



Using Social Media to Encourage Participation

School Site Profile

School Name: Murrieta Valley High School

Grade Levels Served: 9–12

Enrollment: 2,481

Percent Free and Reduced: 20

Foodservice Director: Jill Lancaster, RD, SNS, Director of Nutrition Services

School District Profile

District Name: Murrieta Valley Unified School District

Grade Levels Served: K–12

Number of Schools: 19

Enrollment: 22,700

Percent Free and Reduced: 35

Percent Average Participation: 39

Is it a struggle to convince high school students to choose meals at lunchtime? At Murrieta Valley High School only 24 percent of students were purchasing reimbursable meals. Nutrition Specialist Parisa Mohammad, MDA, RD, SNS, and her staff were determined to increase participation to help students get more nutritionally balanced meals, instead of eating snack foods.

By getting to know the students and understanding their interests, the school nutrition staff found low-cost, effective ways to engage students and parents by promoting lunch menu selections. Using Facebook to keep parents informed, the staff regularly posted daily specials offered in the Nighthawk Cafe, along with breakfast combos, a la carte and grab-and-go items. Students preferred using Instagram, so staff posted images of meals and included fun competitions to win



free lunch with friends. The [website](#) was also updated with appealing pictures of grab-and-go lunch combos, breakfast options and monthly menus for each school.

In addition, fresh paint, new display coolers, redesigned menu displays and updated food packaging added great visual appeal in the cafeteria. The changes encouraged students to try more meals. Students also participated in taste testing, with a post-survey showing a 93 percent improvement in student perception of school meals. By using low-cost social media messaging tailored to student interests and improving signage and packaging, greater school breakfast and lunch participation is possible!

To learn more about Smarter Lunchrooms Movement trainings and for additional Smarter Lunchrooms resources, visit HealthyEating.org/SLMofCA.

