

FRESH BITES NEWSLETTER

December 2019



Featured: Sourcewell Members Gain Confidence Running Successful Foodservice Programs

Running a USDA-compliant foodservice program can be a challenge for small, rural districts participating in the National School Lunch Program. Generally unable to attract experienced foodservice directors with dietetic or nutritional backgrounds to their locales, these districts can get overwhelmed in the complexities of the USDA nutritional guidelines for school meals.

Many districts in central Minnesota have found help operating their foodservice programs through [Sourcewell](#), a cooperative purchasing organization serving over 50,000 nonprofit and public agency members nationally. Sourcewell prides itself on providing its members products and services of value through competitively bid contracts. It has introduced and provided NutriStudents K-12 to 16 of its Region 5 member districts. In 2019-2020, NutriStudents K-12 provides 13 of the districts access to more than 30-weeks of compliant, kid-tested and approved lunch menus and reports, tools and resources to simplify compliance, breakfast menu planning and overall operations.

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In this issue

NutriStudents K-12 is pleased to serve school districts and child nutrition programs nationally. As we beta test product enhancements, we often turn to districts that belong to cooperative purchasing organizations with which we partner to help evaluate and refine the system. In this month's newsletter, we highlight our work with both South Central Service Cooperative (SCSC) in southern Minnesota and Sourcewell, a national cooperative purchasing organization serving more than 50,000 nonprofit organizations, public agencies and educational institutions.

We also share insights we gained through a recent client survey, tips for increasing your breakfast participation and revenues (see digital version), and a few free recipes for downloading.

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JT Clark, foodservice director of Park Rapids Area Schools, was one director who struggled in the maze of USDA regulations and nutritional guidelines. “NutriStudents K-12 helped me develop a menu I felt confident met the USDA guidelines,” he said. “It has made record keeping a snap!” He’s currently using a 4-week lunch menu cycle from NutriStudents K-12.

The Verndale School District had a similar experience. Before NutriStudents K-12, the foodservice staff was challenged by the USDA reporting requirements. They quickly became enamored with the built-in daily food production reports, weekly verification reports and well-organized nutritional data on NutriStudents K-12.

“I love that NutriStudents K-12 has all the right portions and incorporates different foods. I also like that it has all the fats, carbs and sodium listed with each menu item,” said Vickie Thompson, Verndale’s foodservice director.

Based on the positive reception Thompson received from students and staff after the first year with NutriStudents K-12, the district moved from a 6-week cycle of NutriStudents K-12 lunch menus to a 12-week cycle in its second year. She noted the combination of fresh new menus tailored to her students and staff, and the addition of a salad bar, bolstered lunch participation over years prior to using NutriStudents K-12. Today, she and her staff serve lunch to about 420 of the district’s 525 students daily.

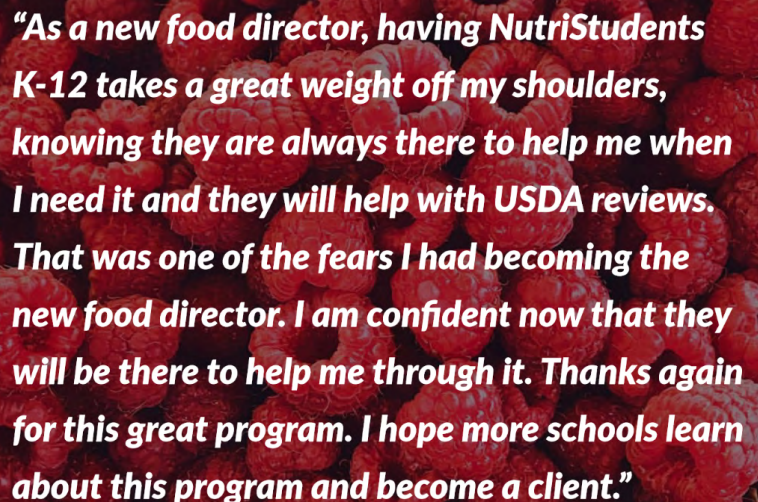
In many ways, NutriStudents K-12 has become Thompson’s go-to resource to make her foodservice program the best it can be with the resources she has. “NutriStudents K-12 makes my whole program a lot less stressful,” she said. NutriStudents K-12 even helped Thompson prepare for and pass her last USDA Administrative Review and is ready to help with the next in the spring of 2020.

