

Case Study: FEEST

Who:

FEEST Seattle is a non-profit organization in Seattle, Washington. FEEST stands for “Food Empowerment Education and Sustainability Team”. Since they began in 2008, FEEST has grown a lot. They now hire 20-25 students from local high schools each year. These youth leaders work with FEEST staff and adult leaders in their communities. During their internship, FEEST interns prepare and organize a regular community dinner. They also raise awareness about food-related health issues in their communities.

The Battle:

FEEST youth leaders felt that food at Evergreen High School did not help them get the nutrients and energy they needed to do well in classes and after school activities. For example, although most teenagers think pizza and chocolate chip cookies are delicious, the sugar, fats, and limited nutrients in pizza and cookies left students feeling unfocused and tired in the afternoon. The FEEST interns dreamed of school lunches that strengthened their bodies and brains. Also, because students come from many different cultural backgrounds, FEEST youth leaders hoped for a diverse and nutritious school lunch menu.



Youth interns had students taste the new recipes at lunchtime and vote for their favorite sample.

Raise Awareness and Engage Others:

First, FEEST interns met with the school staff who make decisions about what food students eat during school – school district dietician and Director of Nutrition Services. After the first meeting, the interns established a regular, monthly meeting with them. These were the people to convince if the interns wanted to change the food at school.

Second, FEEST interns raised awareness with the rest of the student body. If the students liked a possible new school food item, then there was a better chance of adding it to the regular menu. The interns shared their ideas about healthy eating and diverse food options with the high school students.

Make Your Plan:

The interns planned to add at least one new item to the school food menu through this project. There are two criteria for adding an item to the lunch menu. First, it must meet school nutrition standards. Foods must be low in fat, salt and sugar and be from the essential food groups for health (fruit, vegetables, protein and dairy). Second, students have to like the food (in other words, it has to sell well). A food that does not meet both criteria will not be added to the menu. It was also important to the interns for the food to use fresh produce grown in the northwestern United States and to reflect the cultural diversity of the students.

Each month, the interns created a food item that met all their criteria. Then, they planned to sample the food items with the student body during lunch periods, gathering feedback about whether students liked the new foods.

Implement Your Plan:

Each month, during their meeting with the two district nutrition staff members, the interns gave feedback about food menus, promotion of foods, and policies about nutrition at school. The interns suggested and tested new food items including Malaysian Pickles, Summer Berry Salad, and Butternut Squash Curry. The lunch time tastings of new food items became a popular event. Students voted on the samples, and school nutrition staff evaluated how well the food items met school food standards.

Butternut Squash Curry was officially added to the rotation of entrees offered at Evergreen High School cafeteria. Because squash is harvested in fall, this dish was added to the menu in the late fall and winter months. When possible, the Butternut Squash Curry uses squash grown by farmers in Washington and Oregon. As for reflecting the cultural diversity of the student body, one student said that it tasted just like her grandmother's cooking!

Evaluate Your Plan:

*The interns evaluated their efforts by collecting feedback from the nutrition staff and students about school lunch items. For example, the interns looked at cost, nutrition, and popularity of existing school lunch offerings and compared them with food options they hoped to add. Then, the interns collected more information about food offerings that were not added to the school lunch menu. They may have been curious why it did not meet nutrition standards or why students did not like the food. Because the relationship between students and the nutrition staff was important for this project, the FEEST interns could assess the partnership too.

* While the original story does not include a direct description of the interns' evaluation efforts, we are able to describe these likely actions based on the description that was provided.

Used with permission from FEEST Seattle; Source information: "Press Release: Highline Students Advocate for Less Pizza, More Greens in the Cafeteria," (2018, March 28). Retrieved from <https://feestseattle.org/press-release-highline-students-advocate-less-pizza-greens-cafeteria/>.



Extension

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