



Success Stories from the Field: Queen Creek Unified School District

February 17, 2026

1:30 PM - 2:00 PM

Professional Standards Learning Codes: 2200, 2300, 4100



Meet Your Host



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HEALTH AND NUTRITION SERVICES SPECIALIST

Welcome!



upLIFT was designed specifically for child nutrition professionals like you. It offers resources to help you LEARN about nutrition, get INSPIRED on meal choices for your participants, FEED students healthy meals, and TEACH others in your community about your programs.

You can look forward to materials and monthly webinars featuring unique upLIFT content showcasing Arizona child nutrition professionals, and providing ongoing inspiration throughout the year. This will empower you to upLIFT your programs in your own unique way!

**Queen Creek Unified School
District: Yezica Hostetler
Director of Child Nutrition**

Transforming Your School Meal Program

School Profile

Queen Creek Unified School District

School Profile:

- 15 Schools
- 15,155 Students
- Grades PK to 12

Meal Statistics:

- 22% Free & Reduced
- Breakfast ADP: 1,041
- Lunch ADP: 6716

Team size:

- 92 Staff Members



Previous Feeding Model

Previous High School serving model

- Traditional cafeteria-style line
- Snack bar
- Long lines
- Limited flexibility
- Few opportunities to test new innovative menu items

A Unique Challenge

Start of School Year 2022

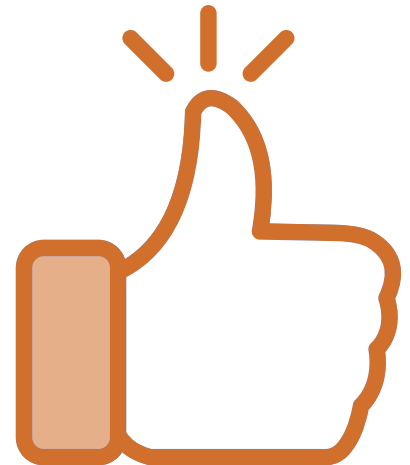
- Crismon High School's kitchen construction was not complete
- No full kitchen access until the end of the first quarter
- Needed a creative, compliant, and efficient solution

This challenge became our opportunity.

The Solution – Food Trucks

We introduced a mobile feeding model that:

- Served students during renovations/construction
- Expanded menu creativity
- Increased visibility of school meals to community
- Created excitement around lunch



Current Feeding Model

-  We have an alternative way to serve meals to students during renovations and new construction.
-  An excellent option for promoting our school meals at after-school events, such as a school grand opening, grandparents' day, or trunk-or-treat celebrations.
-  A mobile alternative to serve meals in emergencies (gas issue - ovens not working)

Current Feeding Model

The food trucks now serve as:

- An alternative service model during renovations
- A mobile option during emergencies
- A marketing tool at school events
- A way to serve at after-school events

Examples:

- School grand openings
- Grandparents' Day
- Trunk-or-Treat events



Procurement

Procurement

- Purchased through an RFP in 2021
- Sent to multiple companies - only one responded
- The district purchased three food trucks

Cuisine Concepts

- BBQ
- Farm-to-Table
- World (International) Flavors



Permit to Operate

Mobile Type 2 Permit

Required:

- Commissary agreement
- Food truck design drawings
 - Electrical
 - Plumbing
- Equipment specification sheets
- Menu
- Serving times & locations



Student experience

Response has been absolutely positive!

- Well received from day one
- Growing popularity over time
- Fun atmosphere
- Music
- Special menu items
- Inviting and engaging

Students LOVE food truck days!

How service works



The process mirrors cafeteria service:

- Students must take a fruit or a vegetable
- Meals must meet reimbursable requirements
- Students enter their ID at the POS

It's innovative — but fully compliant.

Operational Challenges

Wi-Fi

- POS lag caused duplicate meal purchases
- Solution: system adjustments & monitoring

Maintenance

- District maintenance handles most repairs
- Generator issues are sometimes outsourced

Staffing

- Finding the right personality matters
- Clear expectations from the beginning

Culture & Buy-In

The food truck is part of the program — not competing with it.

- Communicate with kitchen managers
- Build trust
- Align goals
- Share success metrics

Be creative and build relationships!

