



Learnings from the Field



Pueblo City Schools

Pueblo, CO

District Enrollment:

17,000

Production Model: Self-

operated

District F/R: 80%

School Year Implemented:

2016-2017

District ADP: 71%

No. of Grants Awarded: 4

East High School

Age Group: 9-12

School Size: Large (900+)

School Environment: Urban

School F/R: 62%

School ADP: 40%

Central High School

Age Group: 9-12

School Size: Medium (301-900)

School Environment: Urban

School F/R: 69%

School ADP: 41%

Centennial High School

Age Group: 9-12

School Size: Large (900+)

School Environment: Urban

School F/R: 47%

School ADP: 55%

South High School

Age Group: 9-12

School Size: Large (900+)

School Environment: Urban

School F/R: 50%

School ADP: 48%

Project Description

After seeing success in their district with both the Salad Bar to Schools grant and the USDA Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program, Pueblo City Schools sought to improve the fresh fruit and vegetable consumption at their four high schools. Through the Project Produce Grant, they created an initiative called “Try it Tuesday.”

Two Tuesdays per month throughout the majority of the school year, they hosted fresh fruit and vegetable tasting events during lunchtime. Cafeteria staff prepped pre-portioned cups of fruits and vegetables for student volunteers to pass out. They chose less traditional varieties, such as watermelon radishes, to peek the students’ curiosity. They also tried to feature local varieties whenever possible. In those cases, they showcased where the product came from and why eating local is important.

Student volunteers managed the tastings and provided nutrition information to their peers. Putting the students in charge helped to create a sense of

ownership and willingness around the program. When the students were encouraged to try new things by their peers rather than staff, they were more enthusiastic. It also counted towards the students' mandatory volunteer hours. Hannah Phillips, the district's Administrative Dietician, said the adventure of trying something new and mysterious, coupled with the encouragement from peer volunteers, helped get students engaged in the taste tests.

The district tried to draw from as many free and existing resources as possible in order to strengthen the program, while lightening the staff's workload. Ms. Phillips explained, "We tried to partner with board organizations such as the National Watermelon Board or the Pear Association. Any resources they can provide are great supplements for materials you'd have to create on your own. And it's all free!"

Successes

- The schools that needed the most improvement saw a lasting increase in fruit and vegetable consumption in the cafeteria.
- Trying new exotic fruits and vegetables served by their peers excited students.

Challenges

- There was a labor increase in the cafeteria in order to prepare all the fruits and vegetables.
- There were some challenges around a lack of commitment from certain student volunteers.

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

