

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.

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Vickie Thompson
Foodservice Director
Verndale ISD 818

NutriStudents K-12®
Menu Freedom. Tools for Success.

"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.

"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 Foodservice Directors

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."

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."

"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."

"Lunch menus are great - there are over 40 weeks of approved meals to serve. I love how you can just click the week you want and it's all ready for you."

Brittany Zuhlsdorf
Foodservice Director
Staples-Motley Schools

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