

NESHAMINY

Neshaminy Middle to toss salads into the mix

After an initial surge, salad sales at Maple Point have hit a plateau, but kids are still eating them, officials said.

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Move over Maple Point. Soon, you won't be the only middle school in town with a salad bar.

Students at Neshaminy Middle School will also be lining up for something fresh and crisp. As part of their involvement in a nationwide health project, the middle school pupils recently proposed the idea of a salad bar to the district's food services department, said Principal Karen Wychock.

The crunchy addition to their cafeteria should be up and running by the end of March, officials said.

The kids settled on that concept after surveying more than 600 students and staff and finding that 76 percent would buy lunch in the cafeteria if the school had a salad bar, Wychock said.

"We're trying to change the way we're eating in school," said 12-year-old sixth-grader Yashmeet Kaur. "Kids are buying lunches and it's not good, because they're getting overweight."

The children will launch a campaign advertising the salad bar and favorite toppings such as carrots and cucumbers through infomercials, public address announcements and posters within the school, said Wychock.

That's what Maple Point students did, Neshaminy administrators said.

"We want to get them excited about the process and feel like they're a part of it," said Marie Wallace, school district food services director. "If the kids push it, it will be successful."

After several boys at Maple Point petitioned the food services department for a salad bar, that school recently implemented a stand with fresh lettuce and a choice of toppings.

Sales began with a high of 270 salads per day. Although that number has decreased now to about 125 per day, Wallace said she's pleased because the kids are still eating them. Starting with secondary schools this year, the district's goal is to add a salad bar to all Neshaminy schools by the end of next year, said Wallace.

Neshaminy Middle School, a local pioneer for nutrition and fitness, is one of five schools in the nation participating in a pilot program, called the "Trailblazing Project," with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation Healthy Schools Program, officials said.

With more than 30 sixth through ninth-grade volunteer ambassadors assessing the school and creating an action plan, the project provides online guidelines to help the kids become leaders in a health initiative for positive change, administrators said.

As a part of that program, Wychock said she and two students will travel to Washington, D.C., in April to meet with members of Congress concerning health initiatives. Their hope is to inspire legislation for healthier living, the Neshaminy Middle principal said.

"It's rewarding to get our voices out there as students," said Omari Allen, a 13-year-old seventh-grader at Neshaminy Middle. "This is what we need to give the community an idea of what our school is trying to do for our students. It shows we care, that there are changes to be made and we don't want to stop."