

District Funds Equipment & Maintenance with Annual Budget Surplus

The 2014-2015 school year was a challenging one for the foodservice program in the Staples-Motley School District, a public-school district of 1,150 students in Central Minnesota. The system the district used was sub-standard, according to Shelly Miller*, director of nutritional services. They struggled to create menus incorporating all the proper meal components while staying within the USDA nutritional guidelines for sodium, calories and fat. The district's foodservice distributor also had difficulty stocking products specified in the menus or identifying suitable alternatives. Cost overruns led to a significant foodservice budget deficit. Miller knew she needed to make some dramatic changes to turn the tide.

When Sourcewell (formerly NJPA), a national public service cooperative purchasing organization, introduced the district to one of its contracted services, NutriStudents K-12®, she was hopeful it was just what she needed.

Miller was impressed by the variety and breadth of USDA-certified menus offered through NutriStudents K-12. Elementary, middle and high school menus are all provided – and they meet every Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act guideline. She also appreciated that NutriStudents K-12 provides all the needed compliance reports and that its streamlined market basket simplifies food orders that her new distributor, Upper Lakes Foods, can fulfill. All big time-saving factors.

Miller knew the real proof would be in students' acceptance of the meals. She couldn't afford for participation to decline.

She was delighted! "This doesn't look or taste like school lunch," she cheered. "It's absolutely awesome! Even the administration and school staff increased their participation."

After one month, participation increased 5-6% and plate waste decreased by about 20%. By the end of the first year with NutriStudents K-12, participation had gone up 10% across the board – in every building, at every age, at both breakfast and lunch.

Increased participation alone helped Miller overcome her budget concerns of the previous year. Lower food costs from the NutriStudents K-12 market basket compounded the turnaround.

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Menu Freedom. Tools for Success.

"In our first year with NutriStudents K-12, I had money left in the budget at the end of the year," she said. "I don't think I ever had that happen before. My budget surplus in 2018-2019 was about \$90,000. With the surplus from the previous year, I bought two new milk coolers and did maintenance that wasn't originally budgeted. Just the cost savings alone makes NutriStudents K-12 worth it."

Of course, she and her staff also love the time savings from the automated Food Production Reports, menu planning and easy-to-prepare menus. And when needed, NutriStudents K-12 responsive customer service resolves any questions or concerns promptly.

**Shelly Miller became such a fan of NutriStudents K-12 in the four years she used the system that she chose to come work for us. She is now Director of Client Relations for NutriStudents K-12. Staples-Motley Schools has found that NutriStudents K-12 helped Shelly's replacement assimilate more easily into the role of director.*

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Foodservice Director
Staples-Motley Schools

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