Increasing Paid Meal Participation
Tips and Techniques to Increase Meal Participation

Chef Jeff
Ponca City Public Schools
Ponca City, OK
Two Challenges

- Reducing High School Meal Period from Three to Two Lunches
- SMART SNACK Knocked Out Menu Items for Successful Ala Carte Line
Reducing High School Meal Period from Three to Two Lunches

- 1600 Students split between two lunch periods
- Changed from serving 535/lunch to 800/lunch
- Had to move one line to make room for more tables and chairs
- Reopened New Line in a non-seating area
Obstacles

- Students won’t stand in line very long
- Needed to add a new line (concept) that was fast
- Existing lines had to move faster
- Still not enough seating
New Line (concept)
On the FLY...

- Grab and Go
- Pre-packaged Salads, Sandwiches, Wraps
- All Reimbursable Meals
- Displayed in a Merchandiser Cooler
- Made Fresh Every Day
- Attractive Packaging
- Other Components Available with the Packaged Item
- 150-200 students per day
Results

• 150-200 Students Moved to New Line
• More Seating Was Obtained
• More Reimbursable Meals Are Served
• Site Administration Saw the Error in Their Ways and Moved Back to Three Lunch Periods
SMART SNACK
Knocked Out
Menu Items for Successful Ala Carte Line

- Very Popular Line No Longer Met New Guidelines for Foods Sold on Campus
- Almost 1/3 of Students Each Day Choose This Line
- Very Profitable
- Sacred Items
- Students Already Upset
Obstacles

- CHANGE
- Outside Food Being Brought In
- Reduction of Revenue
- Staff Buy-In
- Production Time and Space
New Line (Concept)
CHIX Concept

- Everything Chicken
- Combo Meals
- All Reimbursable Meals
- All Components Pre-Packaged
- Flex Menu
- Fast Moving
- Some Ala Carte (priced high to encourage reimbursable meal)
Results

- Increased Participation
- Students Liked the New Concept
- Staff Finally Bought Into the Concept
- More Reimbursable Meals
- Too Many Students Now
- Other Lines Were Adjusted to Attract Students
Contact Info

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Successful School Meal Experiences

Getting Students Involved

Sara Simmerman, Huron Valley Schools
Why?

- Develops Relationships
- Eliminates the Unknown
- Encourages Choice
Get to know your students
  › Create involvement!

Build good will
  › Let them know you are their advocate

Listen to them for a change
  › Students do enough of their own listening through out the day

Create positive experiences
  › This creates positive relationships!
Students won’t eat what they don’t know
Student consumers don’t like risks
Students may not embrace change
Choice is always better than force
Choice is a positive
Choice is an adventure
Choice = participation
Imagine a Food Show

- What compels you to stop?
The same thing works for students:

- Eye-catching
- Fun
- Games
- Personal preferences
- Minimal time commitment
1. Taste Testing and Sampling
2. Special Event Menu
3. Student Nutrition Advisory Councils
4. Student Outreach Strategies
Taste Testing and Sampling
Encouraging Participation

- “I tried it” stickers
  > Learningzoneexpress.com

- “I voted” stickers
  > Electionstickers.com

  > Paperclip Answers - simple!
## Taste Testing and Sampling Evaluation

Use a brief evaluation form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>😕</th>
<th>😐</th>
<th>😊</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How does the food look?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How does the food smell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How does the food taste?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How is the texture?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How would you rate the food overall?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taste Testing and Evaluating Recipes USDA
http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/recipes/taste-testing-and-evaluating-recipes
Taste Testing and Sampling Ideas

- High school & middle school
  - Confetti Kale Salad
- Elementary
  - Edamame
  - MI apples with yogurt
Special Event Menus

- **Tiger Baseball Day**
  - Hotdogs, blue raspberry frozen fruit cup

- **International Peace Day**
  - French ratatouille, Aztec grain salad, American apple crisp, Russian sochi soup

- **Homecoming**
  - Go Dreadnaught burger, winning team of toppings, touchdown football cookie

- **Johnny Appleseed Day**
  - Michigan apples, Johnny Appleseed coloring sheet

- **Talk like a Pirate Day**
  - Free temporary tattoo with lunch
Student Outreach Strategies
Know your Customers: Grades K-2

