

Cafeteria Chronicles: Quitman Independent School District

Starting the day off on the right foot includes eating a healthy breakfast.

To craft a healthier breakfast at **Quitman Independent School District** in Quitman, TX, the school nutrition team began looking at sources of added sugars on the menu. Cereal was an easy place to start, says Director of Child Nutrition Shannon Almand. After switching to cereals lower in added sugars, students barely noticed any difference at breakfast!

Check out the breakfast trailblazers of Quitman ISD in this [video](#).

Next up for breakfast was replacing donuts and breakfast pastries with protein-rich recipes like Breakfast Smoothies, Breakfast Tacos and Breakfast Pizza. At first, there was apprehension from students and staff, since the donuts and breakfast pastries were well liked, and simple to serve.

To overcome this challenge, Almand encouraged her nutrition team and explained their role in providing a more nutritious breakfast to students. During staff development days and on summer break, the nutrition team was given training to boost their confidence in preparing the new scratch-made breakfast items.

“...just by knowing that they were serving something healthier...when they saw their students, the kids, loving it and excited about it, it really gave them more confidence in what they were doing, a sense of pride and ownership.”

-Shannon Almand, Director of Child Nutrition, Quitman ISD

Getting student buy-in is critical to making successful menu changes, so the team at Quitman organized taste-testing for their new breakfast lineup. To encourage students to try the new recipes, the Quitman team embraced a social media trend and drew unicorn faces on the smoothie cups, which students loved.

“I had a student come to me not long ago and...she thought it was really cool that we were actually serving something that was on social media.”

-Shannon Almand, Director of Child Nutrition, Quitman ISD

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Thankfully their efforts paid off, with 89% of students at the elementary school approving of the new recipes that were sampled.

Not only are students loving the new breakfast options at Quitman, but the administrative staff have also noticed a difference in student behavior and performance since launching their new breakfast menu.

“...what we saw was the energy level lasting longer. And so, their ability to stay focused and stay engaged in the classroom by the time they got to lunch improved... our kids aren't getting sluggish and tired by 10 o'clock or so.”

-Chris Mason, Superintendent, Quitman ISD

To round out their new breakfast menu, fresh berries, melon and citrus fruit were added to the daily breakfast menu. Although the new breakfast recipes and fresh fruit require more prep time, the team at Quitman agrees the time is well worth it to give students a more nutritious start to their day. These efforts led to Quitman earning the **Breakfast Trailblazer Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) Recognition Award**.

Congratulations to the team at Quitman ISD for leading the way in school nutrition!

[Click here](#) to learn more about Quitman ISD's journey to healthier school meals.

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