



THE OUTLOOK

A Monthly Newsletter for School Nutrition Programs

NUTRITION CHAMPIONS

It has no doubt been a very challenging school year with the pandemic, and school nutrition professionals across Illinois are doing extraordinary work to ensure children maintain access to meals whether they are learning in-person, remote, or with a hybrid schedule.

We asked sponsors to share images and their experiences to take a look back at all the challenges and achievements. Inside this issue (Pages 5-18), the Illinois State Board of Education Nutrition Department is proud to put the spotlight on the incredible work across the state to feed our students.

On May 7, the country celebrated [School Lunch Hero Day](#). In Illinois, the special day was marked with a [proclamation from the governor](#)!

We also applaud the tireless work of our school nutrition professionals at the end of an especially challenging school year. Thank you for all you do!



NEWS BRIEFS

NUTRITION EDUCATION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture kicked off a month-long celebration marking 10 years since the introduction of the [MyPlate](#) nutrition guidance symbol, which helps consumers make healthy food choices. Throughout June, the USDA will offer a collection of activities and resources, including a [Start Simple with MyPlate app challenge](#).



NUTRITION RESOURCES

The **School Nutrition Association**, in partnership with the **National Dairy Council**, created a set of resources about school meals titled a "[Pediatrician's Perspective](#)." Pediatrician Robert Murray (MD, FAAP) breaks down the importance of nutrients to brain and child development, and how healthy school meals build healthier students, contributing to improved educational outcomes.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Registration is under way for the [Illinois School Nutrition Association's](#) annual conference, which will be presented online on Wednesday, June 16, and Thursday, June 17. More information is available at <https://www.ilsna.net/pdandevents/annualconf>. The event includes the [ILSNA Virtual Exhibit Hall](#).



Spread the Word About the Summer Food Service Program

School food authorities (SFAs) must cooperate with Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) institutions to inform eligible families of the availability and location of free meals for students when the regular school year ends. This requirement is included in the [School Nutrition Programs Administrative Handbook \(Miscellaneous Regulations, Page J-17\)](#)

Acceptable activities may include developing or disseminating printed or electronic materials to families of school children prior to the end of the school year, which provide information on the availability and location of SFSP meals.

An SFA can distribute information to households such as the location of nearby SFSP meal sites, times of service, and SFSP service institution contact information.

What can schools do to satisfy this requirement?

- Download and distribute program flyers: <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Summer-Food-Service-Program-Resources.aspx>
- Post and share the texting hotline information: Text "FoodIL" to 877877 (For Spanish, text "ComidasIL")



Be sure to document your outreach efforts as it is a component of the Administrative Review. ([School Nutrition Programs Administrative Review Checklist](#))

- Publicize the National Hunger Hotline to your community, (800) 359-2163. Families can use the hotline to find summer meal sites.

ISBE teams up with partners and sponsors to offer free meals to children each summer across Illinois. Participants can call (800) 359-2163, text "FoodIL" to 877-877, or visit SummerMealsIllinois.org to find the closest meal sites. ISBE's partners, No Kid Hungry and the Illinois Hunger Coalition, staff the hotline and texting numbers, referring families to feeding sites during the summer months.

Recalls and Public Health Alerts

The Illinois State Board of Education Nutrition Department routinely shares product [Recalls & Public Health Alerts](#) from the U.S. De-

partment of Agriculture. Bookmark www.isbe.net/nutrition and watch the What's New? section for announcements that affect Illinois.

School Year 2021-22 Update

As we continue the transition to full in-person instruction, we want to thank you for your patience and provide an update on operating Child Nutrition Programs in School Year 2021-22. The Illinois State Board of Education Nutrition Department is working on trainings for the School Year 2021-22 annual application period and will announce availability soon.

As in previous years, sponsors will be asked to renew their annual application to participate in Child Nutrition Programs for the next school year in the Web-Based Illinois Nutrition System (WINS). We are working closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Illinois Department of Public Health to ensure our instructions and guidance for the new year meet requirements. We are waiting for clarification from the USDA on several parts of the [waivers made available for School Year 2021-22](#). (The USDA Food and Nutrition Service's [Child Nutrition Nationwide Waiver Update](#) released on April 20, 2021, summarizes the newly released waivers.)