- Improving food acceptance
  - Invite parents or grandparents to lunch
  - Hold vegetable tasting parties
  - Offer sliced or sectioned fruit
  - Decorate the cafeteria for special events
  - Provide menus printed with pictures
Menu planning

- Offer soft, smooth, or crisp foods
- Serve lukewarm foods
- Utilize finger foods
- Season foods lightly
- Have distinct, separate components
Student Outreach Strategies
Know your Customers: Grades K-2

Helpful tips

› Introduce one new food at a time
› Introduce new foods at the beginning of the meal
› Involve children in serving
› Serve small portions
› Separate servings of vegetables, meats, and salads
› Provide contrast in color, texture, and temperature
Student Outreach Strategies

Know your Customers: Grades 3-5

- Actively involve students in the cafeteria
  - Nutrition advisory councils
  - Special stickers or certificates for involvement
  - Tasting clubs
  - Groups to decorate cafeteria for special events
  - Poster or bulletin board contests

- Menu planning
  - Offer foods with a wide variety of colors, flavors, textures, temperatures, and shapes
  - Use a variety of seasonings and spices
  - Serve more choices because children like autonomy
  - Enjoy finger foods
Student Outreach Strategies
Know your Customers: 6-8

Food acceptance
- Stress foods for healthy skin and hair - positive results resulting from a healthy diet
- Introduce special speakers for discussion about overall health
- Offer ethnic meals and nutrition education based on special foods

Menu planning
- Include equally nutritious food choices
- Offer lower calorie items
- Allow larger portions for those with higher nutritional needs
Student Outreach Strategies
Know your Customers: 9-12

- Food acceptance
  - Consider offering a training table for those participating in sports
  - Provide calorie comparison of popular fast food items and school lunch items as nutrition education
  - Explore ways of reducing lunch line wait times
    - Use “bar concepts” such as taco or salad bars
Student Outreach Strategies

- Know your customers
  - Food acceptance
  - Menu planning
  - Use popular days

- Introducing new foods

- Influences on children’s eating behaviors
Student Outreach Strategies
Introducing New Foods

- Introduce new or unusual foods one at a time and in small quantities
- Offer the food in conjunction with a popular food item
- Don’t mix the food into a popular combination dish
- Plan the food into a special meal such as holiday, cultural, or school activities menu
Student Outreach Strategies
Influences on Children’s Eating Behaviors

- Role modeling by parents, teachers, & peers
  - Learn portion control, table manners, and timing of eating
  - Learn cultural traditions
  - Learn hunger and satiety cues

- Familiarity and repeat exposures
  - Results in better acceptance
  - Focus on positive results - students are “present” oriented!
In summary...

- Develop Relationships
- Encourage Choice
- Sample Regularly
- Recognize Age Group Eating Behaviors
- Develop Outreach Strategies
- Have Fun!
References and Resources

- Taste Testing and Evaluating Recipes
  USDA

- “I tried it” stickers
  > [www.learningzoneexpress.com](http://www.learningzoneexpress.com)

- “I voted” stickers
  > [www.Electionstickers.com](http://www.Electionstickers.com)

- Georgia School Nutrition Association
  Nutrition Advisory Council Handbook

- Outreach Toolkit
  > [http://www.nufs.sjsu.edu/calpronet/outreachtoolkit/](http://www.nufs.sjsu.edu/calpronet/outreachtoolkit/)
Thank you to Brooke Burgess, MPH and Amanda Gallaher, MPH for ideas and technical assistance!
Greeley-Evans
WELD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 6

“Fueling the Future!”
D6 Fast Facts

Student Enrollment is 21,000+
  • 13\textsuperscript{th} Largest in Colorado

62\% of our students qualify to receive free or reduced price meals.

Served 44\% of students Breakfast and 48\% of students Lunch in 13/14. Equates to 3,230,933 reimbursable meals. (18,676 ADP)

180+ Staff across 33 serving locations.
  – District Schools, Charter, Private, Central Production
Paid Lunch Participation

- SY 2010-11 was our last year serving highly processed foods.
- SY11-12 Implemented School Meal Improvement Plan
  - Central Production Kitchen
  - Salad Bars implemented
  - Menu simplified
Paid Lunch Participation

2010-2011: 2253
2011-2012: 1810
2012-2013: 1483
2013-2014: 1495
Through Dec 2014: 1791
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Thank you!