

Cafeteria Chronicles: Watertown Public Schools

Students at Watertown Public Schools in Watertown, CT, enjoy taste testing events, a customizable salad bar, local ingredients, and educational opportunities in the district's culinary garden as part of their school nutrition program. Over the past year, the district has shown how strategic initiatives can enhance school nutrition, student engagement, and educational opportunities.

With funding from Action For Healthy Kids and USDA's Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) Grant, the district implemented three key initiatives: hiring a Nutrition Education Coordinator, expanding district's culinary garden, and adding a full salad bar at the middle and high schools.

These efforts earned Watertown Public Schools two prestigious HMI Recognition Awards: the Innovative School Lunch Makeover and the Innovation in Nutrition Education Award, highlighting their dedication to fostering a healthy environment for students as well as celebrating their efforts to meet USDA's updated school nutrition standards.

Emily Doering, MS, RD, the district's Food Service Director, notes that the initiatives funded by the HMI Grant have significantly benefited the district. Students are eager to line up for the new salad bars, which have made the cafeteria an engaging space where students can actively participate in their nutritional choices. The new Nutrition Education Coordinator has developed curriculums, hosted taste testing events, promoted new menu options, and engaged with the school community. The garden expansion has offered hands-on educational opportunities and supplied herbs for school meals.

Learn more about the Watertown Public Schools in [this video](#).

Congratulations to Watertown Public Schools for their work to transform school meals!

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