We want to emphasize that the USDA has made the National School Lunch Program Summer Seamless Option (SSO) an option for next school; we anticipate the vast majority will choose SSO over regular NSLP. SSO is not a continuation of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), which many schools are operating in this school year. The USDA's intention in allowing NSLP SSO for the regular school year is to keep meals at no cost for all of your students and to return to the NSLP meal pattern. (The SFSP meal pattern will not be an option.) Those participating in SSO will receive the higher SFSP reimbursement rate.

Watch for SY 21-22 FAQs under the "CNP: COVID-19 Updates and Resources" section at www.isbe.net/nutrition for more information. This document will be updated.

Sign Up for ISBE's SNP Back to School Conference Webinars

Registration is under way for the Illinois State Board of Education Nutrition Department's live webinars for the School Nutrition Programs Back to School Virtual Conference. This year's theme is "It Takes a Community To Feed a Community." Six webinars are scheduled for July 19-21:

- [ISBE Update](#), 9-10:30 a.m. Monday, July 19, 2021
- [Menu Planning](#), 1-2:30 p.m. Monday, July 19, 2021
- [USDA Foods](#), 9-10:30 a.m. Tuesday, July 20, 2021
- [Financial Management](#), 1-2:30 p.m. July 20, 2021
- [Monitoring](#), 9-10:30 a.m. July 21, 2021
- [Wrap-Up Game](#), 1-2:30 p.m., July 21, 2021

Click on the individual links above to register or visit www.isbe.net/snpb2s to choose the live webinars you would like to attend. Participants can [submit questions early via this online form](#). The live webinars will be recorded and available for viewing on the conference webpage.

ISBE's SNP Back to School Virtual Conference will also feature recorded trainings on a variety of topics, as well as an exhibitor's section of resources for schools. These resources will be posted at www.isbe.net/snpb2s by the start of the conference live sessions.

Paid Lunch Equity Requirements and Guidance

The U.S. Department of Agriculture issued [waivers for School Year 2021-22](#) allowing schools to operate the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option (SSO), which provides meals at no cost to all students. Our staff is working closely with the USDA to develop training materials and the annual application process. We are also awaiting guidance regarding requirements of Paid Lunch Equity (PLE). Below are suggestions for how to proceed at this time in the absence of an updated PLE tool.

Exemption Available to Not Raise Lunch Prices for School Year 2021-22 in non-SSO Operations: PLE Exemption available for SFAs with a zero or positive balance in their food services account, as of Dec. 31, 2020, will not be required to raise lunch prices. The exemption will become available once all guidance

is complete.

Raising Lunch Prices for School Year 2021-22: Raise lunch prices \$0.10 based on information from the [prior year's tool](#). This option is still suggested for SFAs feeding under Seamless Summer Option. In raising the lunch prices, during SSO, we also suggest publishing approved rates. In doing this, the communities served would understand where lunch prices would stand, if the SSO were not available. Our staff understands that raising lunch prices during the pandemic is not ideal. However, food cost and labor are still going to rise over the next year.

If your food service balance does not qualify for above exemption, please feel free to reach out to cnp@isbe.net. For more information on PLE visit <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Nutrition-Resource-Management.aspx>.

Illinois Sweep Procedure

School Year 2020-21 Diversion to Processor Pounds

For those schools that diverted pounds to processors during School Year 2020-21, please use all pounds by June 30, 2021. Pounds remaining in school accounts on June 30, 2021 will be swept to the State of Illinois account.

Please check [ProcessorLink](#) and [K12](#) to review your pound balances, and determine how you can use the pounds prior to June 30.

Illinois' full sweep procedure is included in the box accompanying this article and is also available in the [School Nutrition Programs Administrative Handbook](#) (Page O-10).

As a reminder, ISBE offered two opportunities for schools to reduce diversions to processors during SY 20-21, as a result of the pandemic and to provide flexibility and maximization of Food Distribution Program funds. When diversions were reduced, funds were then able to be used for USDA Foods and/or DOD.

Also, please know that consideration was given to extending the sweep date due to the continuing pandemic; however, program funds can be better managed by maintaining the June 30 date. Please do not view the sweep as punitive. The state will gladly provide available state account pounds to any school district that can use them.

If you have questions, please contact Paula Williams at pawillia@isbe.net.

