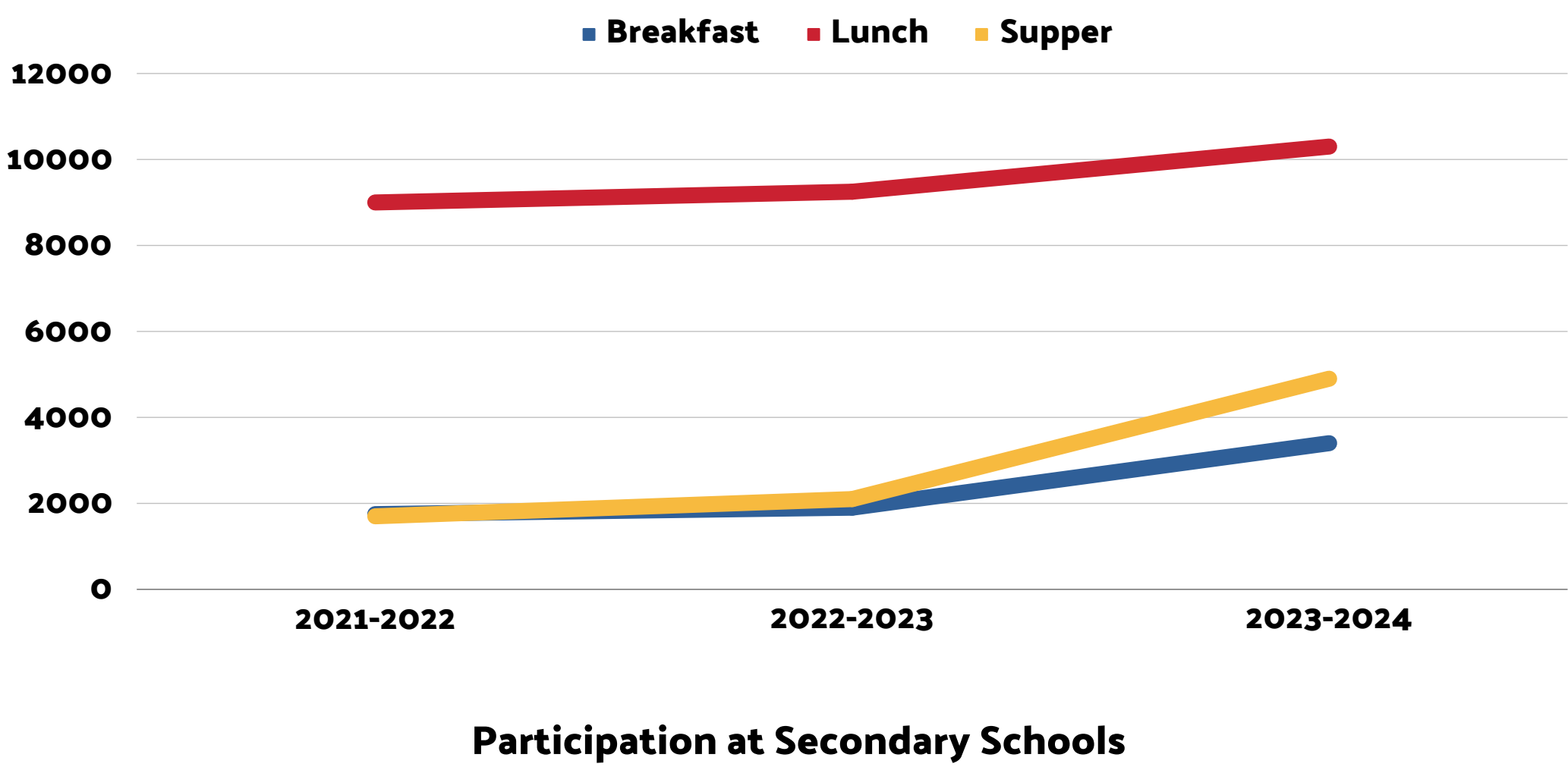
	Breakfast	Lunch	Supper	Snack
ADP by Meal Period (# of students)	16,658	31,671	4,867	823

Goals

- Shoot training videos for every new scratch-cooked menu item
- Increase staff’s confidence to prepare food made from scratch by developing easy-to-follow, step-by-step training videos
- Decrease the quantity of highly processed, frozen items on the menu
- Increase participation by offering menu items from around the world

Successes

- Five training videos were filmed with more planned for the future, including training videos on new equipment such as RobotCoupes and immersion blenders.
- Tablets were purchased and delivered to our six high schools and are now being used to train staff on the new scratch-cooked menu items
- YouTube channel was created to facilitate the sharing of the videos, not just within our nutrition services staff, but also with other school districts that may be looking to implement more scratch cooking in their kitchens.
- Introduced several new menu items and increased lunch participation at secondary schools by 17% this year.



Challenges

- Time – Developing the plan, refining the scope of the project, and purchasing the equipment necessary to shoot the training videos took a long time.
- Staffing – This is not a project that I could accomplish on my own. Some shoots took as many as five people to complete (myself, director, prep staff, IT staff, and editor).
- Shooting location – During work hours, it’s hard to film at a school site because of the traffic and noise levels. As such, some of the filming had to be done before work hours.
- IT – There were several security concerns about how the videos would be shared, specifically on the tablets.
- Budget – The tablets alone took up my entire budget. The rest was an investment that our department made because we saw the value in the training videos.

Next Steps

It was evident from the beginning that this project had the potential to make a positive impact on our scratch cooking efforts, but it also became clear that more thought and money had to go into it to take it to the next level. As such, our director has made the decision to invest in remodeling our training center so that we can have a fully equipped kitchen where I can train our staff hands-on, but also have a private space to continue shooting more training videos.

Developing Staff to Enable Scratch Cooking

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Kelsey Berrini, Assistant Director of Nutrition Services
BerriniK@eths202.org



Project Summary

Evanston Township High School (ETHS) plans to expand its scratch-cooked menu options to include at least one item for every meal service. To help achieve this goal, we created an annual professional development schedule that will provide carefully crafted group training sessions to our staff. These sessions will be recorded for new staff and will cover key topics such as Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), knife skills, cooking with raw proteins, best practices with current equipment, and plant-forward recipes. These training sessions will help staff gain the confidence to execute recipes successfully and safely, improving the overall quality and perception of school food.



ETHS Nutrition Services staff preparing a salad



Veggie brown rice & bean burrito

District Background: Evanston Township High School District 202 (IL)

- ETHS District 202 is a four-year (9-12), comprehensive high school, occupying a 65-acre campus in Evanston, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago along the Lake Michigan shore.
- Single-school district with four student cafeterias, three on-campus satellite locations, and one staff cafeteria. Also services 19 nearby Evanston/Skokie K-8 District 65 elementary, magnet, and community preschool schools
- 3,593 students: 0.3% Native American, 4.5% Asian, 24.1% Black/African-American, 20.2% Hispanic/Latino, 0.1% Native Hawaiian, 6.4% Two or More Race, 44.4% White
- Serves over 3,100 meals per day

Goals

- Offer a scratch-cooked menu with a minimum of one item per meal service by January 2024
- Create an annually recurring all-staff professional development schedule
- Empower staff to interpret and execute recipes safely
- Record all-staff training sessions to share with new hires throughout onboarding
- Implement a procedure to intermittently review staff on content learned during hands-on training

Successes

- All staff members participated in four hands-on training sessions: Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)/Food Safety training, Menus of Flavor: East and South East Fusion workshop, a CL 50 ULTRA Robot Coupe workshop, and Slicer/Bowl Food Processor training.
- Our menus for the academic year 2023-2024 not only met our goal of offering at least one scratch-made entree per weekday for breakfast, lunch, and supper, but exceeded it with more than 50% scratch-made choices and 10% speed scratch options over the week.
- New scratch entrees have contributed to impressive growth in at-risk supper demand – our claim analysis rose by over 300% this Fall compared to last school year
- ETHS nutrition staff are more confident and proficient in following scratch recipes that involve diverse cooking techniques and equipment, showing an improvement in their culinary skills and reflecting the project’s success in promoting staff growth.



Dishes prepared during the Menus of Flavor training

Challenges

- Scheduling staff training has been challenging due to limited contractor availability, competing schedules with similar schools, and the need to forecast lighter school days for after-shift training.
- Some organizations prohibit photos and videos during training, which makes our goal for future staff onboarding via recorded workshops challenging.
- It can be challenging for a trainer to meet the unique needs of a group with varying baseline knowledge of cooking and equipment, as each individual learns differently.
- We have around 22 staff members participating in the trainings, and it would have been more effective to work in smaller groups. However, it was not feasible to request multiple trainers from the same organization to train at the same time.

Next Steps

Although the Fellowship has come to a close, we remain committed to prioritizing staff development. We will continue working with content area experts to provide high-quality training sessions. All training will be followed up with hands-on practice and intermittent review by department leadership, demonstrating that we value the changes staff are making. Furthermore, we will endeavor to emphasize the concept of sustainability by modifying our existing scratch recipes to incorporate more locally-grown produce and produce from ETHS wherever possible.

A Bite of Sabalu Market

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Erin Angela Camacho, Child Nutrition Program Nutritionist
erinangela.camacho@cnmipss.org



Project Summary

My capstone project evolved from standardizing 10 new vegetable recipes for food production purposes into reimagining the way we interact with our students to engage them, excite them, and gather their feedback on the food we serve—specifically vegetables. We implemented large taste testing sessions during lunch at Dandan Middle School and created new standard operating procedures for the taste test setup, display, and service. We also electronically captured quantitative and qualitative student feedback. In addition to the taste tests, we used multiple concurrent marketing approaches to promote the tastings and grow engagement. We combined interactive (eating and conversation) and sensory activities (tasting and music), nutrition and farm education, merchandising, and multiple feedback opportunities to involve our students in this process.



Radish sample with sign

District Background - Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Public School System (NMI)

- Located in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (Saipan, Tinian, and Rota), an archipelago in the Pacific Ocean that is a U.S. commonwealth
- Composed of 20 public schools, 9 Head Start centers, 6 Early Head Start centers, and 19 private schools and daycare centers on all three islands
- Serves about 15,000 students
- Average daily participation (ADP) of 5,622 breakfasts, 8,602 lunches, and 8,732 snacks; all meals are currently produced and delivered by five contracted food service companies on Saipan, one on Rota, and one on Tinian

Goals

- Standardize 10 new local vegetable side dish recipes for tasting and eventual menu incorporation, including procurement, recipe/nutrition, and food production procedures
- Introduce at least 100 students to at least 5 new vegetable recipes created with locally grown vegetables
- Incorporate current trends and pop culture into the marketing and promotion of our tasting activities (i.e., fusing trending pop, rap, hip-hop songs into both the recipe names and the tasting promotion)
- Redesign the taste tests to increase the sample size for statistical significance while introducing new language to help students keep an open mind to new foods and flavors

Successes

- Used new technology to capture and analyze real-time qualitative and quantitative student feedback (iPads, Google Forms, and Google Sheets)
- Developed deeper, more meaningful, and more memorable relationships with specific students who are now excited to act as ambassadors for the meal program and special promotions
- Food merchandising was a hit! Used a mix of modern, contemporary, and playful handwritten signage (similar to Trader Joe’s, Whole Foods’, and Starbucks’ approaches) to appeal to students visually while also providing nutrition education at the point of service
- The majority of all students who sampled the pumpkin recipe tasted pumpkin for the very first time
- Achieved over 50% acceptability for every new vegetable recipe sampled (acceptability ratings ranged from 52%-94%, which is a major victory for veggies!)

Recipe	Vegetables (English Chamorro Refaluwasch)	Acceptability % (Loved it and Liked it combined)
Big Bean Energy	Long Bean Fiolis Fiyoolis	93.6%
Pumpkin Oh My	Pumpkin Kalamasa Ghalamaasa	52.4%
Hey Ya! (Eggplant)	Eggplant Birengenas Birengenas	92.6%
The Real Sweet Potato	Sweet Potato Kamuti Ghómwuuti	62.1%
Lil Boo Taro	Taro Suni Woot	63.8%
About Squash Time	Squash Kalabâsa Ghalamaasa	77.0%
Ready For It? (CNP’s Version)	Radish Radis Daikon	80.3%
Breadfruit Magic	Breadfruit Lemmai Mááy	73.3%

Challenges

- Setup/display and location of the taste tests
- Availability of the local vegetables
- Assessing the acceptability of the flavor profiles – Some items had inherent handicaps, such as vegetables not being as popular as fruits to begin with or newly introduced vegetables like purple sweet potato and pumpkin having a disadvantage prior to tasting
- Scheduling conflicts for the taste tests – Timing of the taste tests conflicted with extremely limited meal service duration times (sometimes a total of 10-15 minutes for both line queue + service and consumption)
- Limited qualitative data – Secondary survey for more detailed, open-ended written feedback was completed optionally on students’ own time; therefore we had almost six times fewer qualitative than quantitative survey responses

Next Steps

We will incorporate six local vegetable recipes as weekly offerings in the cycle menu: long beans, eggplant, sweet potato, taro, radish, and breadfruit. We will continue to gather plate observation data between Dandan Middle School (DMS) and three other middle schools, which will help determine the success of student engagement through taste testing at DMS versus the other middle schools with no student engagement. We will also create high quality posters with the slogan “A Bite of Sabalu Market” to promote the local vegetables being served on the line that day. As we grow our Farm To School program, we will start building relationships with farmers and conducting crop planning to supply each food service company with the local vegetable chosen for the upcoming school year.

