



Westminster Community Charter School (WCCS) is a public K-8 charter school in Buffalo, NY, with 100% of students eligible for free and reduced meals in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program.

WHERE TO START?

The Westminster cafeteria employed a highly skilled cafeteria staff that served more than 50% fresh, scratch cooked meals. However, the program needed invigorating to re-engage the students and staff to the cafeteria program. As with any meal program, delicious food alone is not enough. Students need constant bombardment with messages of choosing healthy foods.

With guidance from Beyond Green Sustainable Food Partners (BGP), Westminster envisioned a new cafeteria program that would create a sustainable school community where students gain knowledge about wholesome foods in the school dining room, classroom, and community. Students, their families and school staff were encouraged to respectfully participate in food, nutrition, and sustainability education together as they nurtured their bodies, minds and the earth.

IDENTIFY PRIORITIES

BGP brought together key stakeholders of WCCS to work together and set goals for the food served in the cafeteria and education in the three areas previously outlined in the vision: dining room, classroom, and community. In the cafeteria their team decided upon increasing fresh, local, and sustainable food purchases.

In order to enhance student learning in the classroom the team choose to hire a full-time sustainability coordinator, incorporate food education into each academic subject, and conduct nutrition education lessons in the classroom. Cafeteria education included a student culinary club, culinary and dietetic table talks, and a student kitchen intern program where students would assist with meal preparation and other aspects of running the cafeteria. Finally, family cooking classes and parent education programs were chosen to expand the learning to the greater school community.



ACCOUNTABILITY

The use of specific, measurable goals compared to baseline data allowed BGP to support WCCS in achieving success. By continually monitoring and evaluating the data, BGP could adjust training methods or discuss new solutions with the team to make sure the project stayed on target to accomplish:

60% fresh food purchases

85% scratch-cooked meals

50% local foods

100% sustainable seafood

100% local, hormone, antibiotic free milk

Nutrition education lessons conducted with 500 students twice per week

8 student interns working 3 times per week in the cafeteria

Lunchroom table talks with 50 students 3 times per week

Monthly family cooking class with 15 students

Monthly parent programs

100% of kitchen scraps and trims composted

100% reusable dishes, utensils, and cups

GETTING RESULTS

Due to the hard working staff willing to grow and change, the school made significant strides in integrating healthy eating habits and connections to the food system into the fabric of student and community learning. In addition to saving \$100,000 in a school year through kitchen efficiencies and increasing quality, local food purchases, nutrition education and food tastings were conducted with a dietitian in classrooms for all K-6 grade students

twice weekly, making over 10,000 student connections this school year. The 7th grade girls weren't eating the school lunch prior to BGP's arrival, but with the improved food and constant education, this hard to reach group returned to eating in the school cafeteria. The student intern program inspired academically struggling students to increase their grade point average in order to continue their work in the kitchen.

TRAINING FOR SUCCESS

In a kitchen the little things make a big difference. BGP worked with the WCCS kitchen team to set up systems for long term sustainability. BGP implemented production logs to better evaluate their quantities made compared to quantities served, and scales to measure portions. Additionally, BGP set up and trained the kitchen team how to separate waste streams to implement a recycling and composting program, and worked with the team to develop a new menu of scratch-cooked snack items. BGP identified vendors to source local foods and instructed kitchen leadership in processes for ordering and preparing the local foods.



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to green things up?

WE CAN HELP!