Illinois State Board of Education, Food Distribution Program

Excess Inventory at Processors

7 CFR 250.30(n) requires the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to monitor processor inventories to ensure that the quantity of donated foods for which the processor is accountable is the lowest cost-efficient level but may not exceed a six month supply based on the processor's average monthly usage. To ensure this requirement is met, ISBE enforces the following procedures:

- USDA Foods diverted to processors must be used by June 30 of the year in which the pounds were diverted. For example, if pounds were diverted for school year 2021 (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021), the pounds must be used by June 30, 2021.
- Pounds not used by June 30 will be removed from a School Food Authority's (SFA) account and transferred to the State of Illinois account.
- Usage is monitored throughout the school year. If a SFA's account exceeds a six month supply based on the SFA's average monthly usage, pounds will be transferred to the State of Illinois account.
- Inventory in the State of Illinois account will be available on a first come first served basis.
- SFAs may contact processors/brokers on an individual basis to request pounds from the State of Illinois account. SFAs requesting pounds should be familiar with USDA Foods processing procedures and end product distribution.

Explore the Institute of Child Nutrition's iLearn

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Team Nutrition is excited to announce the Institute of Child Nutrition's updated eLearning Portal, now with a fresh, new look and a new name: iLearn! Visit <https://theicn.org/icn-ilearn/> to get started. iLearn provides self-paced, free online learning and

offers users the flexibility to complete courses in multiple sessions on desktop, laptop, or mobile devices. Child Nutrition Professionals can download the app and iLearn @ ICN on the go! The iLearn mobile app is available in Google Play and in the Apple App Store.

Olympia CUSD 16



Congrats to the cafeteria staff at Olympia South Elementary in Olympia CUSD 16. Jamie Furman, Sheila Spencer, and Diana Leindl were honored in the Team category for last fall's ISBE Those Who Excel awards. Learn how districts can nominate someone this year at www.isbe.net/thosewhoexcel.

Celebrate Those Who Excel

Do your cafeteria workers deserve best “team” honors, or your food delivery volunteers deserve an award? Think about it, and [nominate your staff and volunteers](http://www.isbe.net/thosewhoexcel) for Those Who Excel – the perfect way to say thank you for their incredible efforts.

Since 1970, the Illinois State Board of Education has sponsored Those Who Excel to honor individuals who have made significant contributions to our state's public and nonpublic elementary and secondary schools. Awards are presented in five categories: school administrator, student support personnel, educational

service personnel, community volunteer, and teams.

Completed applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Thursday, July 1. For more information and to submit a nomination, go to the [ISBE Those Who Excel webpage](http://www.isbe.net/thosewhoexcel). Nomination materials are evaluated by a selection committee comprised of individuals who represent a variety of educational organizations.

Last year's honorees included the Olympia South Elementary Cafeteria Staff team from **Olympia Community Unit School District 16**. “Our cafeteria staff, Jamie Furman, Sheila Spencer, and Diana Leindl, is a wonderful team of work-

ers. They are the unsung heroes behind the scenes of our school each day,” stated Olympia South Elementary Secretary Linda Hawker in her nomination form.

Andrew Walsh, Director of Student Services for the district, wrote in his nomination for the team, “When schools were told that we were forced to transition to remote learning, the team at Olympia South stepped up and eagerly met the challenge to provide meals to students.”

Look up other past winners of ISBE's Those Who Excel awards at www.isbe.net/thosewhoexcel.



At the start of the pandemic, Agudath Israel of Illinois activated their Kiwi Kids (Kids Wellness Initiative) community feeding program. Please take a moment to watch this inspirational video from the child nutrition sponsor! Here is the link to the video: <https://vimeo.com/533986965>.

Agudath Israel of Illinois

North Chicago Community District 187

Susan Oglesby, District Meal Coordinator at North Chicago Community District 187, holds a sign to help direct families to meals when they first went remote and started feeding students by having buses at locations where food was distributed.



NUTRITION CHAMPIONS



Jamie Carollo of Hononegah Community School District submitted these fun photographs of staff keeping things fun. Pictured above is Cathy Haedt, Pam Blade, Kim DAgnolo, Sue Binger, Wendy Shahrikian, Mary Insko, Judy Fabiano, Becky Colson, Julie Hagg, and Jamie C. Pictured below is Kim DAgnolo, Julie Hagg, Becky Colson, Sue Binger, and Jamie Carollo on the last day of summer feeding 2020!

**Hononegah
Community
School District**



Stockton Community Unit School District 206

Stockton Community Unit School District 206 staff have been serving grab-and-go breakfasts and lunches everyday to their students since the school year began in August. And once a month they go the extra mile to provide a hot lunch to our students and staff. They are true rock stars and deserve a shoutout. Thank you to Millie Graves for sharing these photos for our newsletter! Pictured to the right here are Diane Randecker and Denise Albrecht.



