

# FRESH BITES NEWSLETTER

March 2021



Featured: Use SY20/21 Budget for Long-Term Benefits



Without a doubt, school year 20/21 has been a year like none other. Many districts saw a significant decline in participation rates, revenues and food costs over the previous year. Forward-thinking districts will realize it's foolhardy to base next year's budget on this year's costs and participation rates. Some, however, may target an unspent food budget for cost cutting in next year's budget, leaving your program and your students to pay the price.

If your foodservice program has a budget surplus to spend down prior to the end of the year, subscribe, or renew your subscription, to NutriStudents K-12 now and reap the benefits this year and next. Districts will be looking for ways to work faster, better and for less money next year. Make sure you're equipped to do more with less with the NutriStudents K-12 library of USDA-compliant menu weeks, time-saving tools and stand-by professional support. Act today, for your students, for your staff, for yourself!

[Schedule a Demo](#)

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## Editor's note

What's the difference between forethought and forward-thinking? Forward-thinking organizations and individuals combine forethought for annual budgeting, retirements, or a new year, with considerations for changes that might lead to long-term improvements. They ask, "Is there a way to work better, faster, more profitably and keep students and the administration happy?"

With NutriStudents K-12, the answer is a resounding, "YES!" This month's Fresh Bites offers proof we can help you make long-term gains for your program in SY21/22 and beyond.

## Take the Guesswork Out of Commodities



Commodities' season is officially open as USDA Foods surveys go out to child nutrition programs across the country.

Do you dread this time of year? Do you pull your hair out year after year trying to make your best guess as to what commodities you'll use next year?

**STOP.** There is an easier way.

NutriStudents K-12 has taken the guesswork from the allocation process with our USDA Commodity Calculator. This forecasting tool allows you to enter a few variables specific to your program and it automatically computes the precise quantities of the various commodities you will need. Simply enter your student count, number of weeks in your year and the number of times you plan to use each NutriStudents K-12 menu week and voila! You're done! What used to take hours can now be done in a fraction of the time.

[Schedule a demo of this tool today.](#)

NutriStudents K-12 users can access the USDA Commodity Calculator [in the Toolbox](#) in our client portal.



Get In Touch!  
844-204-2847

[info@NutriStudentsK-12.com](mailto:info@NutriStudentsK-12.com)

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## Success Story: NutriStudents K-12 helps new directors succeed



### First-Year Directors Gain Peace of Mind with NutriStudents K-12

Like many school foodservice directors, Vickie Thompson started her job at Verndale School District with little training for menu planning, compliance with USDA nutritional guidelines, allocation of USDA Foods or HACCP.

Before she was introduced to NutriStudents K-12, she relied on the district's existing menus and procedures. It wasn't long before she realized the tried-and-true menus were negatively affecting meal participation and the federal reporting requirements and procedures were a challenge, to say the least.

"NutriStudents K-12 makes my whole program a lot less stressful," she said. "It has all the right portions and incorporates different foods, with all the fats, carbs and sodium listed for each menu item. Our food tastes better because of the creative use of spices and sauces and everyone really likes the variety of proteins we provide."

With NutriStudents K-12's built-in Food Production Reports, Thompson doesn't struggle with USDA reporting requirements and she's reassured knowing the NutriStudents K-12 client relations team is just a phone call away if she needs help.

#### Compliant Plug-and-Play System

When Pam Cailteux took over the foodservice program at Deer Trail 26J School District in Colorado, the district administration wanted to equip the first-time director to succeed. They sought help from NutriStudents K-12 to support her menu planning, reporting, marketing and day-to-day operations as well as provide guidance for the district's second USDA Administrative Review in two years.

She recalled of the audit, "After encountering a few blips with the contributions of menu substitutions during my review, NutriStudents K-12 assisted immediately. An on-the-spot teleconference resolved the issues and proper documentation was provided within minutes."

Kelly Carnell, foodservice staffer at Hope for Hyndman Charter School, had a similar positive experience with her school's Administrative Review.

"We didn't know anything about menu planning and making recipes! We really didn't!"

Barb Ryan  
Foodservice Staff  
Hope for Hyndman  
Charter School

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“Everything the USDA reviewer wanted, we had ready,” Carnell said. “And we knew everything was right. She only spent an hour of the day with us! NutriStudents K-12 made it so easy.”

Before starting NutriStudents K-12, the foodservice program at her school was managed by an executive chef. He developed scratch-made recipes, verified the weekly menus complied with USDA guidelines, placed food orders and guided Carnell and two other staff members. When he resigned, they were concerned.

Barb Ryan, also a staff member, said, “We didn’t know anything about menu planning and making recipes! We really didn’t!”