PPHS Salad Bar Implementation

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Shana Cash, Sr. Health & Wellness Manager & Director of Food Services
scash@pphs.purdue.edu



Project Summary

Scratch cooking nourishes the minds and bodies of students. Salad bars are the “low hanging fruit” of scratch cooking. That’s why all schools should have salad bars! Through my Fellowship capstone project, Purdue Polytechnic High School (PPHS) launched its first salad bar at PPHS Englewood in the Fall of 2023 and will launch its second salad bar at PPHS Broad Ripple in 2024.

PPHS Food Service is in the midst transitioning to self-operation in Indianapolis, where we are fundraising to build a central kitchen. Currently, a Food Service Management Company (FSMC) is contracted to operate the school nutrition program.



PPHS Community Health Worker preparing local apples for distribution among students

District Background - Purdue Polytechnic High School (IN)

- Located in Indianapolis and South Bend, IN
- Composed of 3 campuses in Indianapolis and 1 in South Bend
- Serve approximately 1,000 students as a small but growing public charter school network
- Average daily participation of 20-75% across the 4 campuses
 - All students can eat for free under the Community Eligibility Provision.



Goals

- Increase the number of students eating fresh, high-quality fruits and vegetables
- Catalyze relationships with local growers to connect farm to school and be able to offer local produce options on the salad bars
- Establish a self-service salad bar in production as part of daily meal service at PPHS Englewood (by December 31, 2023) and PPHS Broad Ripple (by April 1, 2024)



The kind of well-stocked, visually appealing salad bar we are aiming to have

Successes

- Launching the salad bar is a significant step toward healthier, fresher meal options for PPHS students. Thanks to the salad bar, students can see that their voices are heard and that we are working for them!
- Golden Quote: “I had some salad from the new salad bar, and it was actually fresh!” ~ PPHS Englewood student
 - More Fresh Fruit and Vegetables: Prior to the salad bar, students were limited to carrots, broccoli, apples, and oranges.
 - Local Produce: Local lettuce, carrots, and apples served, with plans to introduce Harvest of the Month in the future.
 - Taste Tests: PPHS students have never had taste tests until this year!
 - Baseline Data Established: We will be able to track and compare student fruit and vegetable consumption over time, tailor options to their preferences, and expand palates!

Challenges

- Buy-in from FSMC: FSMC leadership has been resistant to change. When they decided not to stock the salad bar when school resumed in January 2024, we placed an order through the Indiana Local Food for Schools (LFS) pilot and are discussing communication and expectations going forward.
- Facilities: 3 of 4 PPHS campuses do not have adequate kitchen facilities. We are fundraising to build a central kitchen to serve our Indianapolis locations.
- Lack of Familiarity with Local Produce: Local lettuce went to waste because kitchen staff thought it was spinach, didn’t think students would like it, and didn’t serve it.
- Portion Control: Students are not used to a self-service option.
- Service Line Speed: Self-service has increased service line time.

Next Steps

Since PPHS is still in the early stages of salad bar implementation, next steps include continuous training for students on the proper use of salad bars, portion sizes, and the components of a complete, reimbursable meal. We also intend to incorporate a Harvest of the Month to highlight local food and the growers who make it possible.

The Smoke House Project

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Nick Dramis, Supervisor of Culinary Operations
NDramis@mjuds.k12.ca.us



Project Summary

Smoking food is generally associated with southern barbeque or even grilling, but it can be so much more. Smoking is defined as, “the process of flavoring, browning, cooking, or preserving food by exposing it to smoke from burning or smoldering material, most often wood.”

With a focus on lower-temperature indirect cooking while infusing wood smoke, can we offer our students more diverse flavors and recipes inspired by Classic Texas, Traditional Southern, and Cal-Mex cuisines? Can a student population that is passionate about the outdoors and steeped in a strong agricultural history appreciate and enjoy this type of cooking from their school? And can we provide staff that may traditionally lack knowledge in the higher levels of culinary techniques a path for success in executing these recipes?



Green Chile Mac & Cheese



BBQ Carrot “Burnt Ends”

District Background: Marysville Joint Unified School District (CA)

- Located in historic California Gold Country in the county of Yuba, approximately 40 miles north of Sacramento, and serving the city of Marysville, as well as the areas of Linda, Olivehurst, Challenge-Brownsville, Dobbins, Loma Rica, and a part of Plumas Lake
- Composed of 15 kitchen production sites and 22 serving sites
- Serves a diverse population of more than 11,200 TK-12 students, making us the second largest district in the Yuba Sutter area and one of the larger in the greater Sacramento Valley
- Average daily participation of 38% for breakfast and just over 50% for lunch, for about 11,000 meals per day

Goals

- Introduce Marysville High School students to new menu options that center around infused smoke flavor, with the hope that they will accept and consistently select
- Increase daily participation by 15-20% at Maryville High School on the featured smoker recipe day.
- Create 4-5 new recipes that highlight bold flavors, regional diversity, and include a strong focus on vegetables and plant-based options.
- Expansion of initial catalog of recipes to include raw proteins as well.



Successes

- Recipes were first taste-tested with approximately 15 staff members and were well received with valuable feedback.
- First tasting event with 120 students resulted in a nearly 80% acceptance rate across the four smoker-created recipe options sampled: Smoked Chicken & Sweet Pepper Quesadilla, BBQ Carrot “Burnt Ends”, Smoky Cowboy Caviar, and Green Chile Mac & Cheese



BBQ Carrots “Burnt Ends” in the smoker



Smoked Chicken & Sweet Pepper Quesadilla

Challenges

- Creating new recipes that are simple enough to execute but also popular with the majority of the students
- Keeping the process and quality consistent during staff shortages
- Effectively training a few key staff members to be the point persons for the smoker recipes
- Continually expanding the program with recipe creation and evolution, introducing new ingredients, and keeping the overall “wow” factor

Next Steps

“The Smoke House Project” will offer our department an ongoing opportunity to increase participation and stoke excitement for the new options we offer. We will use smoked animal and plant proteins not only in their pure forms, but also added to sandwiches, nachos, soups, or even salads. Smoked vegetables sides, cold-smoked cheeses, or something as basic as smoking the Polish sausages we use in our fresh-made Pigs in a Blanket are just a few examples of the ways we can enhance basic ingredients and add another level of flavor with minimal effort. Depending on the success of this program, we will look to expand by purchasing an additional smoker for our second high school and/or for one or more of the middle schools.

Salad Bars – Increasing Access to Local, Fresh Produce

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Liz Estavillo Valdez, Director of Child Nutrition Services
lestavillo@bassettusd.org



Project Summary

Salad bars are a great way to increase meal participation, supplement student access to an abundant variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, and promote consumption of local produce. My capstone project was to procure and implement salad bars at all four elementary schools and the middle school in my district. Prior to this project, only the high school had a daily salad bar, but numerous students and administrators from other sites have expressed interest in having a salad bar. Once the salad bars and necessary serving pans and utensils were procured, intensive training and support was provided to successfully roll out the salad bar at each site.



Breakfast salad bar stocked with apples, apple juice, and bananas

District Background - Bassett Unified School District (CA)

- Located in La Puente in southern California
- Composed of two K-5 elementaries, two K-8 elementaries, one 6-8 middle school, and two 9-12 high schools (one of which is a continuation HS), along with 7 cafeterias throughout the district, which does not have a central kitchen
- Serves 2,878 K-12 students and 225 Head Start students (student body is composed of 92% Hispanic population), making us one of the smallest districts in the area
- Average daily participation (ADP) district-wide of 33% at breakfast and 86% at lunch

Goals

- Provide greater daily access to local fresh fruits and vegetables and empower kids to try new items and make healthy choices
- Increase school lunch participation
- Expand fresh vegetable consumption
- Raise awareness about positive food changes being made for the students



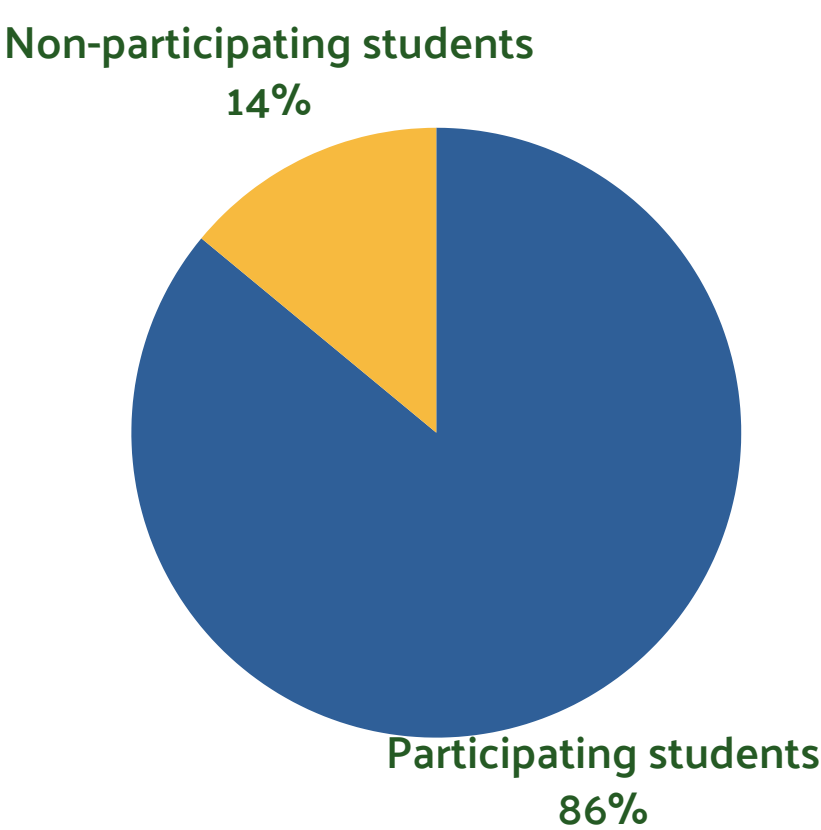
Lunch salad bar with fresh fruits and vegetables



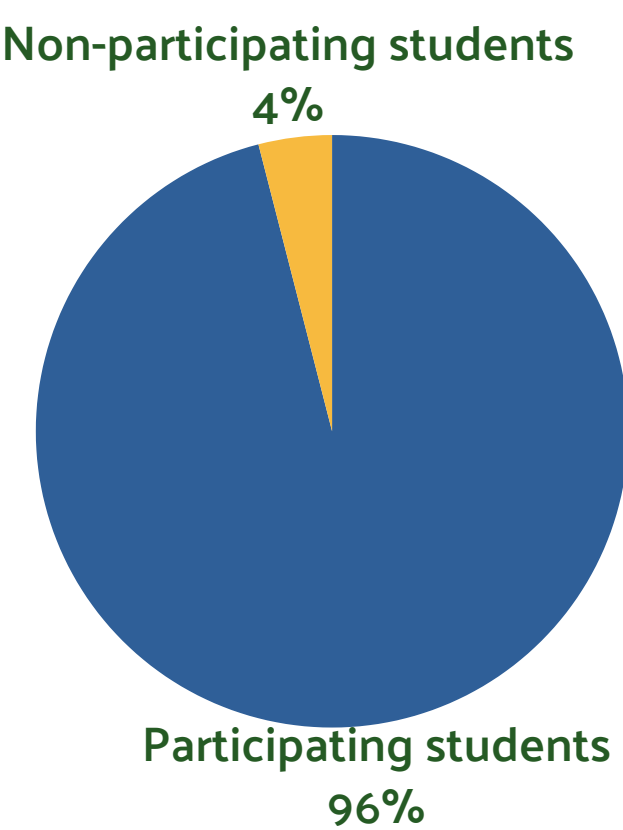
Close-up of lunch salad bar

Successes

- Student lunch participation - During the first week of implementation, participation increased 10%, from 86% to 96% of enrolled students partaking in lunch
- Salad bar uptake – Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of all students participating in lunch utilized the salad bar
- Fresh produce consumption – Students took more produce when allowed to customize their selection combinations
- Community support – School administrators, teachers, staff, and parents support salad bars
- Access and awareness – Developed creative ways to introduce the salad bar produce



Lunch ADP prior to salad bar implementation



Lunch ADP after salad bar implementation

Challenges

- Limited space at K-8 schools didn't allow for full-sized salad bars
- Getting food service staff on-board due to the additional time required to set up the salad bar and track servings provided
- Increased waste of uneaten produce from salad bar
- Creating a plan to lessen impacts on meal serving time

Next Steps

Going forward, we will strengthen our salad bar program in several ways. We will create themed and seasonal salad bar cycle menus to keep interest in the salad bar (e.g., taco salad day, grilled veggie salad day, etc.). We will also continually develop new recipes and conduct periodic taste testings with students for potential new salad bar offerings. Finally, we will conduct quarterly student surveys to evaluate student requests and periodic plate waste studies to reevaluate salad bar offerings.

