



Brien McMahon High School Awarded The Rachael Ray Foundation ProStart Grow Grants to Build Up Its Culinary and Restaurant Management Classroom

\$5,000 grant can be used to enhance the classroom experience with curriculum, supplies, and equipment.

Norwalk, Conn. (Dec. 19, 2025) – Brien McMahon High School is one of forty-eight high schools across the United States that has been selected to receive a \$5,000 grant from [The Rachael Ray Foundation](#) and the [National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation](#) to expand its culinary and restaurant management classroom experience through the ProStart® career and technical education (CTE) program – with the goal of equipping students for future careers in the restaurant industry.

Brien McMahon will use its grant funds to update kitchen equipment and enhance industry-related experiences such as field trips. On these trips, students would build professional networks and gain insights into potential career paths. These community connections can potentially lead to internships, mentorships, and employment opportunities, facilitating a seamless transition from education to career.

In addition, the grant will continue to support the expansion of the culinary pathway within the International Baccalaureate Career-Related Programme (IBCP), established in Fall 2025, expanding opportunities for students to pursue advanced, career-focused studies aligned with the culinary and hospitality fields.

With making additional community connections, Brien McMahon will be able to increase student drive and motivation to further their career in the industry. The funding also allows the school to purchase and replace kitchen equipment to match industry standards to provide real world experiences. Equipment to be purchased can include, sous vide cookers, blenders, and professional knife sets, which are essential for mastering modern culinary techniques. The school also hopes to invite guest speakers, including chefs and restaurant managers, local farmers and more to share their expertise, further bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world applications.

These enhancements, supported by the grant, will strengthen the new IBCP pathway and ensure students are prepared with the skills and experiences necessary for college, career, and industry-recognized success.

[The Rachael Ray Foundation ProStart Grow Grants](#) represent an investment in the ProStart classroom experience, which fosters passion for the restaurant industry and skills for young people to pursue future careers once they leave high school. Tasked with equipping students

through the program's unique blend of hands-on learning and experiential industry engagement, ProStart educators teach a range of culinary techniques and best practices and guide their students through the intricacies of managing a restaurant effectively. Thanks to the program's emphasis on hands-on learning and mentorship, ProStart students emerge from the high school program ready to work in a professional kitchen or advance to higher education.

"Teachers are essential to a successful ProStart classroom experience, instilling knowledge about the restaurant industry and the passion young people need to build a lifelong career in it," said Michelle Korsmo, President & CEO of the National Restaurant Association and CEO of the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. "These grants are more than an investment in a culinary program – they equip teachers with what they need to spark creativity, confidence, and a desire to chase the opportunity that's abundant in our industry."

The Foundation anticipates that The Rachael Ray Foundation ProStart Grow Grants will benefit more than 4,800 students across 24 states. This represents the sixth year of financial support from The Rachael Ray Foundation to support high school students pursuing careers in the restaurant industry, with more than \$1 million awarded through The Rachael Ray Foundation ProStart Grow Grant program to-date. In addition to classroom grants, The Rachael Ray Foundation and the Yum-o! organization have sponsored more than 260 scholarships for students pursuing post-secondary degrees in the restaurant and hospitality industry.

"There's something truly magical about a ProStart classroom – it's where many kids discover their passion for food and start to see a future for themselves in this incredible industry," said Rachael Ray, founder of The Rachael Ray Foundation. "The Rachael Ray Foundation is proud to help educators fuel the ProStart spark to encourage more young people to pursue a career in restaurants and foodservice."

Far more than a high school elective, ProStart has equipped more than 222,000 students at 2,200 schools with the essentials of culinary arts and restaurant management through its two-year CTE program, found at a mix of public high schools and career technical education centers across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico. Students completing the program gain restaurant-specific certifications and competencies, over 400 hours of practical work experience, and access to restaurant and hospitality apprenticeship and scholarship opportunities.

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About the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF): As the supporting philanthropic foundation of the National Restaurant Association, the NRAEF's charitable mission includes enhancing the industry's training and education, career development, and community engagement efforts. The NRAEF and its programs work to Attract, Empower, and Advance today's and tomorrow's restaurant and foodservice workforce. NRAEF programs include: ProStart® – a high-school career and technical education program; Restaurant Ready/HOPES – Partnering with community based organizations to provide people with skills training and job opportunities; Military – helping military servicemen and women transition their skills to restaurant and foodservice careers; Scholarships – financial assistance for students pursuing restaurant, foodservice and hospitality degrees; and the Restaurant & Hospitality Leadership Center (RHLC) – accredited apprenticeship programs designed to build the careers of service professionals. For more information on the NRAEF, visit [ChooseRestaurants.org](https://www.ChooseRestaurants.org).

About The Rachael Ray Foundation: The Rachael Ray Foundation™ (RRF) is a private foundation that is fully funded by the proceeds from the sale of Rachael Ray™ Nutrish®. RRF was launched by Rachael in 2016 to better support the causes she cares for most such as helping animals in need. Additionally, RRF works with organizations that support the mission of Yum-o!, Rachael's 501c3, in order to bolster and amplify their efforts through additional funding. Yum-o! empowers kids and their families to develop healthy relationships with food and cooking. It also teaches families to cook, feeds hungry kids, and funds cooking education, among other initiatives.

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