



Stories from the Field: Concordia Charter School

January 18, 2022

1:30 PM – 2:00 PM

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS LEARNING CODES: 1130, 1230, 3230, 4110, 4150



Meet Your Host



Kim Ruiz, RDN

Health and Nutrition Services Specialist

Welcome!



The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) Stay upLIFTed Webinar Series was created for YOU, the child nutrition professional, to learn and get inspired in how and what you feed your students!

This year, we hope to inspire you during another challenging school year by providing you with relevant nutrition information that you can use in your programs, while also continuing to shine a light on Arizona directors who are keeping their nutrition initiatives in mind as they operate their programs this year.

January Spotlight

Concordia Charter School



*Rachel Gomez-Acosta
Wellness Coordinator
Concordia Charter School*

School Profile

Enrollment: 120 (K-6th Grade)

Free/Reduced Percentage: 92%

Number of sites: 1



Concordia Charter School

142 N. Date St., Mesa, AZ 85201
concordiacharter.org

Connect with us!

@concordiacharterschool

@concordiacharterschoolmesa



School Profile

Before COVID-19

of meals served per day: 195

(Breakfast & Lunch)

Lunch ADP: 105

Since COVID-19

of meals served per day: 169

(Breakfast & Lunch)

Lunch ADP: 99



School Profile

Current Learning & Feeding Model

- In-person, with COVID Mitigation Plan in place
- Staggered arrival/departure times
- Increased spacing between students at cafeteria tables
- Breakfast seating by class
- Minimized class overlap during lunch & tightened lunch schedule
- Lunch service at the table (vs. serving from kitchen window)



Nutrition Initiative

Topic: Conducting Successful Taste Tests

Why we focus on...

Conducting Successful Taste Tests

- Student engagement/buy-in = Increased acceptability and participation
- Opportunity to connect nutrition promotion, Farm to School, and garden education to cafeteria (Local Wellness Policy implementation)
- Teaching students to be "Food Explorers" and develop skills for lifelong healthy eating habits at home
- Investment in our program - We want a creative, exciting, and student-centered program

Conducting Successful Taste Tests

How we put it into practice!

Preparation:

- Coordinate with team and pick a date for taste test (less complex menu day, ingredient procurement, recipe review by kitchen staff, etc.) *1-2 months prior*
- Create visual promotion for both students & staff (bulletin board & posters) *3-5 days prior*
 - Include recipe name & key ingredients in promotional materials. Bonus: Locally-sourced ingredients & info
- Share on social media to include families! *1-3 days prior*



Conducting Successful Taste Tests

How we put it into practice!

Day of taste test:

- *"Try-It Bite"* encouraged: Give permission to decide it isn't their favorite. Talk up how important it is to just TRY it.
- Voting categories of "Loved It," "Liked It," or "Tried It"
- Eliminating negative language - *"Don't yuck someone else's yum."*
- Best practice: Tally marks/dots on poster or bucket votes to eliminate peer pressure (vs. group voting) utilizing emojis



Implementing Taste Tests During COVID

How we put it into practice!

- Choose easier prep days and recipes that are less labor-intensive.
- Since a display is not an option, we put extra effort into making our individual samples as delicious and colorful
- We use the bucket/popsicle stick method
 - Large yogurt tubs with emoji/categories printed on each
 - Buckets taped to a large tray and popsicle stick laid out on the tray per student
 - Tray is taken around café and students vote by placing their stick in their desired bucket
 - Sticks in each bucket counted at the end of lunch and everything is sanitized for next use



Conducting Successful Taste Tests

Promotion tips:

- Keep it simple
- Okay to start small
- Remember to include photos of ingredients
- Include sourcing information whenever possible (local farm name, school garden, etc.)
- Take pictures to share with the community



Conducting Successful Taste-Tests

The voting process:

- Create incentive (gotta taste to vote!)
- Allow other evaluation parameters for hesitant children (i.e. how it looks or smells) to build confidence as a "Food Explorer"
- Direct interaction with staff during the tasting is KEY!!
- Use both words and emojis for categories
- Individual voting is more accurate than group voting



Sample Taste-Test Item

Breakfast Item

Green Eggs & Ham Breakfast Muffins

- Taste-test conducted at Family Literacy Night with students and families
- Utilized greens (chard/spinach) from school garden
- Recipe provided to families to try at home
- Item has been incorporated into school menu