Scratch Summer

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Tricia Kastelitz, Coordinator of Nutrition and Student Wellness Education
TriciaKastelitz@spsk12.net



Project Summary

My project aimed to alleviate some of the most common challenges faced when transitioning to scratch cooking in schools: foodservice staff training, recipe development, and – the largest of all – time. This summer, we were able to use our Summer Academy program as a testing ground for new scratch recipes, staff training, and targeted marketing efforts.

In phase one of my capstone project, Scratch Summer, we successfully introduced and refined new scratch recipes, including items like tacos with local beef, African-inspired stewed chicken, and spicy tuna bowls. This phase also included providing skills training, assessing workflow changes, and actively seeking student feedback through taste tests. Phase two involved navigating transitional challenges on a smaller scale, paving the way for informed decisions on the overall menu for the 23-24 school year.



SCPS Nutrition team member preparing local ground beef walking tacos

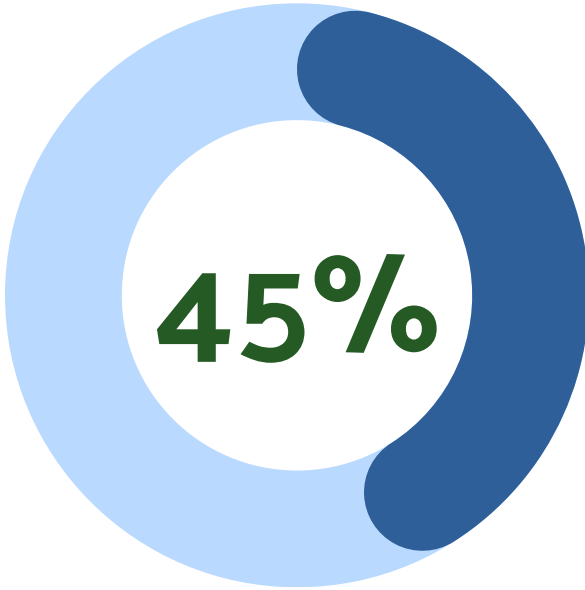


SCPS Nutrition team members with a tray of chicken masala served with flat bread and brown rice

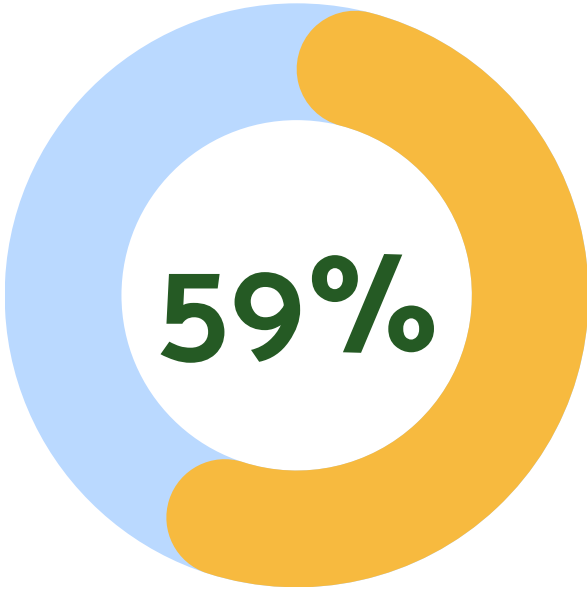
District Background: Suffolk City Public Schools (VA)

- Located in Suffolk, a city in southeastern Virginia
- Composed of 20 Schools
- Serves 14,500 students (CEP district-wide)
 - Medium-sized district bordering large districts like Virginia Beach to the east and small, rural districts of only 3-6 schools to the west
- 15,000 meals served daily

Average daily participation (ADP) at Suffolk City Public Schools



Breakfast



Lunch

Goals

- Standardize a range of recipes for breakfast and lunch, from smoothies to cold Asian noodle salads and vegetarian entrees.
- Conduct staff training to enable successful implementation of the new recipes
- Collect student feedback on the new recipes
- Implement marketing to promote our scratch cooking

Successes

- Local Sourcing - Served scratch-cooked chili and taco meat utilizing local ground beef from a farm 15 miles away and bonus USDA Great Northern Beans
- #WorldWideWednesday - Featured a culturally inspired dish each Wednesday during Summer School. Dishes were incredibly well received by students, staff, and our community:
 - Jerk Chicken - utilizing USDA 8-piece chicken, adapted from Cambridge PS
 - African-Inspired Stewed Chicken - utilizing USDA diced chicken, adapted from CIGN recipe
 - Chicken Masala - utilizing USDA diced chicken, adapted from The Lunch Box
 - Asian Dumplings and Oven-Fried Rice
 - Spicy Tuna Bowl - utilizing USDA tuna



Jerk Chicken



Spicy Tuna Bowl

Challenges

- Procuring sufficient local ingredients - Started buying 300 lbs per month from our local beef vendor; now buying 500 lbs per month, which is their max capacity but only covers our high schools. Need to secure approximately another 2,000 lbs to be able to feed all of our students local ground beef.
- Social media negativity - Social media can result in negative comments, no matter what you post.
- Staff training - Training our entire staff is more challenging as there are varying levels of skill, motivation, and openness to change.

Next Steps

With a commitment to local ingredients and a keen eye on sustainability, this initiative is driven by a genuine desire to contribute to the well-being of students. The future of the project is to continue my focus on implementing the scratch-forward menu for breakfast and lunch at all school locations and grade levels. This involves not only introducing new dishes but also offering more skills training and evaluating workflow changes needed for staff. Seeking active student feedback through taste tests will be instrumental in refining menu changes, paving the way for a successful, long-term transition toward scratch cooking.

Cooking School Lunch in a Combi

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023



Randal “RJ” Lane, District Chef
randal.lane@wccusd.net

Project Summary

A combination - or combi - oven cooks better food, faster. School lunch lacks efficiency and quality, and a combi oven helps fix that! We piloted cooking with combi ovens in our district by installing a combi oven at one site, De Anza High School. With proper staff training, this oven allows us to improve the quality of existing items and introduce new scratch-cooked items like rotisserie-style chicken. We will continue to collaborate with students to develop new menu items they are excited to eat.



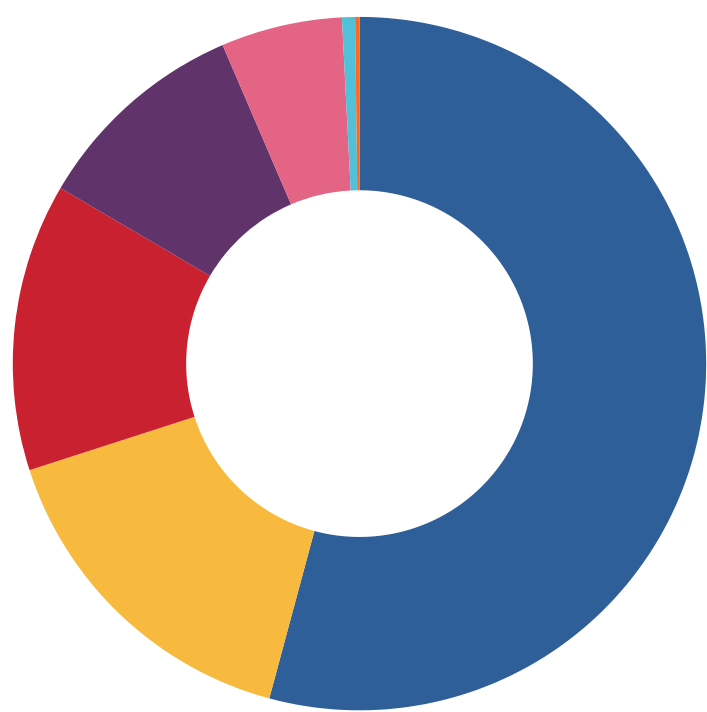
Chef RJ checking the temperature of scratch-cooked rotisserie-style chicken



Newly installed combi oven

District Background: West Contra Costa Unified School District (CA)

- Located in the San Francisco East Bay, just north of Berkeley, CA
- Composed of 56 sites served by the Central Kitchen
- Serves 29,672 students, across 7 cities
- Average daily participation (ADP) of 11,000
- Students on free or reduced-price lunch: 31%
- Students learning English (average) 36.4%



- 53.7% Hispanic/Latino
- 15.7% Asian or Asian Pacific Islander
- 13.3% Black or African American
- 10.9% White
- 5.6% Two or more races
- 0.6% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native

Enrollment by Diversity

Goals

- Install a combi oven at one site to improve the staff’s ability to produce fresh food efficiently
- Train staff to use and maintain the oven
- Empower staff to create new ways to use this powerful tool to benefit their particular school and schedule
- Launch and maintain a rotisserie-style chicken program at the school
- Replicate this model in other schools



Combi oven at De Anza High School

Successes

- Conducted staff training, and staff were blown away by the combi
- Improved food yield and quality: crispier fries, juicier chicken, and no unpleasantly “crispy” pizza
- Increased fresh-cooked food percentage
- Increased average daily participation at the site



Raw chicken



Scratch-cooked rotisserie-style chicken

Challenges

- Time constraints due to the necessity of working with district labor partners to proceed with utilities and site preparation
- Lack of clear directions from manufacturers/equipment representatives about site preparation requirements
- Delay caused by fall-off in communication with our first manufacturer to begin the process of ordering and installation

Next Steps

We are currently looking at moving forward with installation in three other locations. Looking forward, the biggest challenge will be finding sites that have adequate utilities in order to operate a combi oven. Once we have the combi ovens in place, we are also looking at getting dishwashers and even blast chillers at these sites to increase their ability to serve as satellite kitchens, working with the Central Kitchen to support other schools across the district.

Farm to School - Connecting Students to Their Meal Program

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Christina Lawson, Food Service Director
clawson@wpusd.org

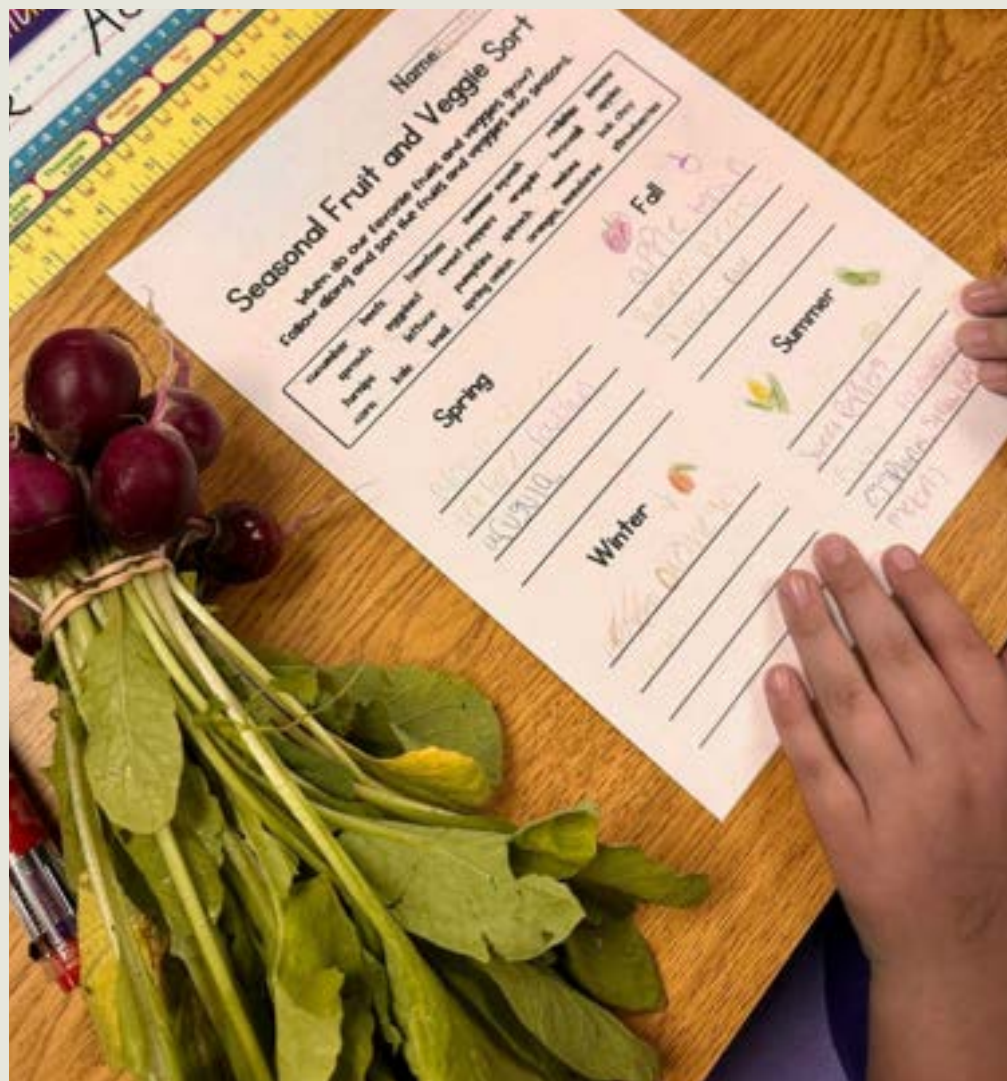


Project Summary

To make scratch cooking possible, we need to create opportunities to connect our students to their food and where it comes from. My capstone project focused on creating nutrition education experiences for all students to deepen their connection to their food and encourage them to participate in our school meals program. We achieved this by offering Farmer Visits, Harvest of the Month Tastings, Guest Chef Classes, and Meet our Chef opportunities, all of which exposed students to locally grown produce and scratch-made meal selections.



