



Learnings from the Field

Duluth Edison Charter Schools

Duluth, MN

District Enrollment:

1,398

Production Model: Contracted

Food Service Management

Company

District F/R: 39%

School Year Implemented:

January 2017 – December 2017

District ADP: 53%

No. of Grants Awarded: 1

Raleigh Academy

Age Group: K-5

School Size: Medium (301-900)

School Environment: Suburban

School F/R: 52%

School ADP: 94%

Project Description

When Raleigh Academy, an elementary school of Duluth Edison Charter Schools, received their Project Produce grant in 2017, they launched their nutrition education programming called “Eat a Rainbow Everyday”. During the grant period, they offered taste tests to students at least once per month. After the students went through the lunch line, cafeteria staff would pass out pre-portioned samples of various fruits or vegetables. The taste tests were intentionally scheduled on days in which the lunch menu was particularly low maintenance so staff would have the extra time to spend prepping for the taste tests.

Once students tried the samples, Food Service Manager Sue Lewis used the opportunity to educate students about the produce. She taught students about the nutritional values of the fruits and vegetables they had tried, where the food originated from, if it could grow in their area, and more. She gave each student a flyer outlining the nutritional information to encourage further discussion in the classroom and at home. In one case, after a day of

sampling papayas, a Spanish teacher gave a lesson on the significance of papayas in Latin American cuisine.



Ms. Lewis explained that the students loved the taste tests. She recounts, “Anytime I would come to the cafeteria, I would have kids running up to me asking, ‘do we have a taste test today?!’” Parents were also impressed by the enthusiasm from the students. Ms. Lewis said she received feedback from parents that their kids were offering tips at the grocery store about the health benefits of various foods. Overall, Ms. Lewis was impressed by the ease and success of the grant and how well the students responded to the program.

For other school districts that receive a Project Produce grant, Ms. Lewis offers a couple pieces of advice. The first is to ask for separate invoices from vendors for products specific to the Project Produce grant. This helps keep track of expenses and how much of the grant funds remain as you continue

programming. The other is to coordinate educational efforts with teachers in order to take advantage of the full range of learning opportunities. Ms. Lewis herself plans to apply for more Project Produce grants for other schools in the district.

Successes

- The food service management company did a great job with the operation of the taste tests.
- Students loved trying new foods and shared their enthusiasm with their families at home.

Challenges

- The district switched food service management companies in the middle of the grant period, which created an unforeseen learning curve, mainly around procurement.
- Engaging teachers in the nutrition education portion of the program.

For resources related to Project Produce, visit www.thelunchbox.org.