Green Eggs & Ham Muffins 

Ingredients makes 6 servings

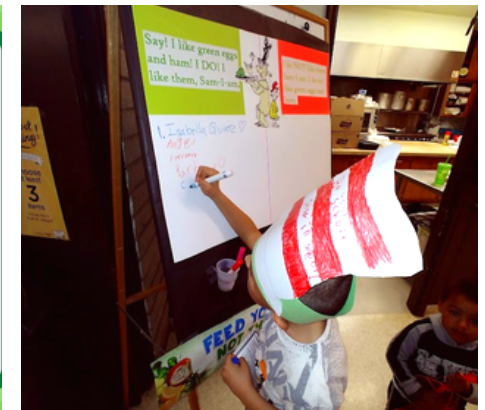
6 eggs	2 cups greens, chopped (kale, swiss chard, spinach, etc.)
1/4 cup milk	1/4 cup shredded cheese
1/4 tsp. salt	1/4 cup ham, diced (optional)
1/4 tsp. pepper	

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spray muffin tin with non-stick cooking spray.
2. Whisk eggs and milk. Add salt, pepper, and greens.
3. Fill muffin tins 3/4 full. Top with cheese and ham (optional).
4. Bake 20-25 minutes until middle is set (no longer liquid)

Tip: Add other veggies like green chilies, broccoli, tomatoes, & peppers!

Nutrition (per serving)
98 calories, 6.5 g. fat, 364 mg. sodium, 10 g. protein, 2.5 g. carbohydrate

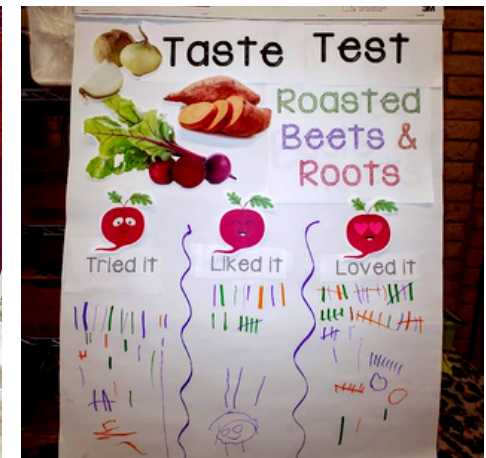


Sample Taste-Test Item

Lunch Item

Roasted Beets & Sweets

- Recipe that features locally-grown winter veggies (beets, carrots, greens)
- Taste test conducted at lunchtime
- Recipe featured in Thanksgiving menu
- Acceptability increased with Farm-to-School connection



Top 5 Tips for...

Conducting Successful Taste Tests

- Utilize local ingredients whenever possible - Builds excitement and connection.
- Focus on the process over the outcome (baby steps).
- Ask questions ("what would you change about this recipe to like it better?").
- Empower your students as young chefs, researchers, and scientists.
- Presentation matters! We first eat with our eyes so make the sample visually appealing.

Thank You!

Rachel Gomez-Acosta

Concordia Charter School

Phone: 480-461-0555

Email:

rgomezacosta@concordiacharter.org

Visit our webpage: concordiacharter.org

Follow us on Facebook:

@concordiacharterschool

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@concordiacharterschoolmesa



Resources

UPLIFTed Operator Spotlight!
Showing the passion, talents, and hard work of Arizona child nutrition professionals.

Rachel Gomez-Acosta
Wellness Coordinator, Concordia Charter School

Hometown: Scottsdale, Arizona
Current City of Residence: Chandler, Arizona
Favorite Childhood School Meal: Turkey, Mashed Potatoes and Quinoa
When I was a kid I wanted to grow up to be a Nurse or Teacher

What was your first job in child nutrition?
NSLP Coordinator

What prompted you to start working to support child nutrition?
The opportunity to develop a new program at a growing school. I was also excited to return to the education field after a bit of a break.

Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.
I loved the idea of buying food from local farms but it took time to build those relationships and figure out how best to grow a sustainable farm to school program. The passion for fresh, local foods also needed a thriving school garden program and several wellness policy implementation activities including taste tests and nutrition promotion.

Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see related to Child Nutrition Program operations at your organization?
We would love to incorporate more scratch cooking using locally-sourced ingredients and lots of exciting hands-on professional development for our whole Nutrition Services team.

What are the top three skills a Child Nutrition Program operator should have?
Passion and vision for the "big picture" feasibility and creativity and the ability to communicate in a way that builds and inspires a community.

What advice would you give to a younger version of yourself just starting in the role of a Child Nutrition Program operator?
Be willing to take risks and try big things!

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Operator Spotlight

School Meals in Arizona
How'd they do that?

Concordia Charter School
Conducting Successful Taste Tests

Taste tests provide students an opportunity to influence their school menus and help create excitement around new or existing items. They can help foster a relationship of trust and collaboration between students and nutrition teams.

- Feedback from students can help in menu planning, making recipe adjustments, and minimizing food waste.
- Conducting taste tests can result in higher participation rates and increased acceptability of menu items overall.

