Background

Students need a school environment with access to healthy choices in order to thrive. Durham’s Innovative Nutrition Program (DINE) partners with schools to make the healthy choice the easy choice for students at school in the classroom, cafeteria, playground and beyond.

Challenge— Increasing Healthy Food Consumption

Childhood obesity is a serious problem in North Carolina and the United States. When children are overweight or obese they are more likely to develop chronic diseases as adults. Eating a balanced diet based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans is important to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

The school cafeteria is a great place to focus on supporting student wellness since balanced meals are served there every day. The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement provides research-backed strategies to help cafeterias increase enthusiasm about healthy eating and nudge children toward making good food choices.

Solution

The cafeteria staff at Spring Valley Elementary School was up to the challenge to get kids excited and eat more healthy foods!

The Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard was used to identify strengths and opportunities in the cafeteria. The following strategies were implemented:

1) Vary the Vegetables - Veggies were promoted through taste tests, announcements & contests.

2) Lunchroom Atmosphere— New signage and posters were created to get everyone excited!

3) School Community Involvement - Students created new names for menu items and drew labels.

Results

- Implemented Smarter Lunchroom strategies which resulted in a 10 point scorecard increase
- Promoted to the GOLD lunchroom award
- 51% of students reported “LOVE IT” and 19% of students reported “LIKE IT” for the locally sourced roasted sweet potato taste test
- Catchy, new names were created for cafeteria menu items like King Kong Kale and Perfect Pear.