Location Matters

Challenges:

- Construction zones
- Driving & parking logistics
- Visibility issues
- (behind grill area)

Best location:

- Middle of the courtyard

Admin support is critical:

- Directing students
- Monitoring service
- Supporting service outside school gates



Food Safety Practices

Compliance

We prioritize compliance and safety:

- Cook in the kitchen (not inside the truck), when needed
- Maintain proper cold holding temperatures
- Food safety logs
- Maintenance logs

Food Safety Practices

Tools

Equipment used:

- Pop-up tent & serving table
- Milk cooler
- Tabletop salad bar
- POS stands (stored at each site)

Food Truck Inspections		Truck _____ Date _____
	Check Mark, if Ok	Notes
<i>Exterior of Truck</i>		
Tires in good repair, not flat		
Left Blinker		
Right Blinker		
Flashers		
Headlights		
Running Lights		
Brake Lights		
Check Generator Oil		
Truck Charging Station/Plug Working		
Windshield Wipers Working		
Windshield Washer Fluid Filled		
<i>Interior of Truck</i>		
Generator Turns-On		
Refrigerator is cooling		
Hood is working including lights		
Water Pump is pumping		
POS Outlet is working		
Hot Box is heating		
Propane Gas Tanks need filling?		
Flat Top-Test Pilot and Burners		
Table Top Warmer-Test Pilot and Burners		
Water Heater provides hot water		
Ovens are heating		
Refrigerator, Ovens, Warmer, Sinks, Hot Wells, Flat Top Clean		
Water Tank Filled		
Waste Tank Emptied		
Hand Soap Filled		
Paper Towels Filled		
Stainless Steel Cleaner		
Grill Cleaner		
White Cleaning Towels		
Long Pilot Lighter		
Oven Mitts		
3lb Boats		
Pan Liners		
Thermometer		
Tire Cleaner		
Glass Cleaner		
Cab Dash Cleaner		
Equipment Temp Tracking Sheets		
Food Temp Tracking Sheets		
Inspected By _____		

Is it worth it?

Impact:

- 9–12% increase in reimbursable meals
- Increased second entrée sales on food truck days
- Greater program visibility
- Unique student experience
- Opportunity to test new recipes
- Platform for student-developed recipes (Blue Watermelon Project)

Absolutely!



Menu Highlights



Student Favorites

- Walking Taco
- Nashville Hot Sandwich
- Wings and rings
- Loaded fries w/BBQ pork
- Birria Ramen
- Açaí Bowl



Student Least Favorites

- Beef and Broccoli
- Gyro
- Philly Cheesestake
- Sonoran Hot Dog

Top Tips for Success

- ✓ Find the **right team** to run the truck
- ✓ Be **intentional** with timing
 - Recipe development
 - Purchasing
 - Promotion
- ✓ During **hot** months:
 - Cook inside the kitchen
 - Serve from the truck
- ✓ Not every item will be a **hit** — food trucks allow us to test, learn, and pivot quickly.



Resources



BROCCOLI

FIND LOCAL BROCCOLI IN ARIZONA:
Harvest Months: **November to March**

Farms to get the local produce:

- **Blue Sky Organic Farms:** Litchfield Park, AZ
- **Crooked Sky Farms:** Phoenix, AZ
- **Orchard Community Learning Center:** Phoenix, AZ

Connect with Local Producers! 

SCHOOL INTEREST FORM

To ensure food safety with **broccoli** always thoroughly wash under running water before cutting and eating.

LOCAL RECIPE: Parmesan Garlic Broccoli

Makes 6 servings. Credits as 1/2 cup dark green vegetable

Ingredients

- 1 S heads fresh broccoli
- 2 cloves fresh garlic
- 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil

Directions

- Cut broccoli up into bite-size pieces. Steam the broccoli for a couple of minutes so that the broccoli retains its bright green color.
- Mix together the oil, salt, Parmesan cheese, and garlic in a mixing bowl. Add the broccoli and toss all the ingredients so that they are well incorporated. Serve immediately.

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Taste AZ

Immunity Boosting Foods

Healthy foods play a key role in supporting the immune system. Learn how simple nutrient choices can help protect the body and improve well-being!

Immune System Defined

The immune system serves as the body's natural defense mechanism, **safeguarding against illness and promoting proper health**. To effectively build and sustain immune cells, it requires a consistent intake of nutrients such as proteins, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.



By focusing on balanced meals that are abundant in these nutrients, you can enhance your bodies immunity, which in turn supports improved overall well-being.

Benefits of a Strong Immune System

Maintaining immune health is especially important in educational settings, as **strong immune systems help minimize sick days** for both students and staff, ensuring that classrooms operate efficiently. Healthy students are more capable of **focusing, learning, and engaging in daily activities**. Given that schools are prime environments for the transmission of germs, offering meals that bolster immunity can create a significant impact in **enhancing student well-being and promoting academic achievement**!