The plug-and-play convenience of NutriStudents K-12 allowed them to self-operate a USDA-compliant foodservice program – and the school didn’t have to attempt to lure a new chef to its rural Pennsylvania location.

“We love it,” Ryan said. “You don’t have to worry. You don’t have to think. NutriStudents K-12 has done all the hard work.”

## Confidence Booster for New FSDs

When the head cook at Upsala Area Schools resigned, the district turned to Alice Westrich, who didn’t have any foodservice experience. “They said they needed someone who wasn’t afraid to get up early!” said Westrich, who farms with her husband in rural Minnesota. “I was intrigued and health insurance was an attractive benefit, so, I interviewed, passed ServSafe and was offered the position.”

“As a new director, NutriStudents K-12 lifted a great weight off my shoulders. I know they are always there to help me when I need it.”

Brittany Zuhlsdorf  
Foodservice Director  
Staples-Motley Schools

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Before becoming a NutriStudents K-12 client, Westrich was going it alone. It was challenging and worries about her first USDA Administrative Review were keeping her up at night.

“At first, I wasn’t sure it was a good idea to make the change to NutriStudents K-12 when I was so new to my job,” she said. “But after a discussion with administration, I decided to try it. I am so happy I did! It has been a win-win-win for me, our foodservice program and the students.”

The partnership with NutriStudents K-12 has been a huge help and confidence booster for Westrich and her coworkers.

“It saves me time researching and planning, knowing the menus are USDA compliant. And the staff at NutriStudents K-12 is so supportive. I can call them anytime with questions. It’s like having a partner who really understands and is always there to help.”

Brittany Zuhlsdorf had a similar experience when she became the director at the Staples-Motley School District. “As a new food director, NutriStudents K-12 lifted a great weight off my shoulders,” she said. “I know 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 they will be there to help me through it.”

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## Success Story: NutriStudents K-12 helps new directors succeed

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“NutriStudents K-12 has been so easy to use,” she said. “It has so many wonderful choices of great food. One of my favorite things when doing a breakfast menu is that it tells you if you don’t have enough grain, fruit and veggies and won’t let you finish a menu until you get the right amount. It saves a ton of time for me as I don’t have to check and double check to make sure it meets the criteria.”

Having more than 40 weeks of lunch menus from which to choose is a great luxury for Zuhlsdorf. “I love how you can just click the week you want and it’s all ready for you, and just swap out a day if your students don’t really care for that meal.”

She continued, “Thanks again for this great program. I hope more schools learn about this program and become a client.”

[DOWNLOAD PDF of this success story](#)

[READ MORE](#) success stories like this one!

We’d like to share yours as well. Email us at [customerservice@NutriStudentsK-12.com](mailto:customerservice@NutriStudentsK-12.com).

Serving over **4.9 million children and adults** healthy meals and snacks daily.

[www.CACFPWeek.org](http://www.CACFPWeek.org)

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Celebrate #CACFPWeek2021 March 14-20

Cafeteria Connection CACFP Edition

Need a last-minute resource for CACFP Week? Our latest issue of Cafeteria Connection: “Providing Nutritious Meals through the CACFP Program” is what you need.

Download it today from the [client portal](#) or via [our subscription page](#).

## Maintain Your ServSafe Certification



Director of Client Relations Shelly Miller has been touring the state of Minnesota helping school nutrition pros achieve and maintain their ServSafe and Food Safety Manager certifications. She recently led classes and proctored exams for foodservice staffs in the Wrenshall, Moose Lake, Cromwell and Crosby-Ironton school districts. A testimony to her teaching ability, everyone passed their exams! Congratulations!

Pictured above are:

Top: The foodservice staff from Crosby-Ironton are serious about food safety and their ServSafe exams.

Bottom Left: Scott Skinner, foodservice director, Crosby-Ironton School District

Bottom Right: (L-R) Valerie Dahl and Terry Birkett of the Wrenshall School District and Carmen Jokimaki of the Moose Lake School District

### ServSafe 4-Hour Refresher Course - Friday, March 26, 8 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. St. Clair, Minnesota

Join NutriStudents K-12 Director of Client Relations Shelly Miller for a ServSafe Training class to maintain your food safety manager certification. This is a training class only - no exam will be offered for those needing certification/re-certification. Participants will receive a certificate of completion for submission to the state.

All attendees are required to follow COVID-19 safety protocols, including wearing masks and maintaining 6 ft. social distance.

Cost:

Existing NutriStudents K-12 clients and SCSC member districts: FREE

Non-clients/non-SCSC members: \$75/person, payable by check the day of the class.

Location: St. Clair Schools, 121 Main Street West, St. Clair, Minnesota, 507.245.3501

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Questions? Contact Shelly Miller, [Shelly@NutriStudentsK-12.com](mailto:Shelly@NutriStudentsK-12.com) or 218.536.1857.