



QUICK STATS

PARTNER SINCE	2010
ENROLLMENT (2016-17)	13,000
SCHOOL BUILDINGS	37
MEALS SERVED ANNUALLY	3.5 Million
BRANDS	<p>ELEMENTARY Cool*Caf</p> <p>HIGH SCHOOL Custom Bros Grill Green Street Deli Tortilla Fresh Mex Corner Crust Original Pizza</p>

Upgraded Kitchens, New Menus and Community Involvement = A Recipe for Success

By 2010, the Camden City School District’s dining program was operating at a significant deficit. Its kitchen facilities were outdated and student participation in the dining program had fallen to record low numbers despite the fact that all meals are free due to Camden’s participation in the Community Eligibility Program (CEP). As a result, the district needed to review all of its options, including outsourcing dining services.

Before this could be productive, however, the district first had to overcome its misconceptions about outsourcing. During their review, they realized that partnering with Aramark would actually lead to greater dining variety and food quality, and more development opportunities for dining team members. The hope was that this in turn would increase student participation and community satisfaction.

The Aramark team hit the ground running with several new dining initiatives. Aramark invested in new kitchen equipment and marketing, revamped the menu with new dining options based on its own Student ViewPOINT™ survey, and hosted local focus groups with students and parents.

“The entire dining experience for our students became delightful,” said Food Service Director Joel Hernandez. “What’s more, we’re still innovating. Our next initiative is a food truck.

We anticipate an incredible student response, because we’ve included the community in planning and are introducing new items and flavors that students are excited about.”

Aramark completely revamped lunch by adding five new meal stations set up in a food court style environment, including: Custom Bros Grill, Green Street Deli, Tortilla Fresh Mex and Corner Crust Pizza. Not only did lunch participation improve, but breakfast participation improved as well.

Lunch participation is at an all-time high of 90% and breakfast participation increased almost 30%.

“Also impacting participation was the expansion of our Breakfast in the Classroom program,” Hernandez said. “This new program took nearly three months to deploy in each and every grade school. Participation jumped from 42% to 70% and students got a much more nutritious meal to start their day. Teachers also noticed that they performed better in class.”

Financially transformed program

Grab-and-Go Meals increased breakfast participation by 30%

90% of students participate in the lunch program

Innovative Food Truck Concept



Challenges

Outdated Equipment

Schools' kitchen equipment was outdated with minimal storage space to expand meal options and deliver a superior student experience.



Solutions and Results

New Kitchen Equipment

Invested in new kitchen equipment, including bay sinks, hand sinks, ovens, walk-in refrigerators and freezers.

Increased Annual Dining Profit

Created the facilities needed to significantly expand the students' dining experience. Menu monotony and slow service are no longer issues. Thanks to the expansion, the district now operates with an annual dining surplus.

Unappealing Meal Options

Students were bored with lunchtime dining options and believed that breakfast service was too slow. As a result students opted out of eating at school and instead purchased junk food at local corner markets.



More Options and Healthy Upgrades

Redesigned meal options to meet students' evolving desires, tastes and preferences and overcome menu fatigue—including five new dining concepts and new grab-and-go breakfast selections. Included in the upgrades were healthy alternatives such as fresh fruit and produce, grilled chicken and a wide array of flavor profiles. In the elementary schools, Aramark launched the Cool*Caf program, which utilizes a cartoon mascot named Ace. Ace visits schools to educate students on healthy eating habits.

Increased Participation

Increased lunch participation to an all-time high of 90% and breakfast participation increased almost 30%.

Community Pressure

Community pushed back on outsourcing dining services, believing that it would result in lower-quality food and lower staff wages.



Community Involvement

Gained community support through several initiatives, including: an open-door policy with parents, participation in the community's Thanksgiving Camden Harvest Fest that included providing assistance to families in need, and hosting team lunches at local bodegas to support the community. In addition to supporting the local community and serving food from the school menus, Aramark also provided staff members with competitive wages, benefits and training opportunities.

Reduced Costs and Increased Efficiency

The partnership resulted in strong, ongoing community support for the district's dining program. Aramark worked with the district and increased student engagement and participation while reducing program costs, maximizing program efficiency and maximizing federal reimbursements.

Building strong community ties was central to Aramark's success in the Camden City School District.

The relationship-building began by aligning with community leaders and educating them on Aramark's mission and values, including the company's plans to enrich and nourish their children's lives. It also incorporated retaining the dining staff, continuing to hire from within the community, and continuing to offer competitive pay and great benefits.

"Today, we are part of the community," said Hernandez. "It's not even a partnership. It's more like family in the district. We have their support and work well together."

Interested in learning what Aramark can do for your district?

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