

# FRESH BITES NEWSLETTER

July 2021

## Featured: SNA Back to School Survey



A new nationwide survey of 1,368 school foodservice directors from the School Nutrition Association (SNA) released last week revealed serious concerns for the upcoming school year. SNA's [Back to School 2021 Report](#) highlights worry surrounding operational challenges, the financial strain caused by COVID-19 and achieving regulatory compliance.

### Operational Concerns

Despite USDA extensions of COVID-19 waivers through school year 2021/22, the survey indicates school foodservice directors are concerned about the upcoming school year:

- 97% are concerned about continued pandemic supply chain disruptions, with 65% stating this is a serious concern
- 90% worry about staff shortages
- 82% are concerned about low meal participation

Concerns about pandemic meal service modifications, barriers to serving distance learners and meeting school nutrition standards are also noted.

[Continued on page 2](#)

## In this issue

[SNA Back to School Survey](#)

[Summer Contact Drawing Winner](#)

[Upcoming Trade Shows](#)

[Use COVID Relief \\$\\$ to Save](#)

[USDA Q&A for Child Nutrition Programs SY 2021/22](#)

[Does Time Matter When it Comes to Student Nutrition?](#)

[State SNA Conferences & Drawing Winners](#)

### Financial Worry

Financial sustainability of school meal programs is a top concern for school foodservice directors. While school nutrition programs have historically operated on tight budgets, pandemic-related losses and rising food and labor costs have left many in the red.

- Nearly half (48%) of school foodservice programs anticipate a net loss for school year 2021/22, with an additional 20% of respondents unsure of what to expect
- Of those anticipating a loss, only 32% have sufficient funds in reserve to cover that loss; Nearly 30% of respondents have requested district general funds to cover losses

### Regulatory Compliance

A vast majority of respondents expressed concerns about Final Target sodium regulations coming in July 2022 and the ongoing challenge of student acceptance of whole grain rich foods, both negatively impacting student participation and further complicating the financial picture.

USDA waivers allow states to provide targeted flexibility for school meal programs struggling to meet sodium and other meal pattern mandates through school year 2021/22. Still, SNA is urging Congress and USDA to delay Target 2 mandates until July 2024, eliminate Final Target sodium limits and restore the mandate that half of all grains offered with school meals be whole grain rich.

While the survey painted a worrisome picture for school year 2021/21, there are a few positive notes to mention. Survey respondents recognized a handful of significant benefits associated with free meal service, including:

- Better student access to meals
- Increased meal participation rates
- More equity among students
- Less unpaid meal debt for families
- Reduced stigma low-income students may face

### Summer Contact Drawing Winner!



Thank you to everyone who entered our drawing for a free one-year subscription to NutriStudents K-12 by sharing your summer contact information with us.

Our winner is:

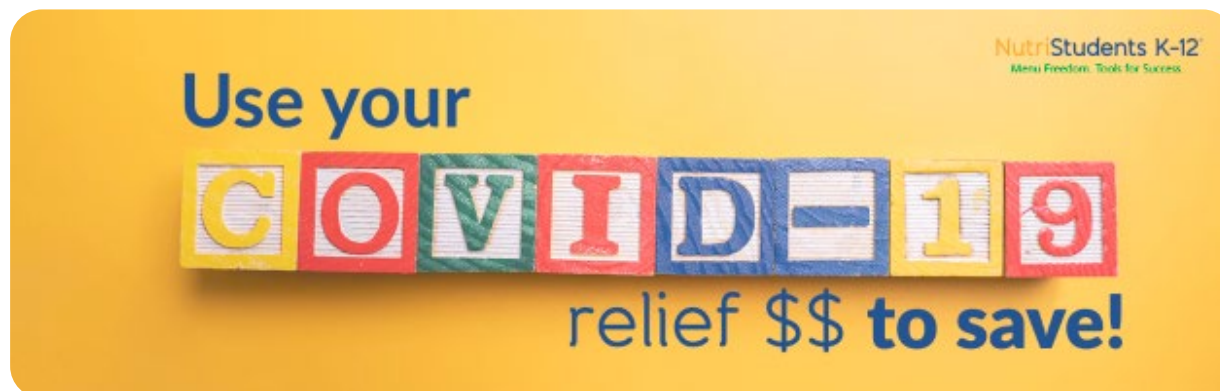
**Kim Codner**  
**Seminole County Public**  
**Schools**

### Upcoming Trade Shows

#### Minnesota SNA Conference

August 1-4, 2021

River's Edge Convention Center  
St. Cloud, MN



Did your school receive COVID-19 relief funding to offset increased costs caused by the accommodations made during the 2020/21 school year? Many states included integrated services that support student learning, including child nutrition programs, as eligible expenses.

If you have these funds available, consider investing in your school foodservice program's future by pre-paying for a NutriStudents K-12 subscription for years to come. As things begin to reawaken post-pandemic, we're offering risk-free pricing to aid that recovery. What does this mean?

- No long-term contracts.
- No upfront costs.
- Transparent pricing. NutriStudents K-12 is just a \$289/month subscription\*, which can be canceled at any time.
- 100% money-back guarantee at any time up to your first anniversary, if you've used the system as intended and are not satisfied for any reason.

