

Cafeteria Chronicles: Santa Anna Independent School District

Santa Anna Independent School District (SAISD) in rural Santa Anna, TX, is making a big impact on the wellbeing of its students with support from the USDA and Action for Healthy Kids' Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) grant. As an HMI grantee, SAISD is enhancing nutrition education and introducing more scratch made meals at breakfast and lunch.

A large focus of SAISD's grant project is incorporating regular taste-testing events into the district's afterschool program. Every other week, students sample new foods that are healthy, culturally diverse, and packed with nutritious ingredients such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. These taste-test events give students an opportunity to try foods and flavors that may be new to them. Student feedback from these taste-tests guides menu changes, making healthy eating fun and engaging.

Learn more about SAISD's effort in this [video](#).

The HMI grant has also helped SAISD upgrade kitchen equipment, supporting their efforts to incorporate more scratch cooking and local ingredients into the menu. New tools like a warmer, milk cooler, and ovens help the district serve a wider variety of fresh, nutritious meals to students, including foods that reflect different cultures and dietary needs.

This project aligns with the USDA's updates to the school nutrition standards, which emphasize more whole grains, fruits, and vegetables while reducing added sugars and sodium. By expanding their scratch-cooking capabilities and incorporating student feedback, SAISD is ensuring they meet these standards while offering meals that students are excited to eat.

In a district where many students face food insecurity, these changes make a significant impact. With the help of the HMI grant, Santa Anna ISD is not just feeding students; they're expanding their palates, promoting better health, and fostering a love of nutritious foods.

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