Fall pasta with locally made pasta and local dino kale covered in a cream sauce prepared by WPUSD Chef Adrian Padilla.



Seasonal fruit and veggie worksheet

District Background - Western Placer Unified School District (CA)

- Located in Lincoln, CA, on the north side of Sacramento
- Composed of 14 schools and 12 kitchens
- Serves 7,926 students
- Average daily participation (ADP) of 1,200 at breakfast and 4,200 at lunch

Goals

- Increase our students’ exposure to different locally produced items and create familiarity with various selections before offering them on our cafeteria line.
- Create experiences that allow students to connect with the food being offered and encourage them to participate in our scratch-made meal program.
- Facilitate meaningful opportunities for students to connect with their food and to learn where and how it was produced, allowing us to increase and improve the variety of our school meal offerings.
- Provide students the opportunity to have a voice in school meals and let us know what they would like to see from their student meal service program.

Successes

- Farmer Visits - Elementary students were more willing to take produce items after connecting with local farmers to taste teste new fruits/veggies and learn where their food comes from.
- Harvest of the Month Tastings - Elementary students could try a variety of local fruits and vegetables in a fun setting and vote on whether they enjoyed it or not. Taste tests drove an increase in consumption of the different fruits or veggies on our salad bars.
- Guest Chef Classes - Secondary students learned about a new produce item and executed a recipe with that item, giving them an opportunity to connect with our Harvest of the Month item and learn about potential culinary career opportunities.
- Meet our Chef - High school students had small group interactions with our district chef, Adrian, who used these opportunities to develop new recipes, get input on our menus, and gain insight into future farm to school education events our students would like to see.



Challenges

- Time - Coordinating between the farms, chefs, and sites was time-intensive. Keeping these nutrition education experiences going would need to be someone’s full time job.
- Farms/Chefs - Having a large enough network of local farmers and chefs who are interested in partnering on these efforts was initially a challenge until we worked with our region’s CDFA Farm to Fork representative to help us find chefs and farmers to partner with us.
- Site Participation - Not every site was interested in having a farmer or chef visit for various reasons. We adapted offering the various experiences to a wider range of sites and grades.

Next Steps

- Apply for a CDFA grant so we can pilot a Farm to School Coordinator position for our department.
- Reach out to local farm to school non-profits that are doing this work to see if they would partner with us to facilitate the grant-funded Farm to School Coordinator position.
- Secure funding, hire a Farm to School Coordinator through a third party, pilot this program, and continue to deepen our students’ connection to their food!

Project Summary

Two selected campuses (Bryan and Mims Elementary) were provided the opportunity to join the other 12 elementary schools in the district in receiving fruit as a nutritious snack and an educational opportunity for students to try new fruits. Teachers and campus administration were also encouraged to “model” the benefits of the fruit provided to the students.

The fruits served included strawberries, Asian pears, and persimmons and were the same as what the other elementary schools chose through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP). With collaboration from the administration at the two selected campuses, we are monitoring the feasibility of sustaining a long-term program.



School food staff member distributing fresh fruit to students

District Background: Mission Consolidated Independent School District (TX)

- Located in Mission, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley, 10 miles from the Rio Grande River and Mexico
- Composed of 22 campuses (14 elementaries, 4 junior highs, 1 alternative high school, 3 early college high schools) with 1 central kitchen
- Serve about 14,000 students (one of the smaller districts in the area)
- Average daily participation (ADP):
 - 8,500 breakfasts (Second Chance Breakfast available at the high school),
 - 10,750 lunches, and
 - 4,500 suppers

Goals

- Educate students, teachers, and campus administration on varieties of fruits not common in the area.
- Coordinate with the Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Buyer to determine if ongoing procurement of fruits, outside of HSFP funds, is feasible in limited amounts.
- Increase marketing at the district and campus levels to increase interest and participation.
- Use pilot testing to increase buy-in from CNP and campus administration for adoption of alternate choices of fresh fruit on the menu.

Successes

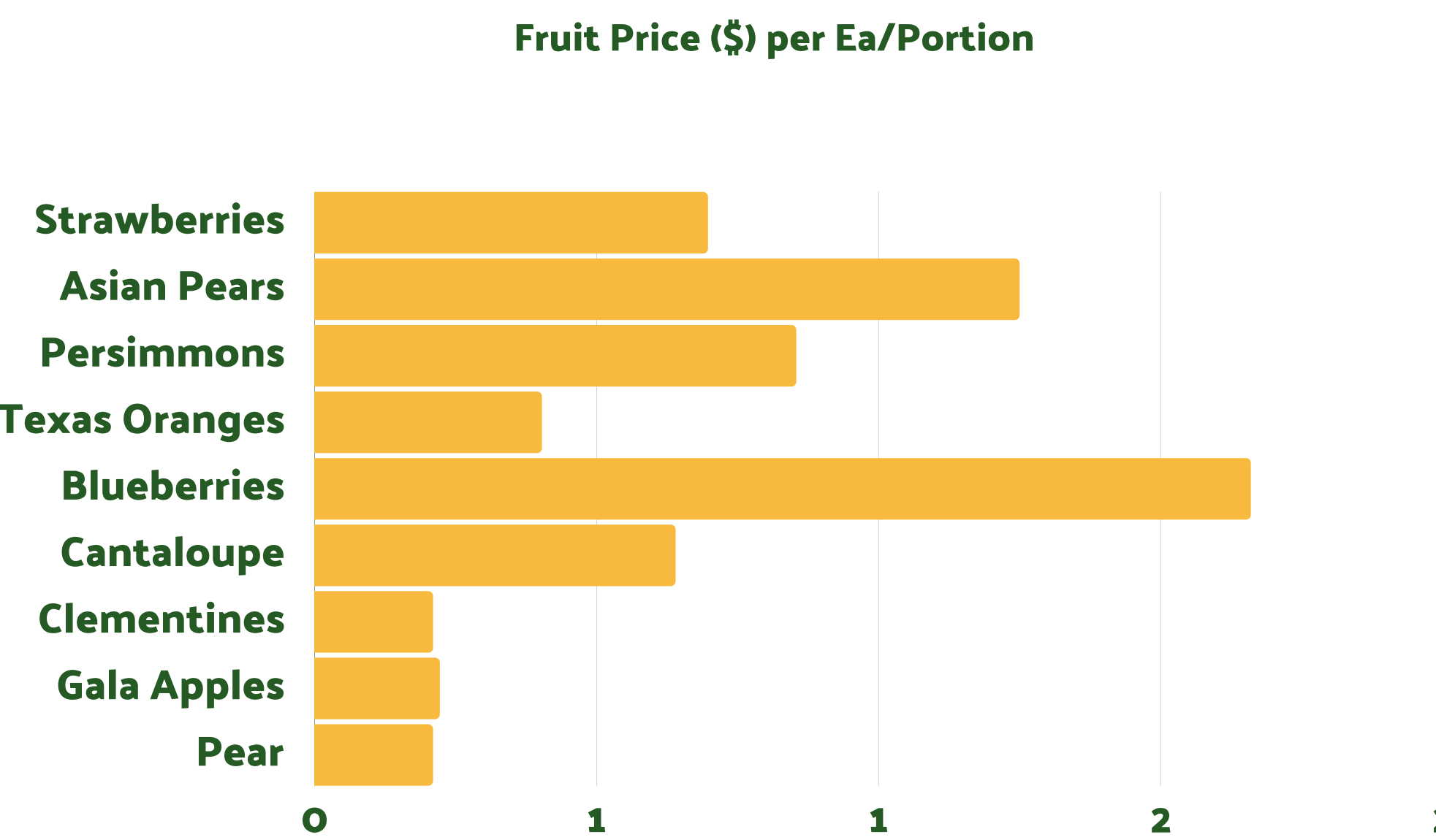
- Students, teachers, and campus administration were pleased with the fruit provided, especially the Asian pear and the persimmon. Many students and faculty had never seen nor eaten persimmons, so promotional and educational materials were provided for both students and faculty.
- Each rotation of the strawberry, Asian pear, and persimmon returned with no leftovers (any fruit that was left over could be provided as an extra fruit in the next day’s lunch service).
- Both the FFVP and this capstone have increased our interest in and ability to provide newer, different fruits and vegetables to students. New recipes and varieties will be investigated to continue to provide increased variety to students.

Next Steps

We are motivated to continue to increase participation in Lunch and Supper meal service programs to increase reimbursement. Reimbursement funds will aid in the selection and service of high-quality produce. CNP will continue to pursue different fruits and vegetables from the FFVP that can be implemented into regular service. CNP will continue to reach out to local and state produce vendors in order to receive the best fresh produce possible for the students.

Challenges

- Acceptability of the fruit options among students - Sample fruits were taste tested before the program began in November.
- Determining the number of students that will require the non-FFVP fruits - Met with campus administration to provide an ADP amount that could be used as a guide for ordering.
- Once capstone funds were depleted - Careful evaluation of CNP funds necessary to continue either bi-weekly or monthly special fruit service at the two campuses receiving fruits, Bryan and Mims Elementary.



Grab & Go Bistro

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Barbara Macleod, District Manager
Barbara.Macleod@bvsd.org



Project Summary

The Grab & Go Bistro project is intended to re-engage students at the high school level and make them excited about our lunch program. In BVSD, we are passionate about our scratch-cooked, locally sourced, and high-quality food. However, with open campuses at the high school level and so many nearby fast-food options available to our students, our high schools only have about half of the participation of our K-8 schools.

Adding a grab-and-go-style program in addition to our regular lunch program will bring back that “meal appeal.” The menu will be fresh and trendy, made with the same quality ingredients but without the stigma or long lines! Our students today have more academic pressures and more extracurricular pursuits than ever. We need to make fresh food fast, accessible, and “cool kid”-approved, because hungry kids can’t learn, hungry kids can’t grow, and hungry kids eat teachers!



Scratch-cooked ribs with baked beans and orange slices

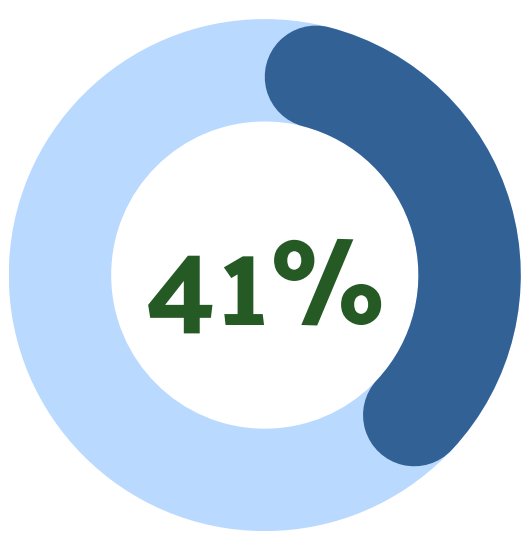


Pork taco with cabbage slaw and salad

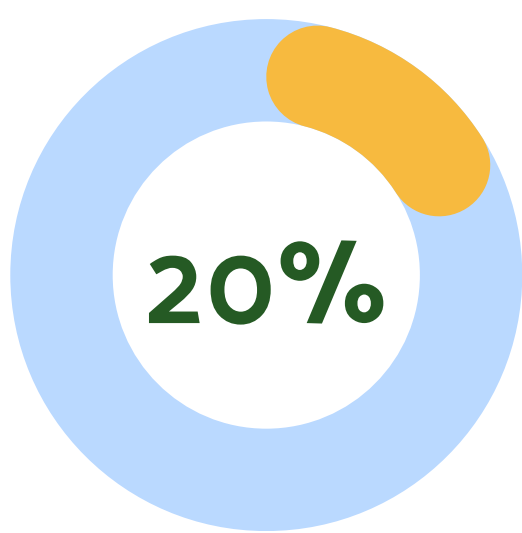
District Background: Boulder Valley School District (CO)

- Located in Boulder, Colorado
- Composed of 56 Schools with one Culinary Center
- 74.1% Full Pay, 24.7% Free, 1.2% Reduced Price (all student meals are free in SY23/24 thanks to Prop FF)
- 67.1% Caucasian, 0.9% Black, 6.6% Asian, 19.6% Latinx, 0.03% Native American

Average daily participation (ADP)



District-wide



High school level

Goals

- Increase participation at the high school level, bringing ADP from 20% up closer to the district average of 41%.
- Re-engage students so that they feel that fast, fresh, healthy, great-tasting food is as accessible at school as it is at the restaurant down the street.
- Continue to provide nutrition education to build healthy and adventurous relationships with food
- Change the narrative about school lunch to eliminate stigma.
- Provide a healthy meal option for students who have longer days and extracurricular activities.
- Make the Grab & Go pilot program enough of a success at one site that we can launch it at all secondary sites.

