

Questions and Answers

Responses from Rick Millar, Principal - Mountview Elementary, Williams Lake

Responses from Arzeena Hamir, Organic Farmer - Huband Park Elementary Farm to School Salad Bar

Q: About how much space do these salad bars take up? Further, suggestions in a cramped space?

The salad bar units are about 6 feet long by 2.5 feet wide. In a cramped space each school has to figure out how to do things. Some use other rooms/areas to do the prep in so that there aren't too many people in one space. Hallways, empty classrooms, etc. are possibilities.

We run our salad bar in the hallway since it allows the easiest flow-through for traffic. The salad bar unit per say takes up one large table (I believe we use the 10 ft kind). When not in use, we store most of the tools, forks, and buckets in the unit and cover with a tablecloth. It's then pushed up against a wall in an alcove.

Q: What are classroom bins used for?

At Mountview the students get their food in the gym and then walk to their classrooms to eat. After they finish eating they put their dirty dishes and cutlery in the bins, (along with any uneaten food), which is later collected for washing.

Q: How is food costs covered?

The \$3 each student pays per meal covers food costs, honorariums for the coordinators, and there's always a little extra for things that may be needed in the kitchen.

Children/teachers' pay \$3 per salad bar. Those kids who can't afford this are added to the list automatically by the principal.

Q: What adaptations did the school need to make to meet food safety requirements?

We did have to have our kitchen inspected by the health inspector. Originally the only 2 things required from him were a 3rd sink for sanitizing (before we purchased an industrial dish washer) and a proper fan over our stove. Other than that it was ready to go thanks to the great work of the carpenters, electricians and plumbers from our School District. They really know what they're doing!

We worked with our Environmental Health Officer from the very beginning so there wouldn't be any surprises. We already had a 3 bin sink system + one parent volunteer with FoodSafe Level 1 certification.

Q: How is food allergies dealt with?

We don't have very many allergies but the one that is most problematic is anaphylaxis reactions to nuts. Due to this we stay completely away from nuts in any of our foods. Also, the coordinators are very conscious of what they purchase and they make sure that items are not prepared in nut products in any way. Things like lactose intolerance and eggs are very rare and when they do crop up usually the parents deal with this on their own in terms of coaching their children what they can/can't have.

No nuts are served. Last year, we had a few children with gluten allergies so we always offered a gluten-free option like corn chips, corn tortillas, rice noodles or gluten-free pasta.

Q: Do all the students in the school take part in the salad bar?

At Mountview it ranges from between 80% and 90% of the students. What we do is give free meals for everyone in September (2 weeks worth) and this seems to really spark the students' and parents' interest and once they get into the habit they just seem to continue. If anyone can't afford the meals it's not a problem as we get a grant to cover these families. We never take attendance but rather encourage students to go if they want to go. Sometimes many students who haven't paid go and it all seems to be fine in the end. With so many students sitting at their desk eating a delicious and nutritious meal the "Salad Bar Fever" just seems to take over and it promotes itself.

No, only about 1/3

Q: Are there subsidies? Is this open to all students regardless of student means?

Please see above. In BC schools receive a government grant that can be used for these types of programs. There are also other grants that schools can obtain but while I've heard of them I'm not familiar with any of them.

Yes. I believe 12 students are added to the list of participants. We always have more than enough so if a child wants salad but didn't bring money, they can "owe" us or just grab a plate.

Q: Is there Environmental Health Officer Involvement?

Yes. Yearly inspection of our facilities, especially the kitchen.

Yes, we were in touch with our EHO at the very beginning.

Q: does anyone know if there is still start up grants available?

In BC there are but you'll have to act quickly as the deadline is December 19th.

There is a new grant available in BC. Deadline is approaching fast though.

Q: Do all students pay the same regardless of age?

At Mountview the K – 2 students pay \$2.25/meal, the Gr. 3-4 students pay \$3.25/meal and the Grade 5 & 6 students pay \$4.25/meal.

Yes. It would just be too difficult for us to have different prices on our ordering system (It's all done online through a hot lunch program)

Q: I would like to have more information about portion control for cost control.

What we do at Mountview is have a "compost" bucket in each classroom that is collected, with the dirty dishes, after each meal. The food in these buckets can go towards a school compost program, a school worm program (we had one last year), and/or local farmers for their chickens/pigs. The Coordinators see these buckets and if there is a lot of food in them then they let me know and I work with the teacher and the class to figure out what the problem is and how to solve it. Most times there's not an issue and the buckets are mostly filled with peels from oranges and bananas and often times some lettuce because the students took a bit too much. Students very quickly figure out what they like and how much of it they like. My worry is not usually that they take too much but rather that they take too little! We do, though, have to remember that it is a lunch and that we don't need to "super size" everything. Students will stop eating when they are full and they will go for seconds if they are hungry. Trust them!

We do have older children portion out highly desirable items like when we make pita pizza slices from scratch. It ensures everyone gets one.

Q: Does anyone only serve greens or do they put wraps together to serve as part of the salad bar?

No, we have at least 7 veggies. Just greens would be difficult to sell on an ongoing basis.

Q: Do they put together smaller salads, like coleslaw, carrot slaw, broccoli slaw, or Mac salad in their bars to serve as part of the salad bar?

At Mountview we do not at this time do this but after seeing Arzeena's presentation and pictures our Coordinators are going to start doing this after the Christmas Break. I'm curious to see how this goes.

We tried this but found that the younger kids didn't like the items with sauce so much and we'd have to make a separate batch without. We decided to just serve sauce on the side when we make a dressed slaw or pasta salad.