

Cafeteria Chronicles: Thornton Fractional High School District #215

Thornton Fractional High School District #215 in Lansing, Illinois, received Action for Healthy Kids and USDA's Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) Grant to help fund small changes that made a big difference in the nutrition of students in the district.

HMI Grant funds have been directed toward student surveys and engagement, menu analysis software, and staff training. Additionally, the district put HMI funds toward updating outdated kitchen equipment and expanding their existing garden to increase production of school-grown foods to use on the menu. The district had already been providing some scratch-made meals to students; however, these changes allowed them to expand those efforts.

See the efforts of Thornton Fractional High School District #215 in this [video](#).

The district has a student-centric approach to menu planning and conducts taste-testing events and student surveys to obtain feedback and suggestions. One change that was made because of this feedback is the incorporation of more scratch-made, savory menu items at breakfast, including Baked Chilaquiles, Breakfast Quesadillas, Breakfast Charcuterie, Overnight Oats, Egg Bites, and Diced Potato Breakfast Bowls.

This change not only added more variety to the menu, but it also helped reduce added sugars at breakfast because the new items replaced pre-packaged, sweet menu items. To further reduce added sugars, the district also stopped serving flavored milk. Decreasing added sugars in school meals is consistent with USDA's updated school nutrition standards and helped Thornton Fractional be one of the first districts to earn the Breakfast Trailblazer Award, recognizing their dedication to improving the quality and appeal of its school meals.

Thornton Fractional's achievements highlight the impact of student engagement and innovative strategies in school nutrition. By focusing on student feedback, embracing scratch cooking, and using fresh, local ingredients, the district is offering healthier, more appealing meals for its students.

Congratulations to Thornton Fractional High School District #215 for their remarkable efforts and leadership in enhancing nutrition and well-being for their students!

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