Successes

- Created a new Grab & Go menu plan that will stay true to our mission and vision while also honoring current food trends.
- Planned for a fresh new take on our brand at the Grab & Go Bistro.
- Identified which high school would benefit most from the Grab & Go pilot program and the breakeven point to make it sustainable.
- Identified great marketing opportunities to bring students in.
- Planned for equipment and infrastructure needs for Grab & Go.



Scratch-prepared poke bowls

Challenges

- With the launch of new nutrition analysis and ordering software this year and a lot of changes to our program, we have not been able to launch as soon as we wanted to.
- We still need to do taste tests to understand how to capture our market.
- To make Grab & Go a sustainable program at a site that only has 11% ADP, we will need to sell at least 60 reimbursable meals each day.

Next Steps

The Grab & Go Bistro will launch in the fall of 2024. To prepare for launch, our next steps are to finalize our menu choices and do taste testing with the students. We also need to procure Grab & Go equipment and make the necessary updates to infrastructure to install, launch, and operate it. Finally, we need to build out our branding and marketing strategies to ensure we hit or exceed our breakeven point.

Farmer’s Market Produce Area

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Maria Josephine Perez, MPH, RDN, SNS – Nutrition Specialist
MariaJosephine_Perez@Redlands.k12.ca.us



Project Summary

The Farmers’ Market Produce Area is meant to make food personal and engage students to eat healthier by offering a daily variety of fruit/vegetables at two Elementary School sites: Lugonia and Judson-Brown Elementary Schools. In Phase 1, we brought in new produce items including red grapes, shredded lettuce cups, and side salads. In Phase 2, we added value to improve the flavor of USDA produce items, such as pairing condiments with produce (corn cups and cucumber/jicama with chili-lime seasoning), creating new recipes (Ranchero Beans, BBQ Baked Beans), and creating composed salads. In Phase 3, we conducted tastings of dragonfruit, pomegranate, Crimson Gold apples, and rainbow carrots.



Taste test of pomegranate quarters at Judson-Brown Elementary School.



Taste test of Crimson Gold apples at Lugonia Elementary School.

District Background: Redlands Unified School District (CA)

- Located in San Bernardino County of southern California, serving the cities of Redlands, Loma Linda, Mentone, Forest Falls, and parts of San Bernardino and Highland
- Composed of 25 school sites (16 elementary, 4 middle schools, 3 high schools, 1 continuation high school, and 1 virtual/hybrid school), 24 kitchens, and 1 central kitchen
- Serve 20,170 students (with declining enrollment), 67% eligible for free and reduced meals
- Average daily participation (ADP) of 43% for breakfast and 63% for lunch

Goals

- Increase the fruit/vegetables consumed by students, using data from the previous year for comparison.
- Increase produce variety by working with local organic farmers to bring in more diverse options.
- Make the farmers’ market produce area more appealing to students by creating more appetizing displays encouraging students to take fruit/vegetables.



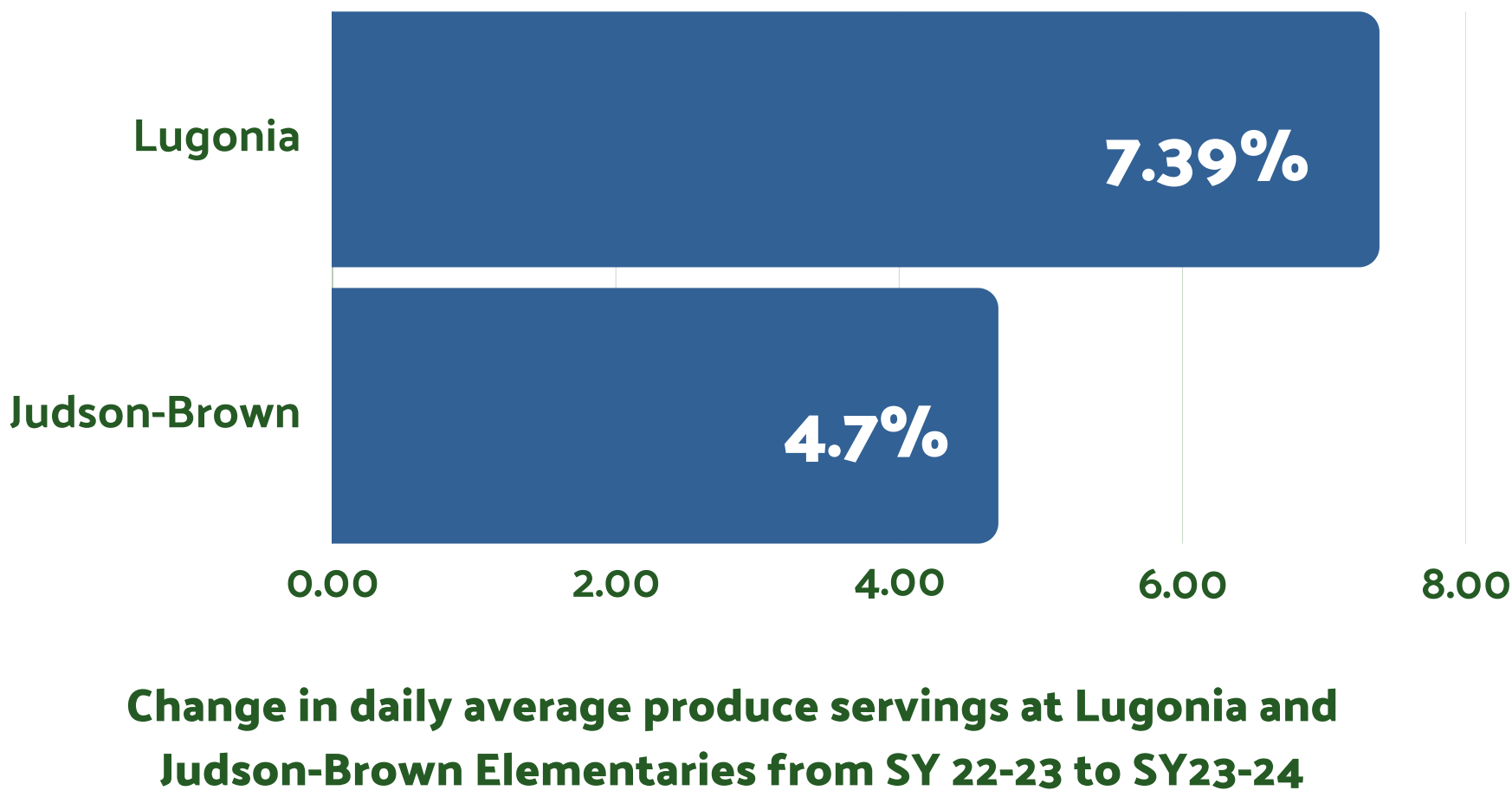
Cups of broccoli and carrots



Taste testing of dragon fruit

Successes

- Tastings had the greatest impact on fruit/veggie interest
 - At JB, after the first tasting, students were asking, “When is the next tasting?!”
 - At Lugonia, students wanted to come back for seconds!
- Social interaction yielded great responses from students
- Developing partnerships was crucial to success:
 - Old Grove Produce and their Harvest of the Month (HOM) Program made taste-testing options easy.
 - Central Kitchen created recipes to put out at the site.
- Crimson Gold apples moved from an occasional to a full-time item.



Challenges

- Limited time – With changes in leadership and staff, finding time to work on the project was hard, so I initially focused on bringing in new produce rather than recipe development.
- Limited labor at elementary school sites.
- Increased participation – Universal meals necessitated increased production at sites.
- Produce processing - We weren’t sure how much labor would be needed to process new produce items for the taste test, and we needed to maintain freshness if the vendor cut the produce for us.
- Display options – Finding containers to make the produce appealing was challenging. The best option at Judson-Brown was black trays that fit perfectly on the serving line.

Next Steps

In the coming months, we will try to scale up produce tasting to the remaining 14 elementary schools. We will also work to partner with more local produce vendors to get more variety and incorporate a nutrition education component with mini Farmers’ Markets and visits to local farms. Finally, we hope to use this project as a jumping-off point for launching salad bars!

Preservation Station

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Rhima Ramirez, Cafeteria Team Lead
zrluna75@gmail.com



Project Summary

In my district, I saw a need to find ways to maximize our ability to serve more fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables throughout the school year, especially at breakfast, while also minimizing waste and the cost of purchasing fresh produce out of season. Vacuum sealers provide an easy and affordable way to extend the shelf life and quality of items in cold storage. They also open up new possibilities for scratch and speed scratch cooking, such as producing sauces in bulk to bag up and ship to other sites. Thus, vacuum sealers provide a good “bang for the buck” in one piece of equipment with lots of potential both now and down the road.



Fresh blueberries and strawberries mixed into breakfast bread batters



Fresh raspberries

District Background: Twin Rivers Unified School District (CA)

- Located in Sacramento, California
- Serves 37,651 PreK-Adult students
 - 46 languages spoken
 - 4th largest district in Sacramento
 - 24th largest in California
- Composed of 51 school sites and 50 kitchen sites with 223 staff
- Average daily participation of 19,000 meals

Goals

- To make small, meaningful, and incremental changes to move our program towards more scratch and speed-scratch cooking.
- To incorporate new recipes and procedures into our breakfast cycle menus.
- To obtain vacuum sealers for a selection of our school sites and provide training on how to use them to implement new recipes and procedures.
- To reduce waste of food products and increase cost efficiency.
- To set the stage for how vacuum sealers could be used for more complex scratch cooking applications in the future.

Successes

- Worked with the department chef and director to identify vacuum sealer equipment and supplies to procure.
- Chose which sites would be the best recipients for the new equipment.
- Received the new vacuum sealers and began developing training modules for implementation.
- Implemented new breakfast recipes, including granola, yogurt parfaits with fresh berries, and fresh-baked muffins.

Challenges

- Delays in procurement of the vacuum sealer units pushed back when we could begin training and implementation on the new equipment and recipes.
- Allocation of the vacuum sealer units to school sites presented challenges in determining which sites should receive them.
- Management of a district-level project was challenging as a site-level employee.
- Departure of the district chef threw a wrench in implementation.
- Product and supply chain issues.

Next Steps

We will continue with the rollout of vacuum sealers as a tool to increase scratch and speed scratch cooking and the use of fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables, particularly in our breakfast menus. In the future, we would like to further the use of this tool to cook high-quality soups, sauces, and raw proteins that can be easily stored and/or shipped to other sites. Since this is our first major step into speed scratch cooking this school year, we will continue to take small steps toward that future vision.



Scratch-made breakfast sandwich



Yogurt parfait with blackberries and granola

Nom Nom Cart for Student Customization

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Brittney Rodriguez, Nutrition Services Supervisor
brirodriguez@hlpusd.k12.ca.us



Project Summary

We have the opportunity to foster healthy food autonomy for the students we serve through meal customization. Our Nom Nom customization cart will introduce students to diverse recipes and provide local produce and scratch-cooked items for them to select to enhance their meal. Alongside student focus groups and student surveys, we are optimistic that this will increase student participation by allowing students a restaurant-quality customizable meal.