Mark Jennissen, foodservice director of Bertha-Hewitt Schools ISD 786, also relied on NutriStudents K-12 to ready his program for its USDA audit. Afterwards, he said, “I am a very grateful client! I highly recommend NutriStudents K-12 to anyone.”

Jennissen uses a 4-week cycle of NutriStudents K-12 menus currently and knows he has a deep well of menus to draw from when he wants to freshen up his rotation. “NutriStudents K-12 offers menu freedom with over 100 weeks of certified menus. They are the answer to menu fatigue!” he said.

Menu quantity doesn’t mean much if hungry students don’t eat or aren’t satisfied. Students in Sourcewell-member districts love the NutriStudents K-12 menus. Across the board, the districts have experienced high rates of sustained participation. On the average school day, the 13 rural districts collectively serve about 8,760 lunches from NutriStudents K-12 menus and more than 3,500 breakfasts.

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“As a new food director, having NutriStudents K-12 takes a great weight off my shoulders, knowing they are always there to help me when I need it and they will help with USDA reviews. That was one of the fears I had becoming the new food director. I am confident now that they will be there to help me through it. Thanks again for this great program. I hope more schools learn about this program and become a client.”

**Brittany Zuhlsdorf
Staples-Motley School District**

Featured: Sourcewell members gain confidence

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"Our kids just love the food from the NutriStudents K-12 menus! I haven't had one single complaint yet this year!" said Sue Motzko, foodservice director at Wadena-Deer Creek Public Schools. "NutriStudents K-12 is the best thing that's happened to me in my career so far!" She makes full use of the system's reports and productivity tools and offers a 4-week menu cycle from the system to serve lunch to an average of 82% of her district's students daily.

"My daughters have always enjoyed the breakfasts and lunches they are served. Yes, even the picky one!" said Stephanie Japke, LPN, a parent of two daughters whose schools serve NutriStudents K-12 menus. "I have not had them ever come home to say what a horrible lunch they had."

The Staples-Motley School District has benefited from NutriStudents K-12 in many ways since implementing the system five years ago. In the first month of use, the district had a 5-6% increase in lunch participation and about a 20% decrease in plate waste. By the end of the first year, participation had gone up 10% in every building, at every age, at both breakfast and lunch. Participation increases and costs savings realized by using NutriStudents K-12 resulted in a budget surplus in 2017-2018, which funded the purchase of two new milk coolers and equipment maintenance not originally budgeted. The district had a significant budget surplus again the following year.

Brittany Zuhlsdorf, Staples-Motley's foodservice director, relies on NutriStudents K-12 for her 4-week lunch menu cycle, compliance reporting and creating USDA-compliant breakfast menus with the Breakfast Menu Builder.

"[The Breakfast Menu Builder] tells you if you don't have enough grain, fruit or veggies and won't let you finish a menu until you get the right amount," she said. "Without that, I don't think we would offer everything we need to meet the USDA criteria. If we do have enough, it still saves a ton of time for me as I don't have to check and double check to make sure it meets the criteria."

As a new foodservice director this year, Zuhlsdorf came into the position more confident because she knew the NutriStudents K-12 system and team would help her run a compliant program. That allowed her to focus on learning other aspects of her new position.

"NutriStudents K-12 takes a great weight off my shoulders," she said, "knowing they are always there to help me when I need it and they will help with USDA reviews. That was one of the fears I had becoming the new food director. I am confident now that they will be there to help me through it. Thanks again for this great program."

Staples-Motley also provides meals to nearby Pillager Charter School through a multi-year partnership. Tracy Colger, Pillager's foodservice director, said, "We have been so pleased with our partnership. The portion sizes are adequate for our high school students, and the food is always tasty. In addition, they work with us to provide bag lunches for field trips whenever we need them!"

These districts' success stories and bolstered confidence in running USDA-compliant foodservice programs are gaining the attention of their foodservice colleagues in Minnesota and nationally. NutriStudents K-12 continues to add new clients who will put the system to work fighting mid-year menu fatigue in 2020.

Holiday Menu

Our special Thanksgiving meal can also be used for a holiday meal before winter break. Download the recipes and reports below for: Turkey and gravy, green beans, candied sweet potatoes, pumpkin bread and cranberries.

