

The History of Arcadia's One Lunch Period

About a dozen years ago, Arcadia switched from one lunch to two. The increased size of the student body was the primary factor that led the administration and nutritional services to impose this change. For two years, the Arcadia community worked in the confines of a 2-lunch schedule. It was the teachers who initiated a call for reform. Specifically, teachers were concerned that so many students, especially freshmen, were failing or in danger of failing a class. Brainstorming efforts resulted in a series of recommendations, one of which was the possibility of having a single, extended lunch that would enable students to have access to all their teachers during the school day. The site administration and teachers approached parents about joining forces to spearhead "One Lunch."

The process that ultimately led to the adoption of One Lunch at Arcadia was multi-faceted. In conjunction with the teacher librarian, Sharon Ewers, parents undertook a review of the research on one lunch and its impact on students' physical, social and academic well-being. After a period of education, the community stakeholders- teachers, students and parents- were surveyed regarding their preference to keep 2 lunches or switch to one; the majority of all groups preferred one lunch. Parent volunteers were solicited to help with points of sale during the lunch hour. Finally, a group of site representatives made a presentation to the district administration requesting that Arcadia be allowed to have only one lunch scheduled, justifying the request with national trends, research that supported the benefits of one lunch, and community preference.

For eight years now, Arcadia has enjoyed the benefits of one lunch. The dip in club participation that was witnessed during the 2-lunch period has been reversed; Arcadia sponsored over 30 clubs last year with extensive student participation. Students have benefited academically from having access to all their teachers during the school day, enabling them to get extra help, make up work and tests, and simply build better relationships. Arcadia's campus reflects a cohesiveness that earned the Anti-Defamation League No Place for Hate award and was highlighted in our recent re-accreditation review. Amazingly, Arcadia's PTO has consistently had over 50 parent volunteers every week for eight years facilitating One Lunch. Furthermore, in conversations with SUSD Nutritional Services, with whom PTO has had a terrific relationship, we learned that Arcadia's food sales are robust, likely a testament to how easy it is for students to access food and how much time they have to eat it. By all measures, One Lunch has been a resounding success at Arcadia.