Local produce toppings: basil, cilantro, green onion, bean sprouts, and jalapeños

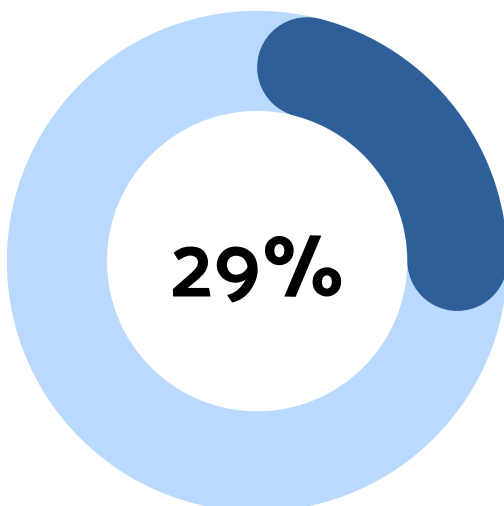


Nom Nom Food Cart

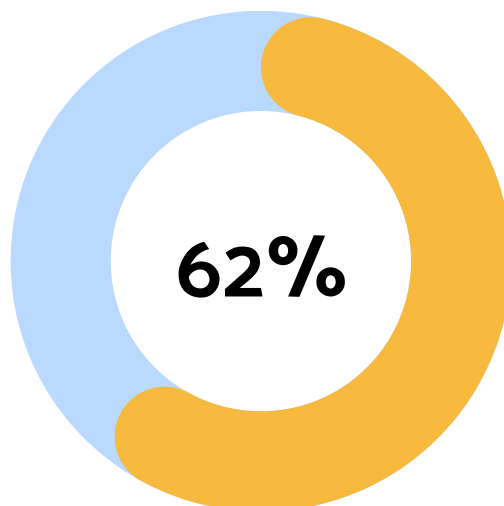
District Background: Hacienda La Puente Unified School District (CA)

- Located in southern California, about 20 miles east of downtown Los Angeles
- Composed of 32 schools, 1 child care center, and 33 kitchens
- Serve 16,394 students, making us one of the largest districts in the area
- Average daily participation (ADP) of 14,872
 - 10,144 for lunch (62%)
 - 4,728 for breakfast (29%)

Average daily participation (ADP) at Hacienda La Puente USD



Breakfast



Lunch

Goals

- Increase overall participation by 25% on days cart is open
- Introduce students to 2-3 diverse recipes and local ingredients
- Engage students with nutritional education about plant-based and plant-forward options
- Include students in the process of naming the cart and choosing recipes they would like to customize
- Launch cart at all secondary sites , if it is a success at one site

Successes

- On the day students were introduced to our cart, we were able to increase participation by 50% by capturing students in a different location on campus
- The pilot recipe, pho, received 85% student approval.
 - Base of noodles with a protein option of chicken, pork, or Planetarians savory strips
 - Students could select the following local produce toppings: jalapeños, bean sprouts, cilantro, basil, lime wedges, green onion
- Students were introduced to a new vegan protein option
- Students voted to name the customization cart, “Nom Nom Cart”

Challenges

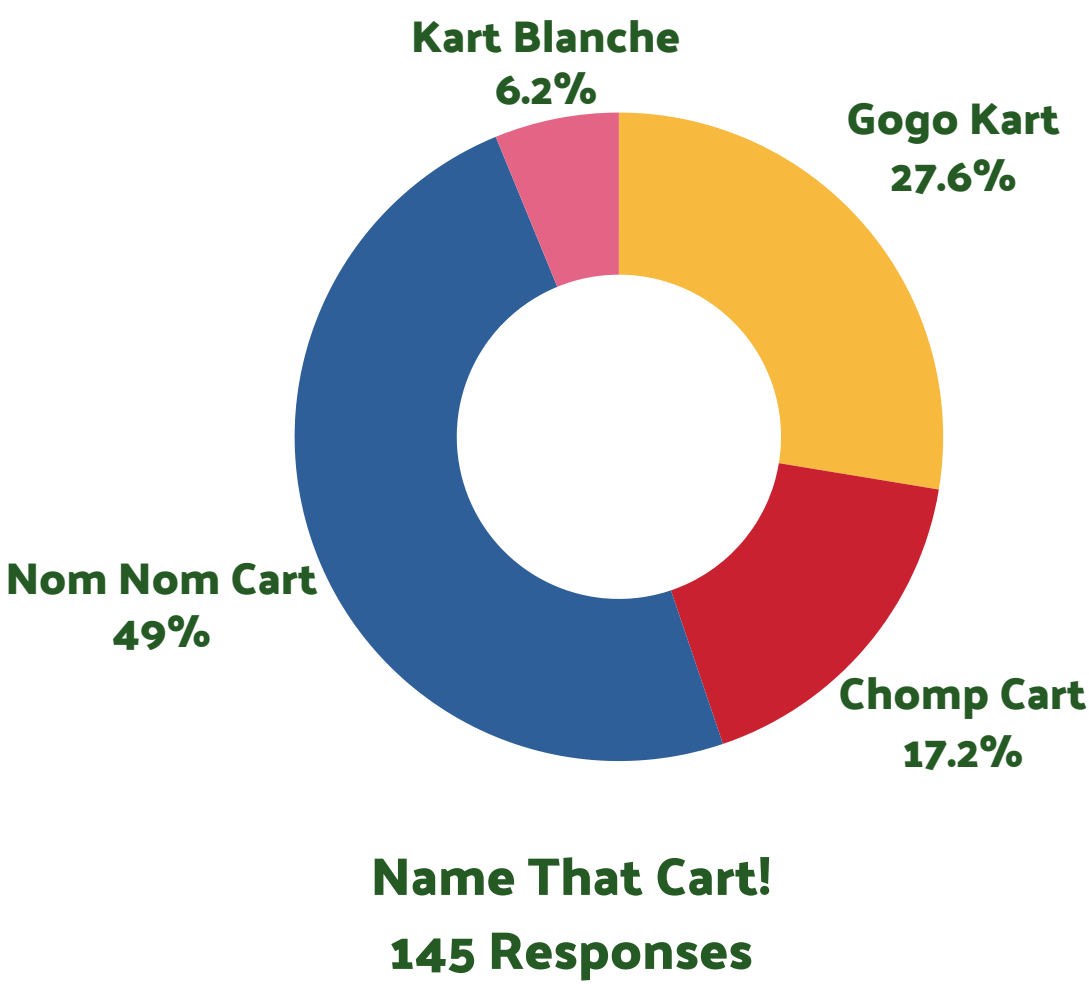
- We started the cart procurement process in June, and while it was due to be delivered by the end of November, delays have pushed the delivery to mid-January.
- We were able to test the pho without the cart but weren’t yet able to have a “red ribbon” launch event.
- This delay limited us to testing one recipe with students instead of the planned two to three.



Bowls of pho



Students selecting food at the Nom Nom Cart



Next Steps

Our next steps include testing additional customizable breakfast and lunch recipes (oatmeal, yogurt, and birria ramen) with students and surveying them for feedback. Once our cart arrives, we will hold a red ribbon event that will allow for additional student engagement and participation. Additionally, we will hold a forum to discuss future menu customization ideas with students.

Whole Food: Quality You Can Taste!

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Warren Ryan, Nutrition Services Assistant Director
warren.ryanii@sbcusd.k12.ca.us



Project Summary

It is critical to have the right equipment to improve the quality of school food and be able to purchase from local farms or businesses. Moving away from pre-cut, processed fruits and vegetables not only reduces waste, but also increases the quality of the food. Additionally, having the ability to self-process fruits and vegetables expands the opportunity to partner with local farmers and businesses. For this reason, we purchased new equipment to process and cook fresh, local ingredients.



Chef Alonso



Fresh, local ingredients prepared by the SBCUSD nutrition staff

District Background - San Bernardino City Unified School District (CA)

- Located in San Bernardino, California, about an hour east of Los Angeles
- Composed of 74 schools
- Serves 45,971 students (89.9% socioeconomically disadvantaged, 23.2% English language learners, 82.2% Hispanic, 9% African American), making us the 8th largest public school district in California
- 50,000 total meals served per day, with an average daily participation of:
 - 36% at breakfast,
 - 69% at lunch,
 - 11% at supper, and
 - 2% for snack

	Breakfast	Lunch	Supper	Snack
Average # of meals served per meal period	16,658	31,671	4,867	823

Goals

- Purchase equipment, including RobotCoupes and pasta pots, to process bulk, fresh, local ingredients.
- Expand the cafeteria’s ability to self-prepare and process bulk ingredients to increase scratch cooking.
- Offer freshly cooked pasta by August 2023.
- Reduce waste and prepackaged foods by 50% by processing fresh, whole fruits and vegetables.
- Increase food quality by using fresh, local ingredients.



Cooking fresh pasta with a new pasta pot

Successes

- Secondary lunch participation increased by 17% this year.
- RobotCoupes for 6 high schools were purchased and delivered to process fresh fruits and vegetables on-site.
- Pasta pot sets for all middle and high schools were purchased, delivered, and put into use.



One of the new RobotCoupe food processors

Challenges

- Time - It took 7 months to receive the equipment, which includes the time to request, purchase, and receive equipment.
- Labor - Menus were changed for the start of the 2023/2024 school year, so whole produce was purchased prior to the equipment arriving. Staff had to process the produce using knives, which increased the required labor.
- Training - Staff had to be trained on the new equipment before it could be used.

Next Steps

Looking ahead, we will increase the amount of fruits and vegetables being self-processed on-site. We will also increase the number of sites self-processing fruits and vegetables. Finally, we will initiate a survey of middle and high school students to determine the true effects of the changes in our menu and ingredients, outside of participation.

Educate and Connect with School Nutrition

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Renee Swank, District Supervisor of Special Programs (CACFP/SFSP)
rswank@nps.k12.va.us



Project Summary

My project used scratch cooking to bridge the gap between school nutrition and our stakeholders, including young scholars, parents, educators, and community leaders. To do this, I gathered culturally inspired recipes from our stakeholders, reviewed all of the recipes, and used some to create standardized recipes that could be incorporated into our menu. Some of the recipes were also featured in a hands-on cooking class with our scholars, creating a sense of pride and ownership while sharing nutrition education.



Cooking demo with toasted cheese sandwich recipe submitted by students



Students making toasted cheese sandwiches

District Background - Norfolk Public Schools (VA)

- Located in Norfolk, a port city in southeastern Virginia
- Composed of 49 schools, each with its own kitchen
- Serve 27,264 students
 - Non-Hispanic/Latinx 86.50%, Hispanic/Latinx 13.50%
- Average daily participation:
 - 13,250 at Breakfast (NSB),
 - 18,357 at Lunch (NSLP),
 - 1,212 at Supper (CACFP), and
 - 644 at Snack (CACFP)



Meeting connecting community partners and school nutrition professionals

Goals

- Engage stakeholders (young scholars/parents/educators/community leaders) in school nutrition and educate them on nutritious food per the USDA guidelines.
- Gather culturally diverse recipes from our stakeholders and standardize them to meet School Nutrition guidelines, providing simple, healthful recipes that could also be made at home.
- Hold taste testing events for our stakeholders with the standardized recipes.

Successes

- Educated students on the importance of how to read a recipe.
- Received positive feedback on the students' opinions being heard.
- Inspired students to look at food as a pathway to knowledge in their education.
- Experienced the positive impact that occurs when school nutrition professionals and community stakeholders brainstorm and network.



Students enjoying new menu items during their cooking class

Challenges

- Ensuring cultural representation with the recipes.
- Creating cooking demos that can encompass multiple grade levels for after-school educational or enrichment programs.
- Getting community partners' buy-in to participate actively in educating our young scholars on the importance of nutrition.
- Encouraging parents/guardians to participate in cooking demos with their students.

Next Steps

I will connect with the leaders of after school enrichment activities that include topics such as basic baking and cooking or sustainability to be a guest speaker to talk about school nutrition. I am also going to connect with my district's Communications and Community Engagement Department to find opportunities to participate in community events and engage with stakeholders.

ACPS Daily Bread

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Jason Tepper, Executive Chef
jason.tepper@acps.k12.va.us



Project Summary

ACPS (Alexandria City Public Schools) Daily Bread brings local, healthy bread options into our schools. This bread is scratch-made, preservative-free, and sourced from a woman-owned and -operated bakery that has been in the neighborhood for over 30 years, MB Bakery. The goal of this project is to provide healthy options to the students and staff while highlighting a local business and building community. This project will also teach the students and kitchen staff about the bread-making process with hands-on instruction from start to finish.



Scratch-prepared grilled cheese sandwiches with scratch-made bread



Sandwich buns from MB Bakery

District Background: Alexandria City Public Schools (VA)

- Located in Alexandria, Virginia, just outside of Washington, DC
- Composed of 18 schools, including two middle schools, two K-8 schools, 13 pre-K and elementary schools, and the internationally recognized Alexandria City High School
- Serves more than 16,000 students who hail from more than 119 countries and speak 121 languages, making us the 16th largest of 133 districts in the state
- Average daily participation of 66%



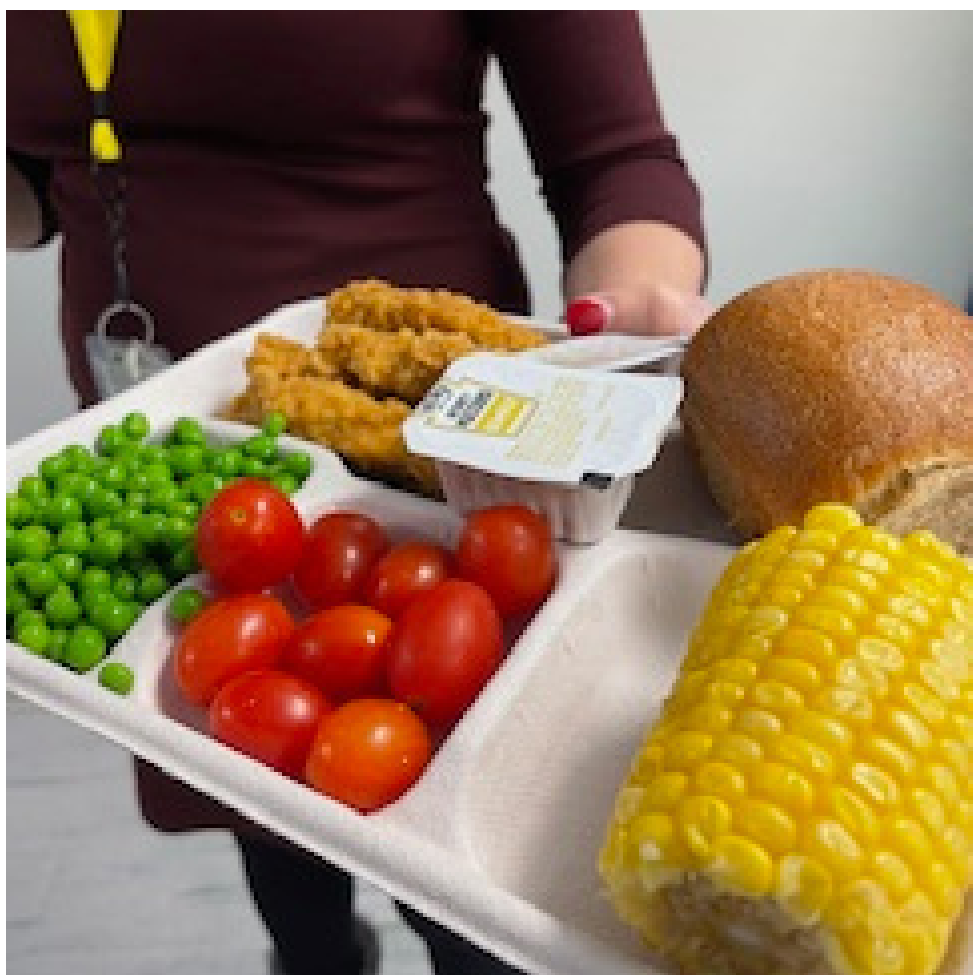
Chef Jason with the ACPS team and MB Bakery's founder and owner, Maribeth Nyerges

Goals

- Serve our school district healthy, scratch-made, preservative-free breads.
- Make a compelling argument addressing why sourcing local bread should be done and how to do it.
- Support the local economy while providing students with a community-building experience.
- Cut back on greenhouse gas emissions by sourcing locally.

