



# **FRAC: Afterschool Nutrition Programs**

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## **Model Program**

### **Air Force Base Combines Snack Program with Children's Garden**

**Travis Air Force Base Youth Center, CA**

#### **Program Demographics**

- The Travis Air Force Base Youth Center is located on a military base near Fairfield, California and offers programming for students throughout the year.
- 190 students attend the program each day.
- Students range in age from first to sixth grade.

#### **Meal Program**

- During the school year, the center serves breakfast to children before they go to school and a snack after school through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).
- During the summer, school breaks and holidays, when the children are at the center all day, they use CACFP to serve breakfast, lunch and a snack.

#### **Menus**

- The center tries to incorporate as many fresh fruits and vegetables into the meal pattern as possible. The children particularly enjoy fresh cherries and melons.
- Staff members ask the children what food they like and, when possible, incorporate those items into the menu. Youth center staff also take the time to note on the menus which items were suggested by each student. Children feel very proud when an item they chose is included in the menu for the rest of their peers to try.

#### **Process for Meal Service**

- The center has one cook that prepares all of the snacks and meals along with the help of a few student interns that assist with the food preparation, meal service, and clean up. The interns also pack bag lunches when the children take field trips.
- All the food is prepared on site and is served family style.
- The cook puts together a suggested plate with the appropriate servings of each item on display so the students can see what their plate should look like.
- The center sets meal times (i.e., breakfast is served from 7:00-8:00am and lunch is served from 11:00am-12:00pm.) However, students can choose when they go to the cafeteria to eat. This process allows children to eat when they are ready instead of eating before they are hungry and also affords children enough to eat. This system prevents children from getting into the habit of eating when they are not hungry or eating too quickly.

#### **Funding and Costs**

- The program made the decision to serve very high quality food, which costs more than the USDA reimbursement so the center combines a modest amount of program funds with the federal CACFP reimbursement to cover the full cost of the meal service.

### **Creative Practices**

- The Air Force is very concerned about nutrition for the students on its base and has started a program called Fit Factor that includes nutrition education. It has an online component that encourages children to log their activities each day. Each activity, such as going for a walk, washing the car or doing yard work, is awarded a certain level of points. There are five Fit Factor levels: Energy, Strength, Agility, Adventure, and Endurance. Once the children accumulate different levels of points, they receive prizes such as pedometers.
- California is able to grow a wide variety of produce throughout the year and the youth center takes advantage of this by growing fruits and vegetables in their garden, which is nearly the size of a football field. The garden features raised vegetable beds, orchards and flower beds. Children help in the garden and grow plums, apples, herbs, strawberries, corn, pumpkins, zucchini and a variety of other items that are incorporated into the meals and snacks served at the center.

### **Response to the Program**

- Many parents have been impressed with all of the different foods their children are willing to try and learn to enjoy through the meal program at the center. This is most likely due to the emphasis that staff place on growing food in the garden, tasting new items and eating healthy.
- Parents and staff believe that the students benefit from eating breakfast at the center before they leave for school. Children have a hard time learning and focusing on their school work if they are hungry. Some children that attend the before school program might not eat breakfast if the center did not provide it.
- The Center opens at 6:30 am each day. When children arrive they have an opportunity to unwind, eat breakfast, spend time with their friends and play before they get on the bus for school. This allows them to have a healthy and relaxing start to their day.

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