

# Laconia School District

## Project EXTRA-Afterschool Meals

### Background

The Laconia School district serves a K-12 student population at five schools, with Project EXTRA afterschool programs at each site. Currently, just over 60 percent of students qualify for free and reduced-price meals. Hearing that afterschool snack was not enough to satisfy the children's hunger, and that many children were going without dinners at home, motivated Project EXTRA Assistant Program Director Beth Vachon to investigate and become an early adopter of the Afterschool Meals Program. Laconia was the first district to begin serving meals through CACFP in NH. **21,000 afterschool snacks and 9,291 dinners** were served this year, free of charge to eligible students.

### First Steps

After learning that the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act had expanded the availability of afterschool meals to qualifying programs in all 50 states, Beth approached Tim Goossens, Director of Food Services for the Laconia School District in 2012. Laconia Food Services was already the provider of afterschool snacks for Project EXTRA, and the strong partnership made sense for both programs. This led to Laconia and Project EXTRA becoming the first district in NH to start the program in that year. The program was piloted at Woodland Heights School under the direction of Jake Colby, Site Coordinator, and Tess Seymour, Kitchen Manager. The program eventually expanded to include all three elementary schools. Plans are in place to include the middle and high school programs in 2014/15.

### Challenges and Solutions

A big concern from food service departments is covering labor demands and costs within the confines of the meal reimbursement. Laconia Food Service was able to use their full-time employees within the meal reimbursement amount. Project EXTRA staff serve the meal and record numbers served, provide a good "family-style" dining experience for students, all while ensuring the enrichment-based academic integrity of the program. Without the close partnership between the Laconia School District, Food Services and Project EXTRA, this program would not be possible for the students while at the same time staying within budget.



Another concern was the *type* of meal to serve, within the guidelines of the USDA food requirements, knowing that there is a time factor between preparation and serving. Hot meals were experimented with but cold meals were preferred by students and staff.

### Sample Weekly Menu

Sunflower Butter & Jelly on WG White Sunchips Fresh Vegetable Fruit or Juice Choice of Milk	WG Benefit Bar String Cheese Trix Yogurt Fresh Vegetable Fruit or Juice Choice of Milk	Turkey Sandwich on WG White Sunchips Fresh Vegetable Fruit or Juice Choice of Milk	WG Bagel w/cream cheese String Cheese Trix Yogurt Fresh Vegetable Fruit or Juice Choice of Milk	Ham and Cheese on WG White Sunchips Fresh Vegetable Fruit or Juice Choice of Milk
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### Impact

Woodland Heights Site Coordinator Jake Colby: "Parents seemed more relaxed when they arrived to pick up their child which led us to more positive interactions together. They seemed to visibly appreciate the dinners

being provided. Student behavior was not as prominent during end of the day pick-up time as it had been in the past and students were less easily upset and slightly more willing to cooperate with others at the end of a long day. Students came to enjoy dinner time once the process was routine. Especially when games were introduced to play while eating together."

Jackie O'Neil Viar, Pleasant Street School Site Coordinator, noticed that "Students enjoyed their dinners while talking with teachers and friends. They were less agitated at the end of afternoon activities because they had dinner and friends to look forward to. Some students and parents thought it was convenient to during busy times of the year (baseball practice/games/dance class). I found it comforting to know that my most needy students were able to be part of a community dinner while getting the nourishment they needed."

At Elm Street School, Site Coordinator Aja Montague reflects on her experience: "When we first started the dinner program (December 2nd) we noticed that students did not sit together as a whole, they sat in small groups. However by the end of December students were starting to sit together more as a family. If they noticed that a student didn't head down for dinner they became concerned and would make sure a dinner was saved for that particular student. It really brought the students together as a team and resulted in friendships that were not established prior to the dinner program. I had several parents come to me very emotional. They thanked me and our program for providing a healthy meal to their child, free of charge."