Successes

- Excitement from the students about bread from our new program.
- Added a superior, healthier product to nourish our students.
- Enthusiasm from our administration, who also give the product their thumbs up.
- Garnered support and greater awareness of our efforts to serve the best possible ingredients and products to our students.



Scratch-made roll with corn, peas, tomatoes, and chicken tenders



Student with lunch tray

Challenges

- Getting the buy-in from senior leadership in the school nutrition department and convincing them that this project would benefit the district.
 - The general perspective of senior leadership was that there was nothing wrong with the bread we were already serving.
- Overcoming the perception that this capstone project was only an “external” affiliation on my part and helping our leadership understand that it would improve the lives of our students through nutrition and strengthen the district’s community partnerships.

Next Steps

Our next step is to further develop the project by teaching the art of baking to our kitchen staff and students with in-house field trips. We will also work on better utilization of existing equipment such as floor mixers and ovens in combination with the best ingredients to bake the bread in-house to serve our district.

Nutrition Software Implementation

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023



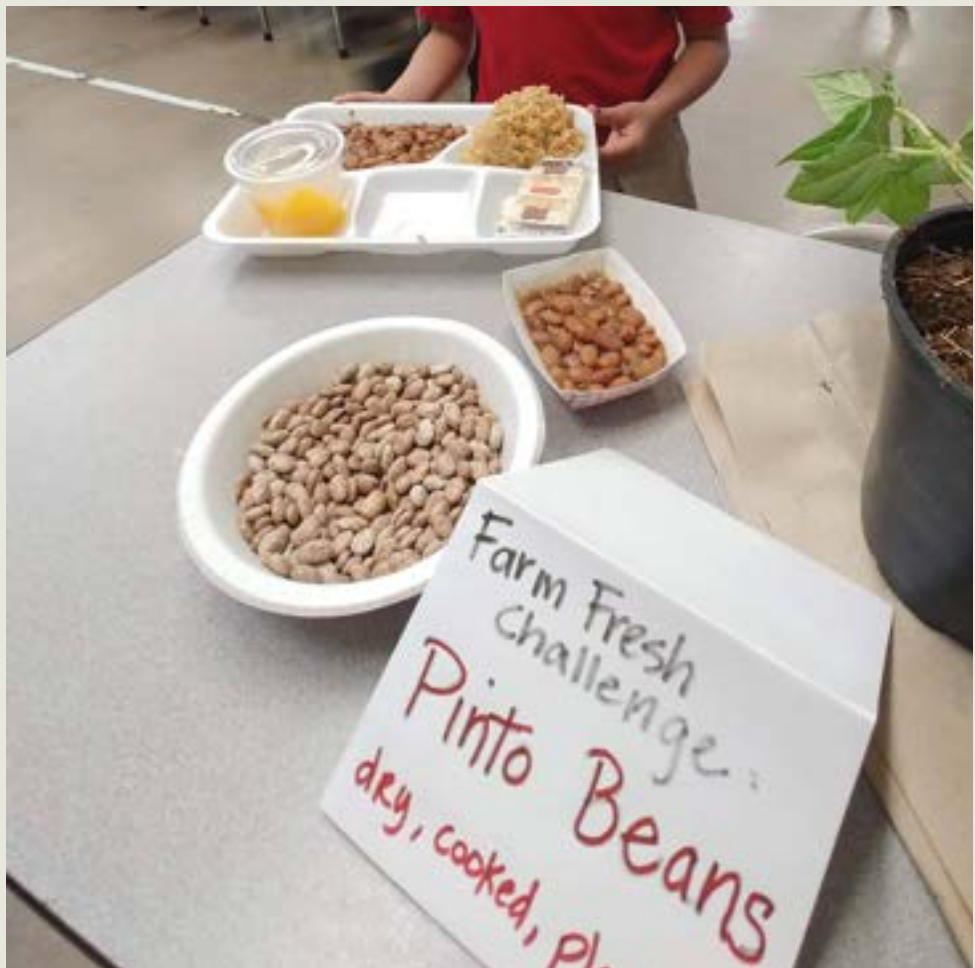
Iris Tirado, Food and Nutrition Director
itirado@concordiacharter.org

Project Summary

Nutrition software is an essential tool to run a scratch cook or speed scratch program, as well as a salad bar. The nutrition software will allow us to standardize recipes and modify and adapt them to the specific needs and tastes of our school community. In addition, it will provide production and financial information to evaluate the sustainability of the program. In the future, nutrition software could also provide point of sale functionality, free and reduced meals application management, and menu marketing tools.



Food and Nutrition Director Iris and CCS staff preparing a school meal

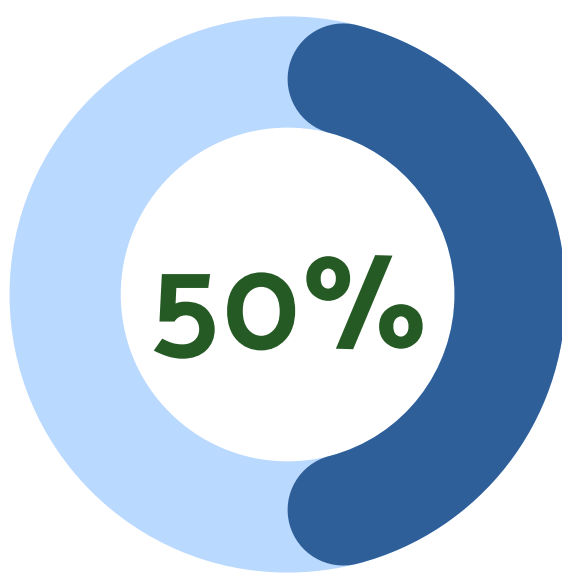


Farm fresh pinto beans

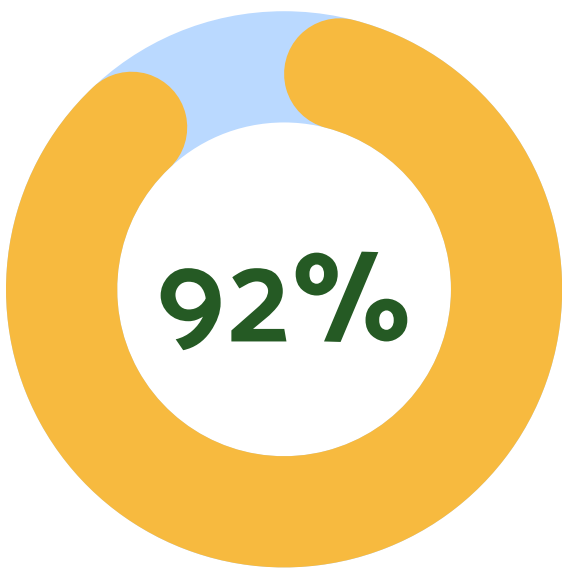
District Background: Concordia Charter School (AZ)

- Located in Mesa, Arizona, about 20 miles from Phoenix
- Small charter school composed of one school site; want to be an example that small schools can provide good service, too
- Serves 82 students, 71% free and reduced (currently on Provision 2 non-base year)
- Average daily participation (ADP) of 45-50% for breakfast and 92% for lunch

Average daily participation (ADP) at Concordia Charter School



Breakfast



Lunch

Goals

We will roll out nutrition software to enable us to:

- Measure the nutrition information of our recipes that are standardized and culturally modified to meet the needs of the current school population;
- Cost the program properly and be able to make changes to sustain a financially viable program;
- Monitor all program areas for compliance with the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) regulations;
- Run a successful scratch-cooking program.

Successes

- Software program selected to best meet the needs of our school
- Program purchased and significant steps toward roll-out accomplished, despite unforeseen barriers.
- Most of the labor took place as part of the capstone project, which made it possible to obtain the program.
- Just a month short of completing back-of-the-house implementation.

Challenges

- The item list - The software does not have a data bank of products as previously offered, so all items used in the kitchen (about 500) need to be entered into a spreadsheet with 45 columns.
- The ingredient list - All items' nutrition information has to be entered into a 47-column spreadsheet in the correct measurements, which requires time-intensive research or conversions.
- Limited labor - As a sole staff, completing these two lists has proven to be the most difficult step in implementing an effective nutrition software. However, slowly but surely I will accomplish the task.

Next Steps

Once these spreadsheets are completed by the end of this month, the information will be imported into the program, allowing us to implement the modules for creation of recipes, menu planning, inventory, and production. The back-of-house implementation phase should be completed and fully functional by the end of March. Currently, we serve about 35% scratch- or speed scratch-cooked meals. We want to continue to move forward with increasing this percentage, and knowing if the recipes are in compliance will be critical to doing so.

VA Beef to VB Schools: Let’s BEEF Up Virginia Beach!

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Nicholas Vedia, District Sous Chef
jNicholas.vedia@vbschools.com



Project Summary

I launched a pilot program to integrate locally sourced, fresh, raw ground beef into my school district’s menus. My district has a history of using raw ground beef, facilitating the transition back to this practice. The core objective of this initiative is to elevate the standard of scratch cooking in our school kitchens, while supporting local producers and enhancing the flavor and nutrition of the protein we provide to our students. The pilot was implemented in both a high school and an elementary school, where it was well-accepted by students. Our staff also benefited from this pilot, which fostered excitement about local sourcing and scratch cooking.



Meatball sub tray at Kellam High School



Purebred Hereford Cattle. Sustainable farming is a tradition at Coastal Cattle. Located in Pungo, VA.

District Background: Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VA)

- Located in Virginia Beach in southeastern Virginia
- Composed of 87 schools and 82 kitchens
- Serve 63,036 students, making us the fourth largest school division in Virginia
- Asian 7%, Black 22%, Hispanic/Latino 18%, White 46%, Multiracial 7%
- Economically disadvantaged 46.0%
- Average daily participation (ADP) of 45%

Goals

- Achieve a minimum 2% increase in Average Daily Participation (ADP) on days when beef is featured on the menu at the selected schools.
- Enhance student satisfaction with menu items incorporating local ingredients, specifically in the high school setting.
- Boost staff morale and increase their enthusiasm for implementing scratch cooking recipes.
- Demonstrate to department leadership that our current staff is capable of successfully handling raw proteins.

Successes

- Achieved a 2.3% increase in student participation at Kellam High School, particularly on days featuring the local beef, especially with the popular Meatball Sub.
- Fostered increased student engagement with school food, resulting in more positive feedback and valuable suggestions.
- Inspired an open-minded approach among cafeteria staff, who enthusiastically executed the recipe, recognizing the delivery of a higher quality product to students.
- Contributed to an overall boost in satisfaction with school food, particularly when incorporating local ingredients.