Steps for a Successful Taste Test

- 1. Make a plan with your nutrition team. (1-2 months prior)**
 - Select your recipe or ingredients.
 - Analyze preparation needs.
 - Determine the date test.
- 2. Promote the Event. (3-5 days prior)**
 - Create a display or taste test station that includes:
 - Recipe name and key ingredients
 - Sourcing information
 - Photos of recipe and ingredients
 - Date/Time/location of taste test
 - Invite your students to the test and take photos of your finished product and ingredients to use in your display.
 - Take photos and post to the school or your social media profile and website. (1-2 days prior)
- 3. Ensure distribution is engaging and visually appealing.**
 - Be creative with your display or taste test station.
 - Share a short description of the item that will help build excitement for the tasting.
- 4. Collect feedback.**
 - Use collection methods that are simple and easy for students to understand.
 - Consider: use swags to represent categories for: (appetized, loved/hated).
 - Express other feedback such as: (shorts, fully made, baskets, etc).
 - If using paper surveys, keep writing simple and brief (1-2 minutes).
- 5. Maintain positivity throughout the process.**
 - Encourage students to try items with one bite.
 - Remind students that it is okay if a new food is not their favorite.

COVID-19 Mitigation Considerations

- Start with easy recipes that are not as labor-intensive.
- Display stations are not possible, put extra effort into making individual samples appealing.
- Use serving methods that do not require the use of a communal serving station.
- Food safety and sanitization of re-used items in between uses.

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Menu Planning/Promotion

How'd They Do That?

Top Five Tips for...

Conducting Successful Taste Tests

from... **Rachel Gomez-Acosta**
Wellness Coordinator, Concordia Charter School

- 1 Focus on the process over the outcome**
Perfecting your taste tests may take time. Try taking baby steps to get to your desired outcome.
- 2 Ask students for immediate feedback**
If students are unsatisfied with an item, ask questions like "What would you change to make it better?"
- 3 Empower your students**
Provide a narrative to your students empowering them as young chefs, food researchers, or food scientists!
- 4 Presentation matters!**
Students typically eat with their eyes first, so make your taste test samples as visually appealing as possible!
- 5 Utilize local ingredients whenever possible**
Mentioning the use of local ingredients helps build excitement and connections to personal experiences.

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Top 5 Tips

Top Five Tips

Research Rundown

Article:
Serving Vegetables First: A Strategy to Increase Vegetable Consumption in Elementary School Cafeterias

What did this study examine?

The objective of this study was to determine if offering vegetables prior to other meal components in the school lunch line would increase the overall consumption of vegetables for students in 3rd-grade-5th grade.

How was the study conducted?
During intervention days all students in the lunch line were offered pre-portioned amounts (3-4 pieces) of peppers prior to reaching the buffet area, where the peppers were offered once more. Students were told that they could consume the pre-portioned vegetable prior to reaching the buffet area.

How was the consumption of vegetables assessed?
The weight of the peppers consumed by each individual student was calculated for each study day. The weight consumed per student eating school lunch was then calculated by dividing the total amount of consumed vegetables across all students by the total number of students eating lunch.

Key Findings:

- 1 Acceptability of vegetables**
 - The mean number of students eating peppers increased 44% from an average of 45 students (9%) on the two control days without vegetables first, to an average of 346 students (95%) on the three days with vegetables first.
- 2 Individual consumption of vegetables when served first**
 - Intervention days showed an increase in consumption of peppers by weight (mean 4.1g per each child eating school lunch) when compared to days when peppers were not served first.
- 3 Total consumption of vegetable on days when served first**
 - Overall consumption of vegetables was greater on intervention days when compared to control and/or follow-up days (mean 5.4g vs 4.0 g).

Put it into practice!

- While students are waiting in line, offer small samples of known or unknown vegetables first before they receive their lunch. You can use this method with any food items, not just vegetables!
- When introducing a new menu item, holding a "taste test" by providing students with a small portion of the new item before reaching the serving line may increase the likelihood of them taking it.
- Try holding taste tests regularly in order to increase your students' interest in new menu items, or existing menu items that may need a resurgence in your lunch room.


References:
Barnes, B., Baska, M., Mann, T., Boshell, J.P., Mihalovic, E., & Wilkins, D.M. (2018). Serving vegetables first: A strategy to increase vegetable consumption in elementary school cafeterias. *Appetite*, 126, 102-112.

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Research Rundown

<https://www.azed.gov/hns/nslp/uplift/>


Resources



UPLIFT
LEARN. INSPIRE. FEED. TEACH.
Webinar Series

Using Taste Tests and Surveys to Engage Students in School Meals

November 19, 2019
1:30 PM – 2:00 PM
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS LEARNING CODE: 1220



Using Taste Tests and Surveys to Engage Students in School Meals
Recording | Slides

Taste Tests in Schools

Timeline and Checklist

Use this checklist to help stay on track with completing all of the tasks necessary for conducting a taste test in your school!

