



2021 ISNA ANNUAL CONFERENCE Nutrition in Action

By Vickie Coffey, Healthy Schools Director, Richland-Bean Blossom Community School Corp. and Alison Powers, MBA, RD, Regional Sales Manager, JTM Food Group

WOW! What a great conference! You could definitely feel the passion, purpose and excitement in the room! Although we've been through the ringer these past couple of years, we are still doing what we do best, feeding kids healthy meals! Of course, the challenges are abundant with the supply chain and staffing shortages. (See what I did there?) As always, we had some great keynote speakers, breakout sessions, and much needed networking to help each other through the challenges, learn some new things, and if nothing else, to know we're not alone.

Nutrition is the backbone of what we do in K12 school nutrition programs. Everything we do stems from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and USDA Federal Program Guidelines. Gathering at our state conference annually provides an opportunity to learn the latest nutrition information impacting our industry.

Read on for a snapshot of some of the nutrition focused breakout sessions and key take home messages from this year's conference in Fort Wayne.

Nutrition Careers in School and Beyond

- **The great resignation of 2021**
 - Over 4 million employees quit their jobs in July 2021 resulting in a national labor shortage throughout every industry. <https://hbr.org/2021/09/who-is-driving-the-great-resignation>
 - A master's degree is required for nutrition students studying to become Dietitians beginning in 2024. Due to the additional educational requirements, many undergraduate nutrition programs are seeing a decline in enrollment. Advertising a career path in the field of nutrition that does NOT require a master's degree is a great strategy to recruit for School Nutrition.



Panelists from L to R: Abigail Creigh, Purdue Extension; Kim Ecenbarger, IU School of Public Health; Beverly Moellering, University of Saint Francis Dietetic Program; and Nicole Moorhead, MenuLogic K12

- **Recruitment in school nutrition strengths and opportunities: academic schedule, family-friendly, employing students, mission driven.**
 - Gen Z is the upcoming labor force and is looking for careers that fulfill a purpose, passion, and give back to their communities. Now is the time to start marketing School Nutrition Programs in a more philanthropic light to target the Gen Z mindset in addition to the family-friendly hours and benefits.
- **Advocating for our profession**
 - No one understands the strife that our industry is dealing with now better than you; be sure to share your daily struggles with your administration so you have their support. Explaining the "Why" behind the "What" that we are doing is the first step to gaining allies where we need them.

Sodium Update for Pediatric Nutrition:

- 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends no more than 2,300 mg of sodium consumed daily for a healthy diet.
- Sodium guidelines are looming and it is on the radar of our food manufacturers and menu planners. If Target 3 Sodium Levels are implemented, the average sodium per lunch is approximately 700 mg, according to NSLP Guidelines starting July 1, 2022.
- Is scratch cooking the solution? A study from the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics suggests scratch-cooking does NOT necessarily alter the sodium content of a food. [Is scratch-cooking a cost-effective way to prepare healthy school meals with US Department of Agriculture foods? - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35811111/)
- Is it really important to follow a low sodium diet? Yes, prolonged modest reduction in salt intake decreases blood pressure across all demographics.



Doing More with Less: Optimizing Inventory with Multiple Meal Applications:

- **Harness the LTO**
 - Don't have time to test out new recipes and products with your students? Uncertain of what items will be delivered? Insert the "Limited Time Offer" (LTO) to gauge interest, popularity, and labor requirements for any new concepts.
- **Increase inventory turnover menus**
 - Identifying multiple applications for the products in your inventory gives you flexibility with product shortages and options to avoid menu fatigue with your students. Challenge your staff to identify three or more menu concepts with each item in your inventory and you'll increase inventory turnover, increase labor efficiencies, and decrease food waste. Click the turnover menus link, above, to see our menu concept brainstorming!
- **Recruit bus drivers, instructional assistants, interns, work study and culinary students.**
 - Now is the time for creative problem-solving for labor issues. Network with area trade schools, culinary programs, dietetic internships, employment agencies and Purdue Extension Agencies to increase program exposure and your talent pool. Many schools are seeing success by employing bus drivers and student workers in their kitchens to bridge the labor gaps.



Panelists from L to R: Brooke Dodds, CORE Foodservice; Linda Bickett, Indianapolis Public Schools; Dana Saverino, S.A. Piazza (Wild Mike's Pizza); and Molly Armstrong, Gordon Food Service

Avoid Stirring the Pot: K12 Nutrition Conflict Resolution:

- **Networking and communication between departments including our school nurses is the best way to advocate for our kitchens, staff, and department.**
- **Be prepared to advocate for school nutrition programs at all times. Consider developing an elevator pitch that explains who you are and what you do for the students in your district.**

Elevator Pitch Example: "The School Nutrition Program is a federally funded program designed to provide healthy, age-appropriate and satisfying meals to children. We are in the business of feeding the future and doing it well. This program was designed and legislated for children, but we are also happy to support and provide healthy meals as an added benefit for the hard working adults and staff in the school buildings."
- **Politely handle constructive feedback and avoid burning bridges.**
 - Most people reaching out with feedback just want to feel heard. Listening and expressing that you've heard and understood their viewpoints is a great way to diffuse a situation.

Federal Sodium Reduction Mandates			
Grades	Target 1 (July 1, 2014)	Target 2 (July 1, 2017)	Target 3 (July 1, 2022)
Reimbursable School Breakfast			
K-5	≤ 540	≤ 485	≤ 430
6-8	≤ 600	≤ 535	≤ 470
9-12	≤ 640	≤ 570	≤ 500
Reimbursable School Lunch			
K-5	≤ 1,230	≤ 935	≤ 640
6-8	≤ 1,360	≤ 1,035	≤ 710
9-12	≤ 1,588	≤ 1,080	≤ 740



Panelists from L to R: Brittany Joiner, RD, Child Nutrition Director, MSD Wayne Township Schools; Kandyce Hardie, RN, BSN, Nurse Coordinator, Carmel Clay Schools; Elizabeth Edwards, RD, Director, Franklin Community Schools; Kim Yount, Child Nutrition Specialist, MSD Decatur Township Schools

QUIZ ON NEXT PAGE!

