



## FEEST x OSE: SPS Snack Pilot Qualitative Data

December 2019

### **FEEST**

FEEST is an organization led by youth of color in South Seattle and South King County working to improve health in our schools. Focusing on the need for more healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant food at school, FEEST centers young people as leaders toward concrete changes in our food systems.

At the foundation of our work are youth-led dinners where students gather around food, celebrate and share culture, and build community with peers. Breaking bread together builds lasting connections that become a foundation for long-term organizing. Rooted in radical joy, we are building power toward policy changes that increase food access for all students.

### **FEEST Vision**

FEEST's work is grounded by love for our communities, pride in our cultures, celebration of our best selves. As FEEST's infectious culture spreads, we are building a sustainable organizing community where young people are empowered to take control of their personal and community health. We see a change in behaviors and cultural norms where youth are making healthier choices in their everyday lives and the very concept of "healthy" includes cultural and ancestral foods that reflect who they are.

We seek health justice: the elimination of all barriers for people to live physically, mentally, socially, culturally healthy lives.

### **OSE's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program**

The OSE's (Office of Sustainability and Environment) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) provides all children in participating Seattle Public Elementary schools with a variety of free fresh fruits and vegetables throughout the school day. It is an effective and creative way of introducing fresh fruits and vegetables as healthy snack options.

The goals of the program are to create healthier school environments by providing healthier food choices, expand the variety of fruits and vegetables children experience, increase children's fruit and vegetable consumption, and make a difference in children's diets to impact their present and future health.

### **Overview: FEEST x OSE's Snack Box Pilot Project**

This year, FEEST youth leaders partnered with the Office of Sustainability and Environment to provide students access to more fresh and healthy snacks. FEEST youth leaders were recognized as an authority on student needs around school food, and were contracted to run focus groups with youth to generate 2-3 viable snack program ideas.

At focus groups at Chief Sealth International High School and Rainier Beach High School, FEEST youth leaders identified barriers to healthy eating at school, the time of day students are most in need of a



snack, distribution methods that works best for their school, and the types of fruits, veggies, and healthy snacks students enjoy.

Focus group results showed a clear need for more fresh fruits and vegetables as well as culturally relevant foods that represent the diverse student body.

FEEST youth leaders then developed several pilot project solutions to increase student consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, while solving the identified barriers. FEEST's proposed pilot project solutions included robust menus for three main snack box options: a Seasonal Fruit and Protein Box, a Culturally Relevant snack box, and a Dried Fruit and Veggie snack box. Proposed distribution methods included "hot spot" snack locations around the school, and classroom distribution.

FEEST youth leaders, along with their peers submitted menu items for the snack boxes. The creation of the final menus and snack box implementation was carried out by District Nutritionist Aaron Smith and Chef Emme Collins. In October 2019, the youth-designed snack box program began at Chief Sealth High School. It was a combination of the Seasonal Fruit and Protein Box and the Culturally Relevant snack box, and used the "hot spot" distribution method. The pilot officially ran through December 2019.

### **Our Findings:**

In December 2019, FEEST staff interviewed students about their experience with the snack box pilot program. Interviews explored the freshness, cultural relevance, and accessibility of the snack boxes, as well as whether or not the snack boxes influenced students' ability to learn and the overall culture of the school.

### **Fresh**

Students reported a strong desire to see more fresh fruit and vegetables in the snack boxes, instead of prepackaged snacks. Select quotes include:

*"I really want [the snack boxes] to start giving fresh fruit. Every fruit!"*

*- Emerson, 11th grade*

*"I would also want more fresh stuff, more natural sugars like fruits"*

*- Rey, 10th grade*

*"It's all in bags. It's not fresh, just chips and rice crispies. I don't want it to be made by big companies."*

*- Jason, 9th grade*

*"Mostly pre-packaged but not stale"*

*- JD, 10th grade*

*"Usually cold, seems fresh"*

*- Mimi, 9th grade*

### **Culturally Relevant**



In terms of cultural relevance, students gave it a score of 1.9 due to “lack of representation”. Students expressed a strong desire for more authentic, culturally relevant food and suggested involving people from those cultures in creating the menu and making the food. Select quotes include:

*“I haven’t seen [cultural relevance] in the snacks”*

- Emerson, 11th grade

*“If you want culturally relevant food, you need to incorporate the people themselves”*

- Rey, 10th grade

*“I didn’t see anything my family would have made”*

- Jullissa, 10th grade

*“I would want more culturally relevant food because it can help people learn about other cultures. Like bibimbap from South Korea. Kimchi. Ramen”*

- Jason, 9th grade

*“More snacks from different cultures!”*

- Estella, 9th grade

*“It needs more diverse food!”*

- Amira, 10th grade

## **Accessibility**

By using the “hot spot” distribution method, snack boxes were distributed to students during the passing period between fifth and sixth period, a time of the day where students identified feeling most hungry after lunch. “hot spots” were located around the campus in areas that would reach the most students. These “hot spots” include: near the main entrance, the northeast corner of the second floor hallway and near the stairs connecting the 2nd floor to the cafeteria.

For many of the students, some “hot spots” were more difficult to access than others. Out of the four “hot spots” available, the most frequented was near the cafeteria. While this location was very popular, it also caused traffic jams that sometimes resulted in students having to choose between getting a snack and attending class on time. When students were unable to access the cafeteria “hot spot”, the second most popular option was near the main entrance.

