

July 2017

Hello Spectrum Students and Parents

My Name is Dave Hirst and I am the Child Nutrition Director for Ascent Academies of Utah. On behalf of my team and I, I wanted to take a few minutes and introduce ourselves to you. We have been Academy ourselves. We have 3 locations in Farmington, West Jordan and Lehi. We have 3 full service kitchens where we bake our bread fresh in the morning, we make just about 60% of our menu from starch or semi-homemade. Each kitchen is staffed with 5 people who work a total over 30 a day to create the foods that are served.

We have an amazing team in each kitchen, who each take turns creating the meals that will be coming to your campus. From the fresh salad that is chopped and cut and created every morning, and preparing the vegetables for dipping into our kitchen made Ranch dressing, to making sure that the fresh fruits used are ready for you, to the side dishes, of amazing refried beans, Spanish rice, to the Sandwiches we serve. We use Tyson, Armour, Capri, Dorito, Basic American, Foster Farms, and Heinz as some name brands you may know.

The menu is set up to reflect what I have found to be the most popular items for our students. I have spent the summer reworking the menus to reflect a higher focus on serving students what they like the most while still fitting into the USDA guidelines. Here is the general set up of the menu.

Mondays' are meatless Monday the options can be done without the meat item (However if you enjoy your protein it is still offered, such as Alfredo, Dipping Sticks, Stir-fry).

Tuesdays for the most part we have Mexican food, Tacos, House made Enchiladas, Nachos, Chili Cheese Fries.

Wednesdays, Are our Hamburgers, Pulled Pork, Dorito Chicken (#1 requested recipe, WHO MAKES SCHOOL LUNCH AT HOME?) BREAKFAST for lunch, Country fried Steak and Dessert day.

Thursday is Pizza Day. We make and bake our own pizza, it is square, it is cheese every week and another flavor and we offer another choice of main dish as well.

Friday is Tyson chicken day, Different Chicken Items, like Nuggets, Strips, Drum Sticks, Wings, but we pair that we Meatball Subs, Taco Burger, Rib B Q Sandwich.

SO when you come thru the line, you can select your beverage, we offer White and Chocolate Milk and 100% Fruit Capri Sun, Fresh Garden Salad, Vegetables for Dipping, Selection of Fruits, Main Dish, side dishes as complements for the meal.

I came from working in restaurants and a degree in Culinary to work in schools. It's not that I don't agree with what happens in school lunch rooms, it's just that I think and know that it can be so much better than what I have seen in my travels. I will be honest with you all, I don't want to be like everyone else, and we aim to be not your typical school lunch. We want you to enjoy your lunch time. In our schools a

majority of the trash is home lunch. When I look in the trash buckets I don't see a lot of school lunch, I see expensive home lunch that kids didn't eat; I would invite everyone to try lunch. It's a safe choice, we temp everything, and we watch it all.

All of the staff at Ascent are Servsafe certified, they all have professional development courses and hours every year, they have professional memberships and something that we have a lot of pride in, we don't look at this like a job, this is a career for us. We take joy in being Child Nutrition Professionals.

As we start this journey with you, we may have a few bumps, we hope to avoid that but know that we are all human. We will work to correct them all as fast as we can. We strive to make your experience with us something that makes you happy. We want you to know that we are committed to your student's success. We are not a company coming in trying to make a dollar at the expense of your students, we are another local school, and we are parents of students in schools, who eat lunch. We have been asked to be here, to improve the quality of the meals your students have, to enhance your students break in the middle of the day. We look forward to working with you.

I am excited to be a small part of your school. I am working on a blog that will list our menu, recipes, nutritional info and stuff going on. When that is up and going it will be found at [www.ascentutah.org](http://www.ascentutah.org), I am listed under network staff, and will have a blog link. When that is ready I will make sure the link is sent to the school. If you have questions you can reach me at [dhirst@ascentutah.org](mailto:dhirst@ascentutah.org). Please tell me which school you are from so I can answer your question correctly. If I don't respond in a day or two please send me another message, the start of the school year is very busy and I can't get to every email, I do try, and I want to answer so please be patient with me. We will get into the loop again.

Again, thank you for welcoming us to your school; we look forward to a great year with you.

Dave Hirst

CNP Director  
Ascent Academies of Utah