Antioxidants - Antidote to "oxidative stress" inhibiting immune cell damage. Sources: Berries, dark leafy greens, grapes, pomegranates, cherries	Vitamin A - Vitamin that supports cell growth and organ maintenance. Sources: Dairy products, leafy greens, tomatoes, carrots, sweet potatoes
Vitamin C - Vitamin that boosts antioxidant function and cell activity. Sources: Citrus fruits, strawberries, bell peppers, broccoli	Zinc - Mineral involved in cell metabolism and DNA synthesis. Sources: Meats, eggs, dairy products, beans, whole grains

Protein - Found in every cell in the body, including essential immune cells.
Sources: Meats, fish, dairy products, nuts, seeds, legumes

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Nutrition Knowledge
Fact Sheet

Fresh Perspectives Series

Examining common misconceptions surrounding school meals to offer guidance on how to steer the conversations within your community

Claim: "School Meals Contribute Too Much Food Waste"

Let's Take a Closer Look...

Response: While that claim may hold some truth, it certainly doesn't imply that all school nutrition professionals are ignoring the issue. On the contrary, there are **numerous strategies** actively implemented to **combat food waste** in school meals, many of which have been effective in addressing this intractable problem. By promoting an overall culture of mindfulness and accountability, schools are not only reducing food waste but also influencing future generations to be more aware of their environmental footprint.

Current Strategies that Effectively Reduce Food Waste

Share Tables A designated table area for students to place uneaten, unwanted food items for others who may want them.	Longer Lunch Periods Advocating for extended lunch periods is one of the most effective strategies to encourage greater food consumption and reduce waste in schools.	Offer vs Serve This system allows students to decline certain food items they don't plan to eat, preventing unwanted food from being served in the first place.	Menu Innovation Holding taste tests, recipe competitions, and/or using student advisory committees are effective in creating more appealing, less wasteful meals.	"Nudgers" Implementing small changes, like creative naming, or pre-slicing fruits and vegetables, have shown to increase consumption.
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Crucial Points to Chat About...

Here are our recommended points to offer during any discussion to effectively **express your commitment and efforts** to reduce food waste at your sites.

- **Implementation of Waste Reduction Strategies:** Highlight your commitment to implementing strategies such as menu planning, portion control, and the use of food service technology (i.e. production records, point of service system) to forecast meal demand accurately.
- **Partnerships and Collaborations:** Discuss partnerships with local farms, food banks, and community organizations to redirect surplus food to those in need.
- **Composting and Recycling Programs:** Describe the implementation of composting food scraps and recycling programs (i.e. share table) within the cafeteria.

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Fresh Perspectives

<https://www.azed.gov/hns/nslp/uplift/>

January Webinar

Join us in March!

**upLIFT Webinar - America's Healthiest Schools w/
Emily Thege**

March 17, 2026

1:30 pm - 2:00 pm

In this engaging 30-minute session, Emily Thege will share insights into the innovative practices that schools across the nation are implementing to foster healthier environments for students. Attendees will learn about the criteria that define America's Healthiest Schools and explore practical strategies to promote wellness in educational settings. Don't miss the opportunity to be part of a movement dedicated to nurturing the well-being of the next generation!



Thank you!

Any questions?
Please type them into the Q&A now.

If you are attending the live webinar, you will receive an email once attendance has been completed. Once you have received this email, your training certificate will be available in Arizona Professional Learning Development (APLD).

If you are watching the recorded webinar, you can access the survey link and certificate of completion at the end of the webinar slides.



Congratulations!

You have completed the recorded webinar: [Success Stories from the Field: Queen Creek Unified School District](#)

To request a certificate, please go to the next slide.

In order to count this training toward your Professional Standards training hours, the training content must align with your job duties.

Information to include when documenting this training for Professional Standards:

Training Title: Recorded Webinar: [Success Stories from the Field: Queen Creek Unified School District](#)

Professional Standards Learning Codes: [2200, 2300, 4100](#)

Length: [0.5 hour](#)

Please Note:

- Attendees must document the amount of training hours indicated regardless of the amount of time it takes to complete it.

Congratulations!

Requesting a Training Certificate

Please click on the link below to complete a brief survey about this webinar. Once the survey is complete, you will be able to print your certificate of completion from Survey Monkey.

*This will not appear in your ADE Professional Learning Development (APLD) Account.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/upliftrecordedwebinar>

The information below is for your reference when completing the survey:

- Training Title: **Success Stories from the Field: Queen Creek Unified School District**

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