



Case Study: Prairie Seeds Academy

Grades: K-12

Location: Minneapolis, Minnesota

NutriStudents K-12[®] Helps Grow Participation by 40%

Crystal Vang, foodservice director of Minneapolis K-12 charter school Prairie Seeds Academy, was among the school foodservice directors who struggled with student participation in lunch after the implementation of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act in 2012. The school had just over 500 of its 790 students participating in lunch each day.

“The students complained about the food quality and limited choices of our lunches,” Vang said. “More and more kids quit eating lunch, and those who did wasted so much food. It was just thrown away because they didn’t like it.”

This occurred, despite her and her staff spending countless hours developing and refining menus and recipes, complying with reporting requirements, and generally following the USDA regulations.

Vang’s situation is a familiar to many foodservice directors. In fact, the USDA reports that more than 1 million students have stopped purchasing school lunches since the new nutritional guidelines were enacted. Some districts have opted out of the NSLP altogether. The School Nutrition Association reports that school cafeterias waste nearly \$4 million in fruits and vegetables each day, as students throw out foods they are served under the guidelines.

But this is not the end of the story for Vang and Prairie Seeds. Today, **the school has successfully raised its lunch participation to about 700 students per day, even with seniors having an open lunch option, by using NutriStudents K-12[®] and its more than 100 total weeks of USDA-compliant menus and recipes, training to help foodservice staff understand reimbursable meal patterns, and promotional tools to help entice participation.**

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Vang loves that the NutriStudents K-12 system gives her and her staff

resources and direction related to serving procedures and compliance with the federal guidelines, including help implementing offer versus serve, which resulted in less waste. The system has also saved her and her staff time.

“We had lots of challenges with our program previously, including the amount of time it took to plan menus, reporting requirements, following USDA regulations,” she said. “Menu planning, reporting, food safety issues, record keeping – **it was really the equivalent of a full-time position to handle what this system is doing for us right now. Really, I’d say we save at least 40 hours a week with this program.**”

Learn more today

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