\*Subscription based on district of 4 schools or less. Additional schools at \$49/month/school.

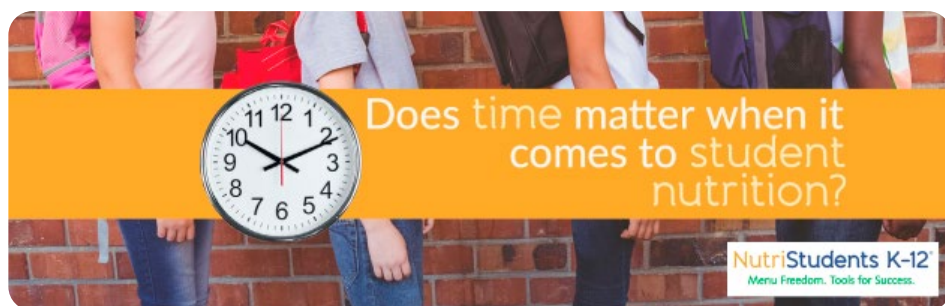
By using COVID relief dollars to pre-pay for NutriStudents K-12, not only will you lock into our current risk-free pricing, but you will also receive an additional 5% cash discount. Whether you measure ROI through increased participation and revenues, reduced labor hours or student and employee satisfaction, NutriStudents K-12 quickly delivers to make your program operate profitably. Talk about a win-win-win!

Take advantage of this offer now and utilize those CARES dollars to invest in your program's future success today! **If you're a current client who'd like to take advantage of this offer, contact Shelly Miller, Director of Client Relations, at 218-536-1857 or [Shelly@NutriStudentsK-12.com](mailto:Shelly@NutriStudentsK-12.com) to make this arrangement.**

If you want to see how your students, employees, and program can benefit from our system and support, we invite you to schedule a demo to see what NutriStudents K-12 is all about!

## USDA Q&A for Child Nutrition Program Operations in School Year 2021/22

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service recently published an extensive Q&A about school year 2021/22 child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. Prepare for the year ahead by getting all the details [here](#).



With so much focus on student academic achievement, it may feel like time has been whittled away from the lunch period in favor of more instructional time in the classroom. According to the

School Nutrition Association, the nationwide average lunch period is about 30 minutes. However, the amount of time available for students to actually eat (referred to as “seat time”) may get cut down to less than 10 minutes due to factors such as spent walking to the cafeteria, standing in line, socializing with friends and finding a place to sit. Does the amount of time students have to eat impact overall nutrition?

New research suggests school-age children eat more fruits and vegetables when given more time during lunch periods to eat. In the study, children who stayed seated for 20 minutes for lunch ate 11.3% more fruit and 14.1% more vegetables than children who were required to sit for just 10 minutes. This resulted in an increase in the consumption of all individual nutrient types, potentially improving diet quality in students while reducing food waste from uneaten meals.

While it may feel like you as a school foodservice professional don’t have much influence to adjust the amount of time allotted for lunch, there are some best practices that you can do to give students have as much time as possible to eat. As you prepare for students coming back to the cafeteria this fall, consider these ideas:

- Cut and section whole fruits like oranges and bananas so they’re easier for students to peel or eat. By offering cut or prepackaged options, fruits can feel less daunting to eat, especially for younger students who may be dealing with a loose or missing baby tooth.
- Ask for parent volunteers to help provide lunchtime supervision to help younger students open milk cartons and prepackaged items.
- Invest time to train your foodservice staff so meal service and payment are smooth and efficient.
- Consider the flow of students through your cafeteria and identify any bottlenecks. If your space allows, adding serving lines or rearranging points of service so that they are easier to access can help minimize wait times.
- Offer grab-and-go options in the cafeteria or in satellite locations in your school building.

For more strategies and suggestions to engage school administrators and staff, parents, and community members to ensure students have plenty of time to eat lunch, check out Making Time for School Lunch, a research brief from the CDC.



## State SNA Conferences

After a year and half of Zoom meetings, virtual conferences, and social distancing it's so refreshing to hit the road once again and reconnect with you at a few state-level School Nutrition Association conferences. We have had a great time speaking with conference attendees about how NutriStudents K-12 can help you increase participation and revenue, reduce food costs and plate waste, and save hours on administrative tasks.



*Friends of NutriStudents K-12 in Iowa with Shelly Miller, Director of Client Relations*



*Jane Andersen from Lawton-Bronson Community School and Lori King from Boone Community School*

We are excited to announce two recent conference drawing winners from the Iowa and Wisconsin SNA conferences:

**Angela Cimmiyotti**  
**Riceville Community School District**  
**(Iowa)**

**Nicole Lutz**  
**Auburndale Public Schools**  
**(Wisconsin)**



*NutriStudents K-12 School Relations Adviser and former SNA-WI President Jeanne Hopkins, RD presented a breakout session about the benefits of school breakfast*



*President Eldon Brustuen and School Relations Adviser Jeanne Hopkins at the NutriStudents K-12 SNA- WI booth*

Let's stay in touch!



844-204-2847



info@NutriStudentsK-12.com  
[menufreedom.com](http://menufreedom.com)



[Schedule a Demo](#)