The students would all agree the middle school never smelled so good. Thanksgiving dinner was a big hit as many students really do miss having hot lunch at school. The cooks provided quite the feast and students and staff truly appreciated it. Pictured here are Myra Pearce, Don Hartog, Denise Albrecht, and Kim Westaby.



Naughty or Nice? These lunch lady twins, Kim Westaby and Diane Randecker, are definitely on Santa's Nice List.

NUTRITION CHAMPIONS



Thank you to Susan Baumgartner, the Food Service Director of Centralia City School District 135, for sharing photos for our newsletter!

She writes: Attached are some pictures from last spring when we were delivering meals remotely to the students. When the first two week shutdown was announced, we thought, "Oh great, a two week vacation." **WRONG!!!** Those two weeks and the remainder of the school year became the most challenging time of my career. Our two week vacation turned into working more days, because we fed the kids through the spring break, we didn't take those days off. We polled our 12 cooks to see who would be willing to continue to work during the shutdown, and all but one were willing to continue to work, even though they were concerned and scared about COVID. We had to develop a plan and then improvise to come up with a system that worked. We started out with 12 buses running their normal routes delivering the meals, later this number was reduced to eight buses. Our highest number of meals served was in the mid 800s. At one point we were having trouble finding lunch bags to purchase. We put out a plea for help on social media and the community was awesome!! We had local businesses and individuals donating bags to us. We received enough to get us through the rest of the year. This was definitely something that we never dreamed we would have to do, and it is definitely something we will never forget!!"

Centralia City School District 135



Worth School District 127



Here are a few photographs of the nutrition champions for Worth School District 127. Every week they hand out hundreds of 7-day meal packs to families. They have been out there on the coldest and snowiest days of the winter. What an awesome dedicated staff! Thank you to Cindy Dykas for submitting these photos.



Southeastern CUSD 337



Thank you to Carrie Shaffer of Southeastern CUSD 337 for sharing this photograph and more information about their operation when we asked! Pictured here, cafeteria staff prepare for Easter break meal distribution. Every student in attendance on March 30 got to take home enough meals to eat breakfast and lunch during the entire break! District Superintendent Todd Fox and the district staff could see that this break was an opportunity to serve all of their students. They also thought it was a great way to see every student and speak to every student right before the long break.

Superintendent Fox conducted a staff meeting on March 13, 2020, to inform the employees that there was a chance COVID-19 might force the school to close its doors for several weeks. One of the first questions asked by a staff member was, "Can we continue to feed the kids?" From the beginning of the pandemic, an army of employees have stepped up to do whatever is needed to be done to take care of our students. The school teamed with a local church food pantry during the summer of 2020. (The Southeastern Food Pantry is located and organized by Living Faith United Methodist Church in Bowen, Ill.) Food was also delivered to students that couldn't get to the food pantry food distribution site during the summer months.



Warsaw CUSD 316

Thank you to Superintendent Bob Gound of Warsaw CUSD 316 for sharing details about their stand-out nutrition program! He had this to share: Warsaw CUSD 316 is very proud of it's food service department, led by Head Cook Brenda Morton. Brenda and her staff prepared and delivered meals on a daily basis throughout the Spring and Summer months. The meals that were prepared rarely contained pre-packaged food. The nutrition staff provided students with meals that mirrored the daily cooked meals that students are used to receiving during the regular school year. When the school district returned to in person learning in August, the nutrition staff provided the in-person students with meals while continuing to provide our remote learners with high quality meals. The nutrition staff continues to provide meals for students on weekdays when school is not in session. They even worked through the holidays while on break for Thanksgiving and Christmas to ensure that all of our students had access to quality meals. This group of ladies has gone above and beyond to high quality meals to the youth of our community and we couldn't be more appreciative of all of their hard work!



Thank you to Food Service Manager of Kaneland CUSD 302 Gigi Gochee-Statler, who took some time to share their experiences serving during the pandemic. She has worked 13 years in school food service and 30 years in health care food service.

Kaneland CUSD 302

CHALLENGES FACED: I had been watching what was going on and had forethought to evaluate what a take home meal would look like. We scrambled at the beginning finding individually wrapped silverware. Then, issues of obtaining products that were compliant that we could use for the meals. Luckily, because of stay at home orders, Administration stepped into help with handing out meals in the beginning. Struggles to make sure our handing out points, or pick up points covered the need in our district as we cover 140 miles and 11 ZIP codes, in the middle of nowhere. Starting with four pick up locations and two bus routes, we found the best was the pick up locations. About a month into our process, we worked out food service employees into handing out meals.