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[Editable Food Production Report](#)

SCSC Districts Get Smooth Start to School Year

Editor's note: The article below appeared in a recent South Central Service Cooperative member newsletter.

SCSC-member school districts have reported their foodservice programs kicked off the year with greater ease thanks to SCSC's partnership with NutriStudents K-12. NutriStudents K-12 helps foodservice directors run profitable, USDA-compliant, efficient school nutrition programs with a 30-week rotation of student-approved menus and tools to simplify daily operations and reporting. SCSC is pleased to offer NutriStudents K-12 to our member districts for free.

"It is awesome! NutriStudents K-12 is everything foodservice professionals need," according to Barb Rosin, foodservice director of Nicollet Public Schools.

Shelly Miller, client relations director for NutriStudents K-12, recently visited several districts to ensure they were making the most of the system's menus and productivity tools for behind-the-lines tasks like reporting, ordering and promoting menus. A former foodservice director, Miller has become a resource for districts when they have questions related to daily operations.

Currently, nine SCSC-member districts subscribe to the system, some for the first time this year and others continuing their use from previous years. All appreciate the flexibility to use the system in its entirety or to supplement what's already working in their district.

Alden-Conger Public Schools uses a 4-week menu cycle from NutriStudents K-12. Jamie Kirsch, Alden-Conger's foodservice director, attested to the system's ease and the simplicity of scaling recipes to her student population using the system's CookBook.

"I have really loved NutriStudents K-12! It is a great support system and is very easy to learn. It saves a lot of time having all this at your fingertips."

- Jamie Kirsch

Madelia Public Schools uses a 4-week menu cycle comprised of 3 weeks of NutriStudents K-12 menus and one week of student favorites. GFW Schools use a 4-week menu rotation exclusively of NutriStudents K-12 menus.

Martin County West is currently using one week of NutriStudents K-12 menus to supplement the district's existing menus to avoid menu fatigue. After meeting with Miller, Foodservice Director Tammy Holm plans to add more of the system's menus into her rotation. She also sees that the system-generated reports can save her and her staff a lot of time.

While NutriStudents K-12 is a bright light for these foodservice directors, many districts have been challenged this fall with menu planning due to difficulties receiving ordered products from their distributor. NutriStudents K-12 is trying to help these districts secure products from alternate distributors such as Upper Lakes Foods and Cash-Wa Distributing.

NutriStudents K-12's Miller will return to our area soon to meet with additional districts. If you'd like a personal demonstration or training session, contact her at Shelly@NutriStudentsK-12.com. It's not too late for your district to take advantage of SCSC's partnership with NutriStudents K-12 yet this year.

Get In Touch!
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MenuFreedom.com

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Make This: Chicken Satay



Asian flavors have grown in popularity in American culture and restaurants. Chicken Satay, similar to the recipe on NutriStudents K-12 weeks 10 and 30, is simply grilled meat (generally skewered) with a flavorful sauce.

Servings: 100

Serving size: 1 chicken breast, ½ c rice and a ¼ c sauce

[Download recipes, instructions and nutritional detail.](#)

Ingredients

Chicken

100 Chicken breast grilled - Advance Pierre (9835)
¾ c + 1 Tbsp + 2 Tsp Oil soybean - Chef's Pride (54107) OR USDA (100442)

Seasoned Brown Rice

6.25 lb Brown rice - Producers (R2PX25QCO) OR Riceland (24519) OR USDA (100500)
19-¾ c + 1 Tbsp + 2 Tsp Water
1-½ c + 1 Tsp Oil soybean Chef's Pride (54107) OR USDA (100442)
1 Tbsp + 1 Tsp Garlic granulated
1 Tbsp + 1 Tsp Salt kosher
1 Tbsp Curry powder

Sauce

6-⅝ c + 1 Tbsp + 2 Tsp Sun Butter (19010)
19-½ c + 1 Tsp Sugar White - United (810079)
2-¼ c + 1 Tbsp + 1 Tsp Garlic Granulated
¾ c + 1 Tsp Cayenne Pepper
⅛ c + 2 Tsp Yogurt Plain
⅛ c + 2 Tsp Sauce Soy - Kikkoman (171)
1 Tbsp + 2 Tsp Salt Kosher
3 c + 1 Tbsp + 2 Tsp Cilantro Fresh 30 Ct

