

Promoting Nutritious School Meals through Visual Menus and Nutrition Education Posters



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Background

Highline School District

- Serves over 18,000 students
- Provides free meals to all students
- Offers Homemade meals & provide local fresh fruits & veggies
- Goal: *make meals accessible for all students, alleviating stress about food, enabling them to focus on academics*
- Factors, like short lunch times and language barriers, can still make it hard for all students to completely benefit from these meals



Offer Versus Serve & USDA Guidelines

- Allows students to have more choice in what they take for lunch, while being able to decline other foods they don't want
- For meals to be reimbursable:
 - Schools must *offer* a certain number of food components
 - Students *serve* or take a certain number of food items or components

A world of

HEALTHY PEOPLE

Objectives

1. Create updated signage with photos of the meal being provided that day
2. Develop nutrition education posters encouraging students to follow the USDA requirements for meal reimbursement

Methods

- Spent time at schools to learn lunchtime dynamics and gather info on current signage & education
- Develop survey asking students & teachers about current meal signage
- Analyze Production Record Data
- Develop visual meal signage and nutrition education posters

Photographing Meals

- Pictures were taken at Mount Rainier High School's production kitchen
- Experimented photographing items in a photo box & under natural lighting



Yogurt Parfait with WA Blackberries photographed in a Photo Box (left) and under natural lighting (right)

Meal Signage with Pictures

Current Meal Signage Opinions

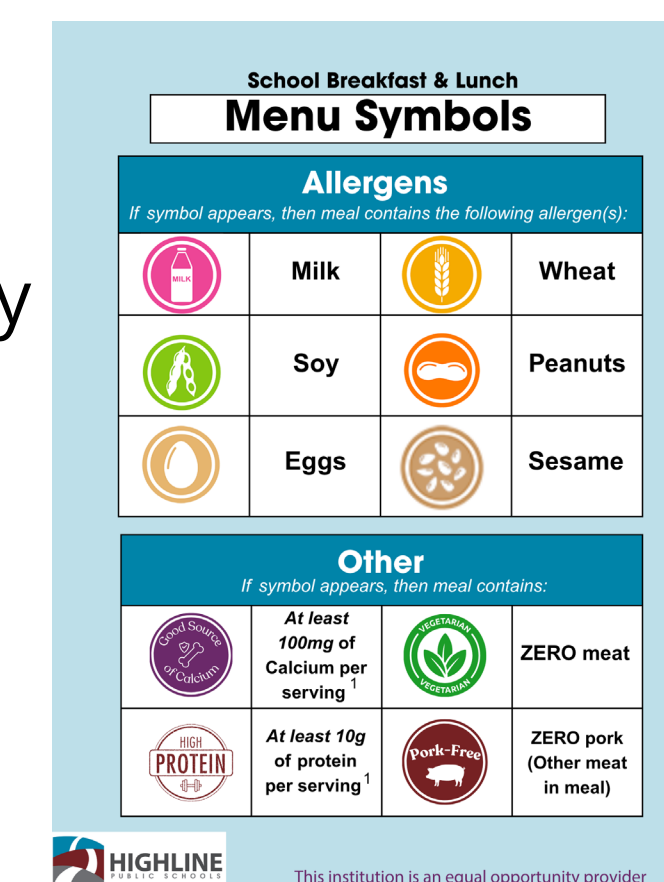
- 60% of students reported seeing meal signs somewhere at school
- 100% of Elementary school teachers reported no signs easily visible to students
- 33% of students reported being unsure of the meal name on the sign

- **Top 3 things to include on signs:**

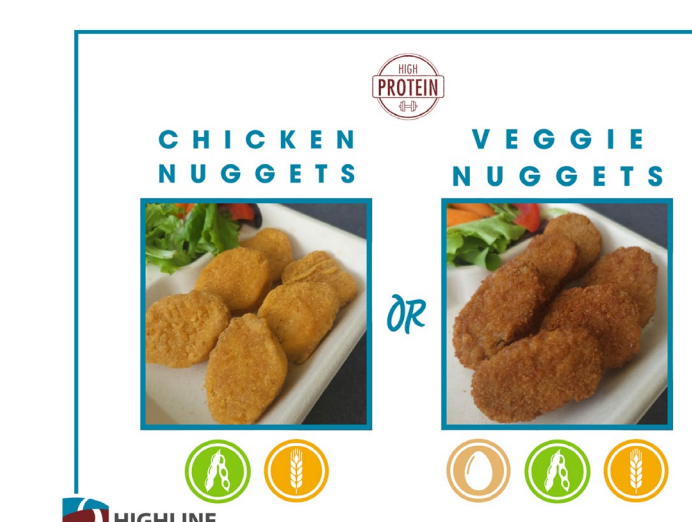
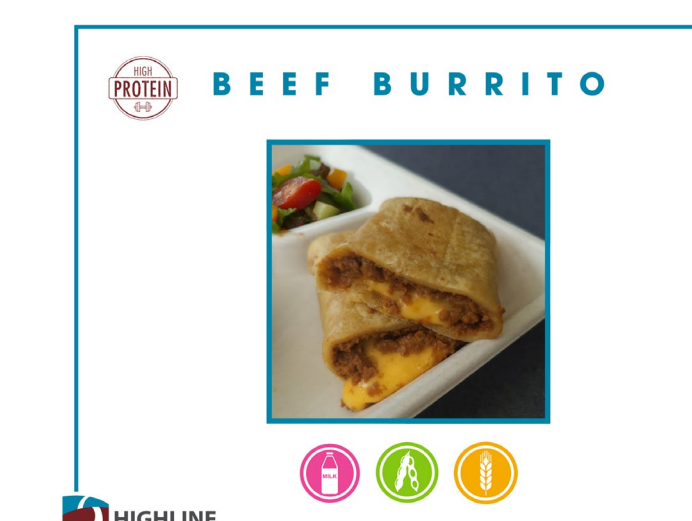
1. Hot meal of the day
2. Vegetarian meals
3. Common allergens

New Signage

- 2 weeks' worth of visual meal signs
- Poster key of menu symbols



➤ 6 Lunch signs



➤ 4 Breakfast signs



➤ 4 Grab & Go signs



Nutrition Education Posters

Posters Explaining USDA Requirements

- **33%** of students **answered "no"** to being aware of meal requirements



Salad Bar Poster

➤ Meal Requirements:

- ½ cup fruit for breakfast
- ½ fruit OR veggie for lunch

- Only **37%** of students answered that **taking ½ cup of fruit or veggies** was one of the requirements
- During meal service, students often needed reminders to take enough fruits/veggies



Recommended Next Steps:

- Place signs in preferred places
 - By the register for High School
 - Outside cafeteria door for elementary
- Create signs for additional meals as able
 - Coordinate with photography class
- Send out surveys again to reassess after signs/posters have been up for a while