Myself and my two head cooks were preparing the meals to limit interaction with others. The struggle of obtaining single wrapped items ex: peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and cost effective items occurred. Serving meals through spring break of 2020 and through the summer was a challenge, as my employees had to sign up for extra hours to help cover. We returned in the fall of 2020 with a hybrid schedule at all six of our schools. Barriers and bubbles had been installed and removal of washable products such as student trays were switched to disposable. No more helping yourself, we serve you was put in place. We were A group on Monday and Thursday, with B group on Tuesday and Friday, with Wednesday's rotating A or B.

Then, in September 2020 one of the employees presented themselves with a positive testing for COVID-19. All middle school employees were sent home to quarantine, with lunch still needing to be served. Luckily, the employee had no contact with anyone but the kitchen staff. The Administrators of the building stepped in and came to serve. Scrambling to figure out what to do for the next 14 days. I pulled staff from the high school to cover the middle school and we modified the offerings to only hot lunch at the middle school, and limited Ala Carte at the high school. The staff from the high school were fantastic. Those who went to Harter to do it all and those who stayed at the high school pulled extra tasks to help out.

A follow up test six days later came back negative but to

be sure the staff was still quarantined for 14 days out of caution. I was one that was quarantined, but worked from home directing the staff at Harter what to do and ordering from home. And, wouldn't you know it, the Health Department arrives to do their inspection. We passed with flying colors.

Things were then back to normal hybrid schedule until the end of November when COVID cases were on the rise in the building and the county closed the school ... all remote. We had practice on this, so we went back to remote pick up at the schools. The staff pulled to the plate working in stations to pack meals, and some working to hand out meals at sites. This scheduled continued until we changed after spring break to full in school at the elementary schools, hybrid continued at Kaneland High School and Kaneland Harter not having the resources for full meals for students with spacing for mask removal, went to a 4 hour 50 minute day with take home lunches and snacks.

WHAT WE DID THAT WORKED WELL: The struggle to get items delivered to off sites was real. We purchase wheel coolers, and large construction buckets from a local hardware store that we could sanitize after each use. After a few months the lids on the construction buckets had started to crack, so we purchased a few more and I contacted the company who graciously sent us out replacement lids for no cost when they found out what we were using them for. Kudos to them. It also gave my staff a chance to get out in the public (limited as it was) to see the appreciation for their hard work.

FUNNY AND CUTE STORIES: A young man at one of the pick up sites, was crazy excited to get his lunches for his family one day as he need a few more packages of carrots to make carrot cake with them. Not what we had intended but gave us a chuckle for the day.

Shortly after we started we received a thank you note from a young child who was extremely happy with her meals. This was posted and noted each day as to why we were doing what we were doing.

I put a "Hero Entrance" sign on the door the staff came in and they would joke the heroes are here when they arrived.

NUTRITION CHAMPIONS



Prairie Central CUSD 8

Joni Besgrove, who has been the Food Service Director for 20 years at Prairie Central CUSD 8 had this to share: The biggest challenges that we faced as the pandemic became real, was the logistics on how to prepare, deliver, and provide meal pick-ups in an efficient manner. Prairie Central is a rural community, serving meals at six sites in four towns. We were not prepared for this unprecedented situation, but learned quickly that we must adapt as necessary! Our plans were constantly changing, as the rules and regulations were also changing. It was a challenge to organize the much appreciated out pouring of community help, as we were struggling to figure out the system ourselves. Food and paper goods were in short supply. Staffing was not an issue, as cafeteria staff, paraprofessionals, teachers, and administration pulled together to help as needed. Bus drivers delivered meals. The meal process changed often as we learned what did or did not work. Mary Newman, ISBE Principal Consultant, reached out to me when the pandemic started, and graciously helped me navigate through the Summer Food Service Program, which was totally new for Prairie Central. Paula Crane, Prairie Central Superintendent, was extremely supportive and worked with me through the many changes. We have all learned a lot through this process.

Pictured here are the dedicated staff from Prairie Central Upper Elementary, Prairie Central Primary West, and Prairie Central Primary East.