Creditable Products

- Advance Pierre #9835 (1 Each, Credits As 2 MMA)
- USDA 100500 (1 Oz, Credits As 1 WGE)
- Riceland 3520024519 (1 Oz, Credits As 1 WGE)
- Producers R2PX25QC0 (1 Oz, Credits As 1 WGE)

Instructions

Chicken

Cooking method: 4" deep full hotel pan in standard oven

1. Place thawed chicken into the pan.
2. Add oil and mix well.
3. Wrap pan with plastic wrap & tinfoil.
HACCP: keep cooled below 41° until ready to cook.
4. Preheat oven to 325° (if using a convection oven, decrease temp by 25° to 50°)
5. Heat until entrée reaches 165° or above, hold above 135° until end of service.

Seasoned Brown Rice

Cooking method: 4" deep full hotel pan in standard oven OR steamer

1. Place rice & water into the pan.
2. If cooking in oven, wrap pan with plastic wrap & tinfoil. OR If cooking with steamer, place lid on pan.
HACCP: keep cooled below 41° until ready to cook.
3. Preheat oven to 325° (if using a convection oven, decrease temp by 25° to 50°)
4. Heat until entrée reaches 165° or above, hold above 135° until end of service.
5. Add spices and mix well.

Sauce

Cooking method: no cook

1. Add Sun Butter, yogurt, spices & cilantro into a blender and mix well.
HACCP: keep cooled below 41° until ready to serve.

Service

Serve each student 1 chicken breast, ½ c rice and a ¼ c sauce.

Survey Responses Inform System Development, Training

NutriStudents K-12 recently conducted a survey of client districts to gain a better understanding of the technology used in schools. The responses received will help us plan future system enhancements and provide a consistently positive client experience.

It's clear based on survey responses that the Google platform is gaining prominence among schools. The districts that have responded to date were almost evenly split among PCs and Google Chromebooks currently, however, some now on PCs indicated they'll be migrating to Chromebooks in 2020-2021. Google Chrome is overwhelmingly the most-used web browser among respondents. Despite Google's growing use, all respondents' districts also use Microsoft Excel, Word and Publisher.

When asked to rate their degree of tech savvy on a 100-point scale, the respondents averaged 58, with a median rating of 52. The responses ranged from 8 to 100, which validates our work to offer a system and support tools for varying levels of proficiency.

The survey also gave our users a chance to provide us feedback on the system and our training. This feedback will serve as a benchmark for Shelly Miller, our client relations director, who has been developing our on-boarding processes and training systems to ensure clients feel supported and love working with NutriStudents K-12.

While we were encouraged by the greatly improved user-experience indicators as well as the respondents who indicated a strong likelihood of recommending us to others, we continually strive for even more improvement in both areas. Thank you to those of you who said you'd recommend NutriStudents K-12 to other foodservice directors every chance you were given!

One newer user responded by saying, "I have been very happy with the system. I think I will like it a lot more once I really get used to using the program."

Respondents are generally satisfied with the quality of training, but indicated more training was desired, which is one of our major objectives in 2020.

"We're extremely confident the quality and quantity of training will continue to improve under Shelly's leadership," said Eldon Brustuen, co-founder and president of NutriStudents K-12. "Since joining the company at the end of August, Shelly has made tremendous strides in supporting our districts and identifying training opportunities."

We also took away a few suggestions, including the request to add a new field within the Breakfast Menu Builder for individual protein items, and to include more salads, a breakfast burrito, hash browns and deli sub sandwiches to the lunch menus.

We're always open to suggestions for how NutriStudents K-12 can best meet the needs of child nutrition programs. Like any technology platform, we are constantly evolving and improving. Have a suggestion? Email us at customerservice@NutriStudentsK-12.com.

If you're a client who has yet to take the survey, please respond by the end of the day Monday, December 23. See the link previously emailed or contact us at customerservice@NutriStudentsK-12.com for the link.

Cafeteria Connection Expanded

Cafeteria Connection, our newsletter for you to send to your parents, has a new issue! "Serving Scholars with Food Allergies" is the 11th issue in the newsletter series. [Download the issue today.](#) Clients can access the full series of newsletters in the client portal under Training & Resources > Promotional Support or [here](#).

Happy Holidays from the management team and all the elves at NutriStudents K-12!

(These pictures are so fun we wanted you to see them in larger detail.)



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