- 1-2 Months Prior** Goal Completion Date: _____
 - Determine where and when the taste test will take place
 - Reach out to brokers or other partners to set up an event
 - Determine what you will sample
 - Callow at least 2-3 weeks for special order items)
 - Select the students who will be involved
 - Determine how much staff you'll need
- 2-3 Weeks Prior** Goal Completion Date: _____
 - Create materials for the event
 - Promotional materials
 - Feedback cards
 - Surveys
 - Recipe Cards
 - Nutrition education
 - Begin advertising the event, if applicable
 - Purchase supplies
 - Tasting cups
 - Utensils
 - Decorations
 - Order the food
- 1 Week Prior** Goal Completion Date: _____
 - Ensure all food items, prices materials and supplies have been ordered and will be delivered on time
 - Train staff involved if applicable
 - Check in with principal or others involved
 - Continue to advertise, if applicable
- Day of the Event** Date: _____
 - Communicate the event during morning announcements
 - Ensure enough time for setup and food prep
 - Take pictures
 - Collect student feedback/surveys
- After the Event** Goal Completion Date: _____
 - Send a follow up letter to parents
 - Evaluate the event
 - Gather and analyze the data collected
 - Develop your action plan
 - Communicate the results to students



Taste Tests
Timeline and
Checklist

ORGANIZING A TASTE TEST

DISTRICT GOALS: EXPOSURE AND REPETITION

Deer Valley USD
Organizing
Taste Tests

DVUSD Food Critic: Student Tasting Experience


Directions:
1) Observe, smell, touch, and taste food.
2) Describe food.
3) Rate food below.
4) Name food.

Remember:
"Your YUCK might be someone else's YUM!"
→ Respect the experience and everyone participating. Taste is unique to EACH person and EACH opinion is valuable.

Describe food here!
Name food here!

For each category, circle which best shows your opinion.

Look	→	😞	😐	😄	😍
Smell	→	😞	😐	😄	😍
Texture	→	😞	😐	😄	😍
Taste	→	😞	😐	😄	😍



Deer Valley USD
Tasting
Experience

Looking Ahead

Join us next month!

February Stay upLIFTed Webinar

February 15, 2022

1:30 pm - 2:00 pm

Topic: TBD

Join us next month for our February Stay upLIFTed Webinar!



Thank you!

**Any questions?
Please type them into the chat bar now.**

If you are attending the live webinar, you will receive a link to complete the survey in EMS. After you complete the survey you can print a certificate of completion.

If you are watching the recorded webinar, you can access the survey link and certificate of completion at the end of the webinar slides.



 Kim Ruiz, ADE

Comprehension Check

Question #1

According to the speaker, conducting taste-tests regularly can help in getting student engagement/buy-in from students.

TRUE

FALSE

Comprehension Check

Question #1

According to the speaker, conducting taste-tests regularly can help in getting student engagement/buy-in from students.

 TRUE

FALSE

The correct answer is TRUE!

Comprehension Check

Question #2


According to the speaker, which of the following is not a step to consider when preparing for a taste-test?

- a. Coordinate with your team to pick a date for the taste-test
- b. Create visual promotional materials for students and staff
- c. Engage families about the taste-test through social media
- d. Buy quality items from your local grocery store for your taste-test

Comprehension Check

Question #2

According to the speaker, which of the following is not a step to consider when preparing for a taste-test?

- a. Coordinate with your team to pick a date for the taste-test
- b. Create visual promotional materials for students and staff
- c. Engage families about the taste-test through social media
-  d. Buy quality items from your local grocery store for your taste-test

The correct answer is D!

Comprehension Check

Question #3

According to the speaker, ensuring that your samples are visually appealing is not necessary for a successful taste-test.

TRUE

FALSE

Comprehension Check

Question #3

According to the speaker, ensuring that your samples are visually appealing is not necessary for a successful taste-test.

TRUE

→ FALSE

The correct answer is **FALSE!**

Congratulations!

You have completed the [Recorded Webinar: upLIFT Stories from the Field: Concordia Charter School](#)

To request a certificate, please go to the next slide.

In order to count this training toward your Professional Standards training hours, the training content must align with your job duties.

Information to include when documenting this training for Professional Standards:

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- Learning Codes: 1130, 1230, 3230, 4110, 4150
- Length: 0.5 hour

Please Note:

- Attendees must document the amount of training hours indicated regardless of the amount of time it takes to complete it.

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