NUTRITION CHAMPIONS

Jessica Keith has returned to Sullivan Community Unit School District 300 in a big way. At the end of the 2019-20 school year and at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sullivan School District decided to return to a self-operated food service. The administration knew it would take someone special to come in during such a challenging time and run a successful meal program. Administration had previously worked with Jessica and knew that she was the perfect person for the challenge, especially with her 10 years of school food service experience. She became the food service director for Sullivan Schools in July 2020.

Jessica greeted the many challenges of serving meals during a pandemic with a positive attitude. One of Jessica's first challenges was to ensure the district's cafeterias were prepared to begin self-operation on July 1, 2020. Jessica had to arrange food and milk deliveries and replace kitchen equipment. She created new menus and streamlined the packaging of meals. In order to increase efficiency, assembly lines were created in the cafeteria to assemble weekly meal bags. In collaboration with the transportation department and teaching staff, most meals were delivered directly to homes in the community, while some chose to utilize the drive-thru meal delivery system. Having these options made the summer food service program even more successful.

Sullivan School District returned to in-person learning on Aug. 17, 2020. This presented new challenges in food service as schools were limited to space requirements during lunch periods. New eating areas needed to be identified and students were served in shifts to allow them to safely abide by the COVID-19 guidelines. Jessica adapted the serving lines so that students could enjoy a near-normal cafeteria experience. Students were still given the options of a taco line, pizza, and grill line, hot meal line and salads, along with some a la carte choices. In addition, she continued to package meals for students who chose the remote learning option. Service learning students, under Jessica's direction, package the meals for remote learners, and they are then delivered to students' homes on a weekly basis. Community members also pick up weekly meal bags. Jessica has gone so far as to personally deliver meals to a homeless family.

Even through a complex transition and global pandemic, Jessica comes in every day with a smile and a positive attitude. She is loved and respected by both staff and students. She cares for everyone and even helped a staff member through the process of applying for and being awarded a Habitat for Humanity home. Needless to say, Jessica has gone above and beyond to ensure that no child goes hungry. She works hard to ensure that students are provided with nutritious meals.

Sullivan CUSD 300



NUTRITION CHAMPIONS

Thank you to Mike Chamness, the Food Service Manager of DeKalb School District 428, who has 10 years of experience in food service, for answering a few questions from the ISBE Nutrition Department about their operation.

CHALLENGES FACED: As we entered into the winter months, weather conditions were a concern for the safety of our team members and families. We were able to modify and communicate to the community in the event that our distribution time/day had to be adjusted because of freezing weather or snow conditions. We also continually modify and adjust our curbside distribution to accommodate In-Person and Remote Learning Students, whether we had to change the day of the distribution or the timing of the distribution, to ensure all families have access to free meals.

SOMETHING THAT WORKED WELL: D428 has been partnering with a local food pantry, Barb Food Mart, at one of our locations during Thursday Night Distribution. This partnership ensures that families who pick-up from the D428 distribution also can have additional fresh food provided to them on a weekly basis. In addition, we have done outreach to spreading the word about our distribution to local community centers and daycares in the area.

FUN STORY: We have engaged with the community by creating interactive recipe cards. For example, in January we provided a “Make Your Own Pizza Kit” containing flatbread, marinara sauce and mozzarella cheese. We provided a “Think Outside the Box” Recipe card where the student, with supervision from a guardian, can cut the flatbread into the shape of a snowflake and top with marinara sauce and mozzarella cheese and either eat fresh or bake. We also provided other topping ideas to add!

We're extremely proud of our Food Service staff and their ability to adapt to the many changes we've experienced since the pandemic began. We changed our entire food service operation in a matter of a few short days to ensure the children in our community continued to have access to nutritious meals. The weather can be very challenging with our curbside service, but our brave Food Service staff continues to be out there every week to serve our community! We are currently serving 7-Day Meal Packs twice a week at five of our school locations. We love to see the smiles when parents and students pick up their meals!

DeKalb School District 428



NUTRITION CHAMPIONS

Brimfield 309 Cafeteria Manager Petrina Winkelman took some time to share their experiences during the pandemic. Thank you for sharing, Petrina!

CHALLENGES FACED DURING THE PANDEMIC: The Brimfield School has faced many challenges during the pandemic as many others have. We have had issues with staff and students having COVID as well as others being quarantined. Subs are hard to find because some are only willing to work at one site or the other, not both. Some subs work for other school districts and do not want to work at others. We have also had previous subs who are not willing to wear masks, or do not even want to be in a school environment. In the cafeteria we have had to work short-handed and do the best we can to feed the students/staff. I am very proud of the work my staff has done and rising to the challenges we have been faced with during the pandemic.

