

Mission Viejo Food Bank

Mission Viejo Elementary School

Aurora, CO



The Mission Viejo Food Bank was established in 2017 to provide snacks for students and families in need. In 2014, Wilder Research published a [report](#) highlighting the important role nutrition plays in a student's academic success. Mission Viejo staff believe that if students have proper nutrition with the help of Food Bank, they will be more ready to learn.

Mission Viejo's family engagement liaison, Sandy Zimmerman, spearheaded this initiative. Zimmerman shares: "When I found that we had multiple families in need of a service like this, I brought the idea to my Principal, Andre Pearson. Mr. Pearson was thrilled with the idea and an integral part of the process, allowing me whatever means were necessary."

The first step was to find a suitable location within the school that allowed for easy access. Once that was decided, school staff discussed how they would obtain the food. The school held its own Food Drives and enlisted other schools in the district to help. This included canned foods and gift cards. The Food Drive allowed both students and staff to be involved in the process, creating a positive school climate and helping others.

Some of the challenges in the beginning were spreading the word and finding a time when parents could use the Food Bank after school hours to provide discretion. Mission Viejo staff moved the Food Bank to another area that work better for the students and parents to access, while allowing privacy.

Zimmerman explains: "I am also the Student Council Director, so I was able to have Student Council representatives keep the Food Bank cleaned and organized, check expiration dates, and dispose of items no longer viable. We also discovered other needed items and included them in our Food Bank, such as: toiletries, diapers, and baby food."

For others hoping to start a Food Bank in their own schools, Mission Viejo staff shared that it is important to be aware of the location and of neighboring schools that would be willing to help. Another suggestion is to keep the Food Bank locked if it is in an area accessible to all. That way, the resources can be properly used and controlled for those who truly need it.

Mission Viejo's Vice Principal, Michelle Chambers, included the following idea: "Make it look like a grocery store,". As you can see in the photos, that is exactly what they did, and families loved it. One of the mothers stated: "I feel like I am shopping instead of using a food bank."

