

Ka Lau

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What it Takes to Run a School First in a multipart series about what's behind the scenes...

Director Nahale-a was thinking out loud about Jackie Martin and the LCPCS food services program the other day. "There are very few master chefs that could do what she does," he said. "When the kids complain to me about a meal, I ask them, 'Who's the best cook that you know? Your grandmother? Some chef on TV? And how well do you think that person could cook if they could use almost no salt? No butter? Had to feed roughly 170 people at exactly the same time every day, and buy all the ingredients with a limited budget?'" It helps to bring home how lucky we are to have what we have.

School Food Services Manager and baker Jackie Martin has two helpers, Kat Dumaran, School Cook, and Lyndele Cardoza, a part-time assistant. Together, they serve about 270 meals a day, which includes roughly 85 breakfasts, and lunch for about 15 seniors in the Hawaii County Nutrition Program in Pāpa`aloa. Menus are planned up to a year in advance, and must be submitted to and approved by the National Food School Lunch Program. Standards are extremely specific and differ according to the age of the student, requiring certain amounts of meat, vegetables and starch. Vegetable requirements are even broken down into categories—green, orange, leafy dark green, legumes, starchy and other! Among her many duties, Ms. Martin does all the baking from scratch: all the rolls, bread, biscuits, hot dog and hamburger buns. And all this in a kitchen where some of the equipment is more than 30 years old. "But we're so lucky to have our own kitchen," says Ms. Martin, looking on the bright side. "Most charter schools have to contract the meals out. We're so fortunate that we can provide school-made meals."



School Food Services Manager Jackie Martin and School Cook Kat Dumaran, hard at work.

And all the while, Ms. Martin is observing what the kids like and don't like, and always trying to match their preferences. Poor eating habits and waste distress her. "It's sad, some of the kids won't even try something new. After we work so hard making the food, and then it's in the garbage can." But Ms. Martin has been working in school food service for over 30 years, and the bottom line, she says, is that she enjoys the challenge. And that challenge includes not only feeding the kids what they'll eat, but keeping it all within budget. The LCPCS Nutrition Program costs about \$200,000 a year. About \$100,000 of that is reimbursed to the school via the National School Lunch Program. Lunch fees paid by parents amount to about \$20,000, and the other \$80,000 comes directly from the school budget. Ms. Martin also works hard to bring in additional support from outside grants.



Food for the concessions at the games? The music festival? Supper at the open houses? Ms. Martin cooks all that, too, and all on her own time. Plus, she's famous for her cafeteria decorations. "I like to see the reactions," she says with a giggle. "Yeah, I come here a lot on my own time, but then, oh well."

A message for parents? "This is a friendly kitchen," Ms. Martin says. Parents are welcome to come in with questions or concerns, and are invited, any time, to join their child or children at lunch time. (Just be sure to check in at the office, first.) And also, "Tell them to please encourage their children to eat a well-balanced breakfast and lunch meal," adds the veteran, and dedicated, school meal expert.

Calendar

- Wednesday, October 21 — SAVE FIRST! Day
- Wednesday, October 21 — Student Auction and Honor Roll Pizza Party
- Wednesday, October 21 — 7th grade field trip to the field station for the Laupāhoehoe Unit of the Hawai'i Experimental Tropical Forest
- Thursday, October 22 — Construction Career Day, 11th and 12th grades

Pre-K Gears UP

LCPCS is now offering a preschool program! Federal grant funding has made possible pre-k programs at four charter schools on the island of Hawai'i this year, and Laupāhoehoe is one of them. "It's a beautiful grant," says Tracey Jardine, LCPCS's Office Manager, who spent most of her summer working to pull the preschool program together. The grant pays for salaries, furniture, equipment, field trips and classroom retrofit. Along with the grant comes tons of paperwork and many requirements, but, thanks largely to Ms. Jardine, things are finally underway, with a cheerful room full of 14 excited 4-year-olds.

Leading the charge are teacher Karen Crowe, educational assistant and co-teacher Polet Rincon (a 2010 Laupāhoehoe graduate), and paraprofessional tutor, Mela Mather. Ms. Crowe has been a teacher and administrator in Montessori schools for 37 years, having spent 20 of those traveling around the world helping parent groups open Montessori schools in Madagascar, Thailand, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, and the United States, among other locations. She emphasizes the importance of preschool. "It teaches children how to socialize in a group setting...how to get along with other children, share, compromise, be respectful, and problem-solve. And it builds confidence." Many studies show that children who attend preschool do better in kindergarten and beyond.



Polet Rincon with preschoolers Inez Hawkins (left) and Annzlee Magoon (right).



Preschooler Esme Hacoba pretending to be asleep during a break in her busy school day.

A major emphasis of the Federal Grant is to get parents involved in their children's education. Ms. Rincon says that they are planning birthday parties, field trips for students and their parents, different activities and a winter parade.

Children who were 4 years old on July 31, 2015, and meet certain other requirements, can attend the preschool absolutely free of charge. Classes run on the same schedule as the rest of the grades at LCPCS, five days a week. Applications can be picked up in the main office.