

Oakville School District

Lynda Gobel
Food Service Director



Lynda found student feedback to be a powerful tool to spark curiosity and deepen engagement in school meals. As part of the Power Up Your Program course, she began talking with students about their dining experiences and preferences. Students asked for more fresh and flavorful options, so Lynda, with the help of lead cooks, Tammy and Greg, made a plan to start preparing meats in-house from fresh cuts. They also upgraded pizzas by topping pre-made dough with fresh ingredients.

Next, Lynda worked with the food service team to streamline kitchen processes and introduce weekly meal themes, making menu upgrades easier to implement while encouraging students to explore new flavors. Using Washington State Department of Agriculture Farm to School grant funds, Lynda built on this momentum by partnering with Colvin Ranch to offer students a smoked brisket event and a fisherman from the Chehalis Tribe to host a traditional salmon bake. These events fostered learning about the sources, preparation methods, and cultural traditions that shape the foods we eat.

In years to come, Lynda hopes to institute annual brisket and salmon events and offer farm visits for students to build familiarity with local agriculture, improve nutrition literacy, and feel more connected to their school meal program.

Sparking Lifelong Healthy Eating Habits

- Child Nutrition Programs are learning laboratories that teach lifelong skills.
- During school meals, students learn to recognize and choose nutritious foods, building habits that extend beyond the cafeteria. Research shows students who eat school meals have more balanced diets overall.
- Nutrition education builds curiosity and confidence. It can include learning about food origins, preparation methods, sensory qualities, and more.
- Taste tests provide low-pressure exposure to new foods, increasing acceptance and shaping food preferences.

