



Chicken Breast with salt-free seasoning, Honey Coin Carrots, Mashed Potatoes, Hot Roll 51% Wheat, Fresh Orange with slits for easy peeling, Slushy Peaches, and 1% Milk.

FAST FACTS

NAME OF SCHOOL DISTRICT:	Cabell Schools
LOCATION:	Huntington, WV
GRADES SERVED:	Pre-K-12th Grade
NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED:	10,000
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE- OR REDUCED-PRICE MEALS (PRE-PANDEMIC):	48%

At Cabell County Schools, Foodservice Director Travis Austin and Coordinator of Cooks and Cafeteria Support Mary Cook recognize that offering healthy, delicious meals to students takes time, training, and a dedicated workforce. With a robust training program, a new cookbook on the way, and recognition from First Lady Michelle Obama, Cabell County Schools is an example of what can be achieved when staff are committed to lasting change.

CHANGING HEARTS AND MINDS STARTS WITH STAFF

Prior to the pandemic, Cabell County Schools were working hard to reduce sodium on their menus and were close to meeting sodium reduction Target 2 (<1,080 mg of sodium for a high school lunch). Cook noted that the most important part of making change is getting the cooks on board. She said leveling with staff and explaining that while, for example, sodium reduction might not be a priority for the cooks, it's what is best for the kids they are serving.

“ IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN WHAT YOU'RE DOING, HOW DO YOU EXPECT OTHERS TO JOIN IN? ”
 –MARY COOK, CABELL COUNTY SCHOOLS

MAKING RECIPE MODIFICATION FUN

Cabell County takes an all-hands-on-deck approach to improving nutrition. Staff wanted to keep student favorites on the menu, like BBQ sauce for chicken nuggets, so the cooks got together at the end of the workdays and worked on reducing sodium in the recipe. And they made it fun - the cooks split up into teams and competed to see which team could come up with the best recipe. This approach was so successful that they were asked to train other districts in West Virginia and have been doing so for approximately seven years.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Cook notes that the district has been scratch cooking for years and attributes that to their success reducing sodium and offering delicious whole grain-rich grains. For example, they make their own lower-sodium salad dressings for the salad bar, steam their vegetables, and scratch cook hot rolls.

Kitchen equipment is critical too - the district uses steamers to prepare fresh vegetables, tilt skillets, and a combi oven that acts as an air fryer allows them to make crunchy French fries that are tasty without added salt.



Staff enjoying the district training.



Samples from the scratch cooking training: Caesar Salad with homemade ranch dressing, Queso BQ Buffalo Chicken Wrap, Pork BQ Nachos, Pork BQ Sandwich with Asian Slaw Queso Shredded Chicken Wrap, Caesar Chicken Wrap, and Low Salt Chili.



Cabell County's award-winning meat sauce featured on The Chew

AWARD-WINNING RECIPES

Cabell County's scratch cooked recipes have received national recognition. In 2014, Cook was a guest on ABC's The Chew with First Lady Michelle Obama. The district's spaghetti and meat sauce recipe won the on-show competition, and they received requests from other districts for the recipe. This recipe and many others will soon be published in Cabell County Schools' cookbook.

This story was developed and based on an interview and email correspondence with the district from in from May to June 2022. Compliance with nutrition standards is self-reported and has not been verified by CSPI.

School Website: <https://www.cabellschools.com/>

For more information, please contact policy@cspinet.org

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