Overall, students wanted more accessible snacks, and suggested either switching to a classroom delivery model, or increasing the number of “hot spot” locations to include more areas of the school. Select quotes include:

*“It would be better to have it delivered to all the classrooms, if you get there late all the food is taken”*

-Newal, 12th grade

*“If there was snacks in each classroom that would be helpful. Have them delivered. Or increase the “hot spots.” Put one on the way from the office, one downstairs by the galleria, one at the end of the 2nd floor halls”*

- Rey, 10th grade



*"Needs to be more accessible, with more locations. I'd want it closer to the math hall. Definitely would want snack boxes delivered to classrooms"*

- Jullissa, 10th grade

*"Would like it more if it was delivered in the classroom, but teachers don't allow you to eat in class. I think it should be in the morning"*

- Jason, 9th grade

*"Liked the timing! Between 5th and 6th is good! It's far enough from a meal that it really helps. But add more "hot spots." Too crowded to get in 5 minutes. I would like it if snacks were delivered to our classroom! Then we wouldn't be late to 6th period."*

- Amira, 10th grade

## **Impact on Learning**

Students reported the snack box positively impacting their ability to learn in many ways. These included feeling an increase in focus, concentration, motivation, attendance, participation, and ability to remember information. Select quotes include:

*"Everybody focused more in class because everybody got a snack"*

- Abraham, 10th grade

*"Sometimes it really helped me because sometimes they don't have a good lunch so I don't eat there so I skip. It helped helped me feel full"*

- Emerson, 11th grade

*"Yeah, I feel like I'm normally super hungry around that time because we have an early lunch. The snacks help me focus more, and gives me motivation to stay in class and get to the next one"*

- Rey, 10th grade

*"When I'm hungry I can't concentrate. After the snacks, I felt better, not as distracted"*

- Julissa, 10th grade

*"It definitely motivated me to do my work. Usually by the end of the day I'm pretty drained. Having a snack is really good for me"*

- Estella, 9th grade

*"Yes! I have more energy to do things. It helps with focus and participation in class, and helps my ability to remember information"*

- Vincent, 9th grade

## **Changes in School Culture**



Students also reported positive impacts the snack program had on their community. In addition to connecting more over their experiences and favorite snack items, students who were able to access snacks stepped in to be the conduit for providing snacks to their peers who didn't make it to the "hot spot" in time. Students also said that receiving snacks at Chief Sealth caused them to feel happier, more energetic in their 6th period classes, more optimistic about the school week, and ultimately more cared for by their school, creating a happier, more connected community. Select quotes include:

*"I liked the effort put in to make sure students were taken care of. It makes a really big impact on students' education - you want to know that the school is inclusive for you. It has started giving people more reasons to like the school. It's started bringing in a more happy community."*

- Rey, 10th grade

*"People were a lot happier after the snack program came. Usually we don't share food. When we have the snacks we share more. My 6th period class is a lot more lively"*

- Vincent, 9th grade

*"I saw students share snacks a lot more"*

- JD, 10th grade

*"It's a good thing for everybody because it helped everyone focus more and it changed their moods"*

- Abraham, 10th grade

## **Analysis & Conclusion**

100% of students interviewed about the snack program wish to see it continue, and report that the program has already had a positive impact on their ability to learn and strengthened the Chief Sealth community overall. Many would also like to see an increase in the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables offered, as well as an increase in authentic, culturally relevant snacks. In order to ensure the snacks are accessible to everyone, students recommend switching to the classroom delivery method of distribution or increasing the number of "hot spot" locations.

While there are still improvements to be made, this pilot project showed the success of solutions that are designed by students, for students. By supporting a youth-designed project, this collaboration between FEEST, OSE, and Nutrition Services thoroughly responded to student needs and had high rates of participation. That's one of the reasons why FEEST sees our students as major decision makers when it comes to school food. FEEST appreciates this opportunity to partner with the City of Seattle's Office of Sustainability and Environment and SPS Nutrition Services. We look forward to future collaborations that center the leadership and expertise of students most impacted by food insecurity, so that all students can feel the positive impacts of healthy, fresh, culturally relevant meals that support their learning.

## **Expansion Recommendations**

We know that eating nutritious, fresh food each day is critical for young people's success in school and influences many predictors of outcomes in life - from scoring higher on tests, attending better colleges, securing meaningful work, to overall life expectancy. In South Seattle, these barriers make it increasingly difficult for young people to achieve their full potential with inadequate nutrition. When students do not



have enough food to eat at school, they report feeling “super hungry leading up to lunch time” and have trouble learning as a result. Thus, access to healthy food is an issue of health equity, especially for schools that have high populations of low-income students of color.

With the opportunity to expand the snack pilot into another SPS high school, FEEST strongly recommends Rainier Beach for the next snack box pilot. Rainier Beach has a high population of low-income students of color, and students face many challenges when it comes to accessing fresh fruits and vegetables both in and out of school. Students at Rainier Beach often resort to leaving campus for food and are overpoliced at nearby grocery stores, fast-tracking them into the school to prison pipeline, or resulting in tardies and absences that lead to detention or truancy court. Expanding the snack program to Rainier Beach would be the first step in interrupting this system and instead support students’ ability to learn and achieve their full potential.