Challenges

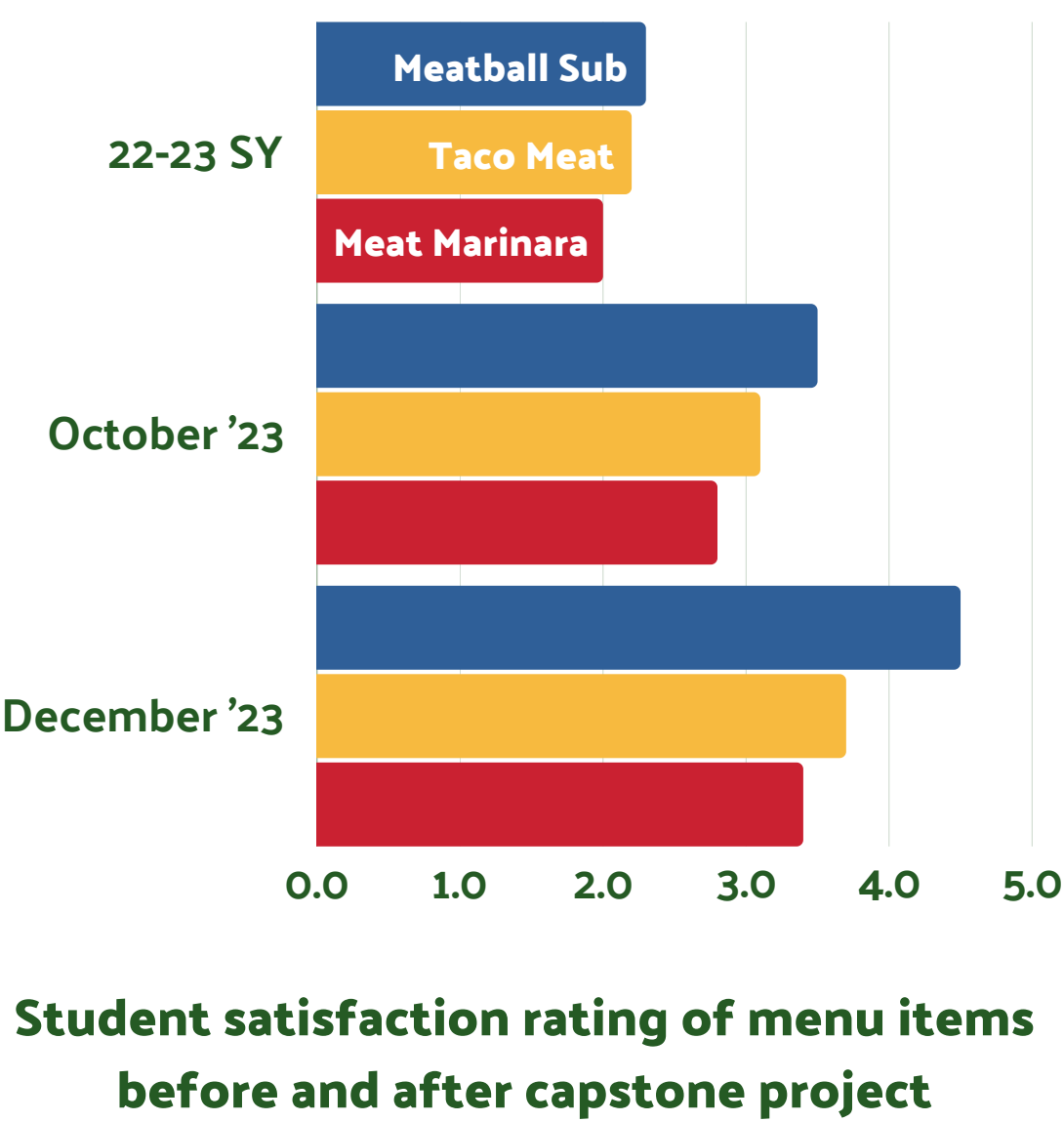
- Identified the challenge of locating a local cattle farmer in our area, further complicated by the need to find one willing to collaborate with our school district.
- Navigated the complexities of transportation logistics, ensuring a smooth transition from the farm to the schools for the pilot program.
- Developed effective marketing strategies for the pilot program, targeting both students and staff to generate interest and engagement.
- Addressed the challenge of expanding the pilot program to other schools in the district while maintaining a consistent and reliable supply of local ground beef.

Next Steps

The forthcoming steps involve extending the local beef program to four additional high schools in the upcoming school year, accompanied by proactive outreach to engage other local cattle farmers for potential partnerships. The ultimate objective is to integrate fresh LOCAL ground beef and expand the initiative to include other LOCAL raw proteins such as chicken, pork, and seafood across all 82 kitchens within the district. This comprehensive approach aims to ensure that our students consistently enjoy the highest quality ingredients, facilitating the creation of nutritious and delicious meals that represent the pinnacle of what our school district has to offer.



Kellam High School student enjoying the Meatball Sub



Lunch Thyme University

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship 2023

Richie Wilim, Assistant Director
richiew@vacavilleusd.org

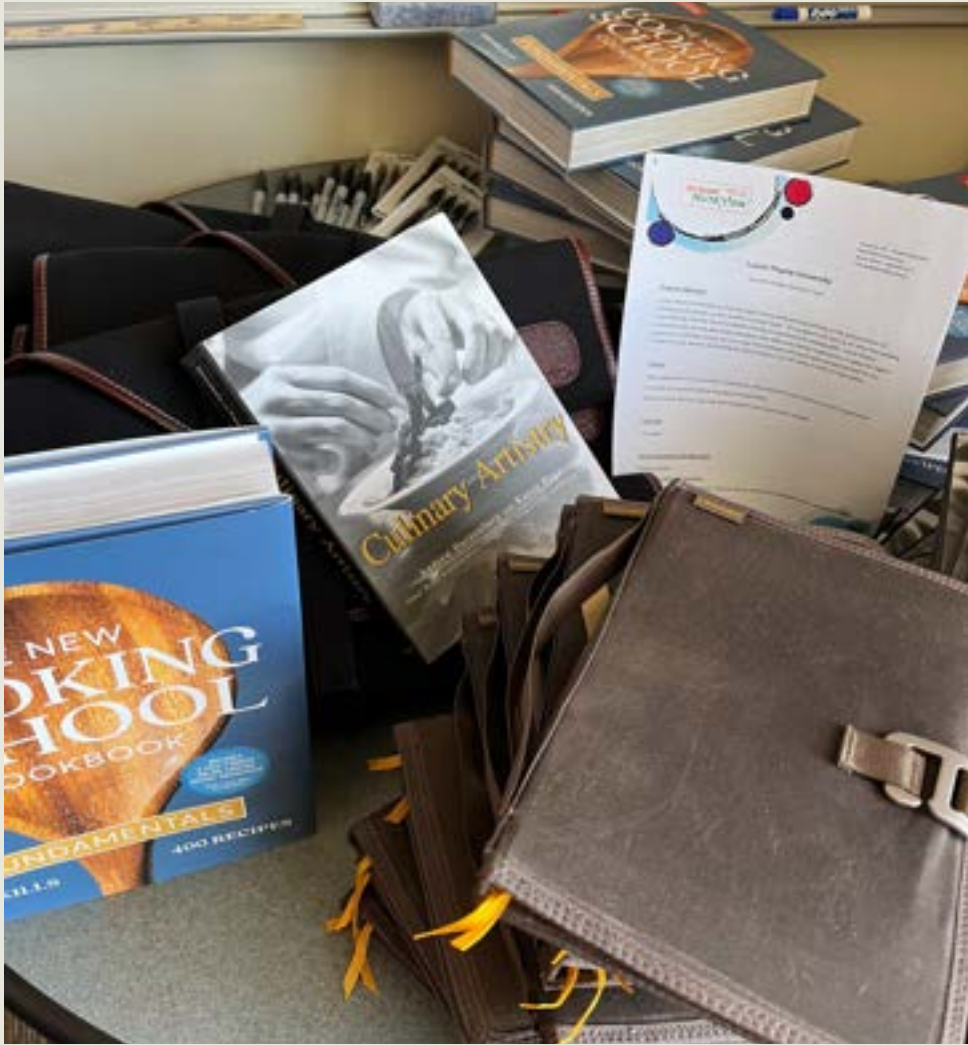


Project Summary

Lunch Thyme University is an immersive, one-year culinary training course dedicated specifically to the advancement of culinary professionals on the VUSD student nutrition team. This program is geared toward team members looking to take the next step in cooking scratch-made meals for our students and essentially become the chefs of whatever kitchen they are in. It will also help ensure we are using real cooking techniques when preparing food for our students and having the best product possible when it lands on their plates. I launched a pilot of Lunch Thyme University during the 2023 school year to validate it ahead of the full rollout in 2024.



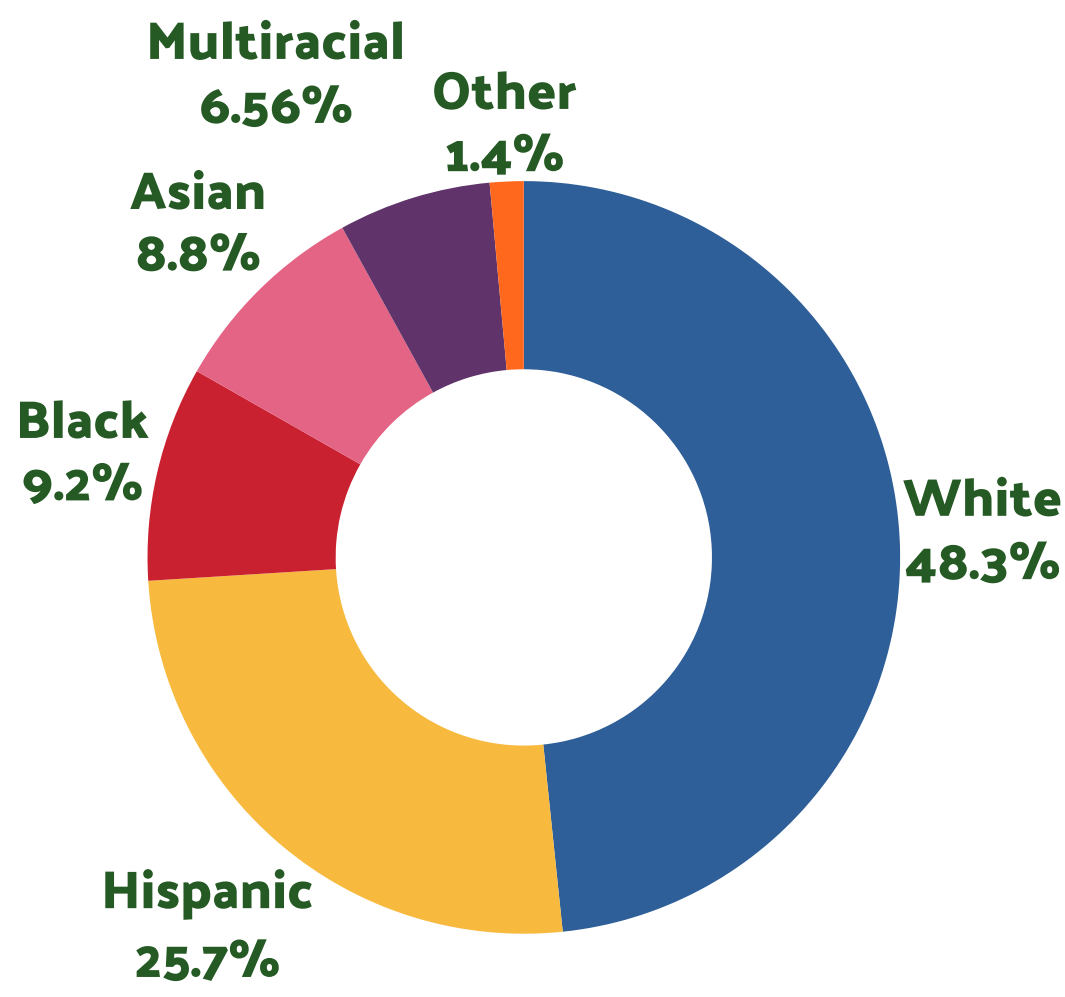
Dishes laid out for a culinary training



Lunch Thyme University gear

District Background - Vacaville Unified School District (CA)

- Located in Vacaville, a city about an hour north of the Bay Area of California
- Composed of 16 schools and 15 cafes
- Serve 12,500 students, making us a small to midsize district relative to districts nearby that have double or triple the number of students
- Average daily participation of 4,500 breakfasts and 9,500 lunches



Racial/Ethnic Makeup of Vacaville, CA

Goals

- Engage and inspire team members to want to cook better food
- Empower and educate team members to feel confident cooking better food
- Give students a better experience and a better meal
- Truly be the best restaurant in our city

Successes

- Immediate increased commitment from staff lacking culinary and food service skills
- Improvements in food taste, quality, service, and presentation
- Positive internal competition and building rapport within the team
- Practicing what we preach and making better, scratch-made food for kids
- .

Challenges

- Time - This is a major commitment for not only myself writing and launching the curriculum, but also for the staff members who participated in the pilot of Lunch Thyme University.
- Ongoing resources - How can we keep this going long-term? How do we evolve and not exclude any team members?
- Union questions - Is it viable to offer this training to everyone? Why were some team members chosen over others?
- District commitment - Demonstrating the need for this training program, and how it gets us to the next level

Next Steps

- Continue to build a loyal group of committed team members looking for an opportunity to better themselves and give students real food.
- Maintain commitment and continue to plan creative lessons to stay relevant.
- Stay on top of food trends and find creative ways to introduce new items into our menu cycles, including things that require more skills now that our team is more proficient.

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Labor cost	60%	50%	45%
Food cost	35%	40%	45%
Other cost	5%	5%	5%

School nutrition financial picture