Going remote due to COVID related issues has been a challenge as well, financially. When we go remote, participation is much lower, so less money/funding. We still have overhead and food and supplies to purchase. We are all ready to get back to some normalcy. We are hoping next year will bring some of the normalcy back.

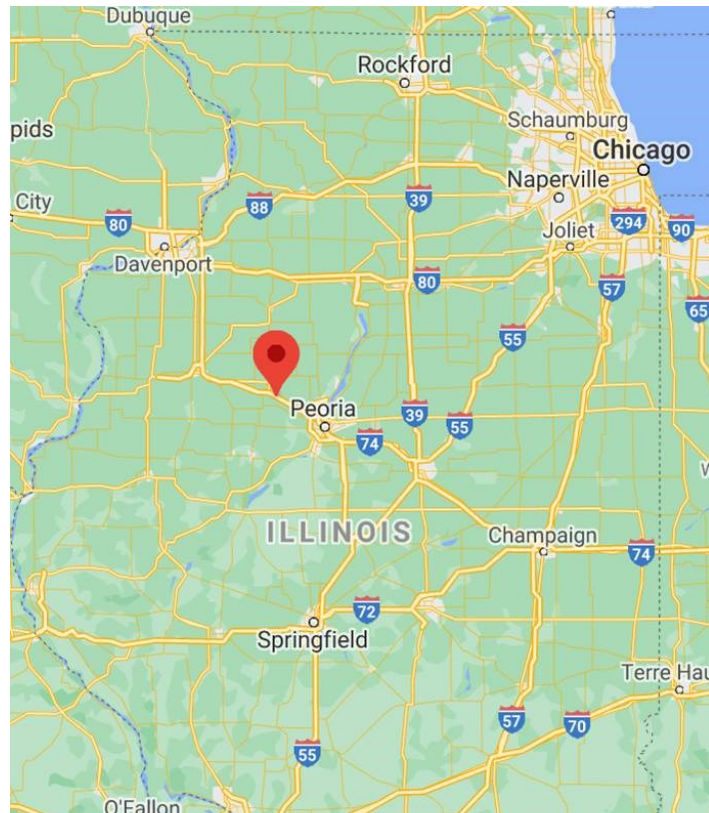
Purchasing supplies has also been a challenge. We have had issues with manufacturers closing down due to sick employees, which makes supplies hard to get. Others have shortened staff, so cannot keep up with the demand of products. Prices have skyrocketed on some items, like gloves went from \$60 case of 1,000 to \$144 a case. Sometimes we do not know until the day before our order is to come in that we are going to be short an item or subbed. I am thankful we have only had to change complete daily menus a couple of times.

We have ordered products this year we have not in the past and have taken items away. We serve things differently this year. We do not allow the students to touch or get anything for themselves. No salad bars! At the grade school, most of the students eat in the classroom now, which is a challenge in itself. Extra work for cafeteria staff as well as teachers/aides.

SOMETHING SCHOOL DISTRICT DID THAT WORKED WELL:

- Social distancing as much as possible
 - ◇ Designating stairs as up/down
 - ◇ Taping off cafeteria seats-only every other seat
 - ◇ Moving desks 6" apart in classrooms as much as possible
 - ◇ Sectioning off hallways-up one side, down the other
- Staggering lunches
 - ◇ Only allowing a few students in the cafeteria at one time

Brimfield 309



- ◇ Eating in different areas
- ◇ Eating in classrooms
- Using plastic, prewrapped utensils
- Using Styrofoam trays, to-go containers
- Temperatures taken upon entering school/bus
- Communicating about illnesses/contact tracing, and going remote when necessary
- Limiting how many persons are in one area
- Wearing masks, except when eating or drinking
- Providing hand sanitizers and performing extra cleaning

A CUTE STORY: One of the times when we were remote, we had a grade school student, who was very shy come in for to-go lunches. She would bring in a different stuffed animal or doll to show us. She wanted to share her toys with us and was always excited to see what was in the lunches. One of my staff members and her would always chat a bit. She was really shy in the beginning and by the end of the remote time she came out of her shell a bit. She was always happy to see us and we loved seeing her. It was very cute to watch her grow even in its smallest form.

NUTRITION CHAMPIONS

Ladosha Bystry, Kitchen Supervisor of Wethersfield School District 230, had this to say when we asked them to share their experiences operating during the pandemic. She has 18 years of experience in school food service. Thank you, Ladosha!

CHALLENGES FACED DURING THE PANDEMIC: When the whole pandemic started I was in denial thinking this was going to last a week or so. Then when it became reality I knew we had to switch gears and feed my students. The first week we sent home only 30 meals. Friday when me and my kitchen staff left for the weekend we had about 50 meals to be delivered on Monday. I am working in a proud district and not a lot of parents are willing to ask for help, so I told the parents that they would be helping the kitchen out if they would receive free meals for their children. Over the weekend the parents started helping our kitchen, my school phone, my email and texting was out of control (This was so unexpected and awesome at the same time). Monday morning hit and we were looking at 250 deliveries and 100 pick ups. Talk about using up all your stashed away save it for a rainy day inventory. **BUT WE MADE IT!!!!!!** Coming back this year in August at the new school year when we thought things were going back to the old normal before the first extension of the SFSP we were on a A -B schedule. I checked into the supper program for our after school programs to try to feed more kids meals. Well because of the whole pandemic situation we were allowed to supply suppers. Now we are BACK to full students and five days a week. Our serving numbers are amazing considering that our enrollment. I could not be happier with my students and prouder of my kitchen staff that always goes above and beyond there job descriptions.

WHAT IS SOMETHING YOUR SCHOOL/DISTRICT DID DURING THE PANDEMIC THAT WORKED WELL? I contacted some of my sister districts and asked what their plans were and how they was going to handle this situation, I would have to say your co-

Wethersfield School District



workers always have great stories they are willing to share, feed off of there information and modify it to work for your situation.

Funny and cute stories: We use everything we can get on hands on for packaging food product to shipping. Most of the time our suppliers are out of supplies. I did receive in some 4 count Chicken boxes that stated Fried Chicken on the side of the boxes. Imagine the students reactions when there was NO FRIED CHICKEN for supper. In fact one of the sixth grade teacher sent me a email stating that the children said I owe them for tricking them into taking a fried chicken supper that was not in the box. I had one teacher relay to me that this one student loves when we serve the biscuits and gravy but it also makes him take a extra bathroom break.

Maria Stadeli, the cafeteria manager of Cissna Park CUSD 6 has been working in food service for seven years. She previously worked for the U.S. Postal Service for 17 years. She had this to share: This has definitely been a challenging year for everyone, but with a little extra work and a lot of creativity we were able to make the best of it. This year we have had in-person instruction with the option of remote learning. On Mondays we had to prepare all of the remote lunches for the week. Our in-person students have eaten their lunches in the classrooms.

Here a few funny comments that the kids made about the lunches:

- "This doesn't look half bad! I wouldn't dare try this at home, but I will try it at school."
- "Were these strawberries picked fresh this morning?"

Cissna Park CUSD 6

- "I didn't know that we were having dragon eggs for lunch today!" (We were actually having chicken nuggets.)
- "I really like that chicken teriyaki! I'm going to have to ask Mrs. Marshall (the principal) for the recipe! (This year since the students are eating their meals in the classroom. Since we do not see the kids, apparently they think the principal is the one coming up with the "recipes." Lol!)
- After looking in her lunch, one little girl asks, "Is that cole slaw? Oh great, that's my favorite!"



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Events, Meetings, and Deadlines

- July 5 – ISBE offices closed for Independence Day
- July 19 – SNP Back to School Conference: [ISBE Update](#)
- July 19 – SNP Back to School Conference: [Menu Planning](#)
- July 20 – SNP Back to School Conference: [USDA Foods](#)
- July 20 – SNP Back to School Conference: [Financial Management](#)
- July 21 – SNP Back to School Conference: [Monitoring](#)
- July 21 – SNP Back to School Conference: [Wrap-Up Game](#)

Please note this is not a complete list of Nutrition Department events, meetings, and deadlines. Visit us online at www.isbe.net/nutrition.

What's New?

- [CACFP: Read the New Issue of Mealtime Minutes](#)
- [USDA Foods and DOD Funds for the Summer Food Service Program](#)
- [Child Nutrition Programs Waivers for School Year 2021-22](#)
- [Nationwide Waivers and Flexibilities for CACFP](#)
- [Revised Public Health Guidance for Schools \(FAQs\)](#)
- [USDA Extends Flexibilities Through Summer](#)

Watch for our latest news and posts under What's New? at www.isbe.net/nutrition.

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1. **Mail:** U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. **Fax:** (202) 690-7442; or **Email:** program.intake@usda.gov.

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