

Benefits of Implementing NSMP

Improved nutrient value of school meals

NSMP requires the menu planner to use nutrient analysis software in designing school menus. The menu planner must review the nutrient analysis of each weekly menu. When the menu does not meet USDA's established Nutrient Standards, the menu planner must make modifications to meet the standards.

Menu planning flexibility

Previous USDA approved menu planning systems are based on food "components": meat/meat alternates, bread/grain, fruits, vegetables and milk. The menu planner was required to use specific minimum quantities of each of the components. NSMP allows the menu planner to create menus without being "boxed in" by specific amounts of components, with the exception of milk. All foods count toward meeting nutrition requirements.

Enhanced ability to meet specific student preference

Schools may be better able to meet specific student food preferences such as vegetarian diets or various ethnic entrees.

Immediate nutrition feedback

The nutrient analysis provides immediate feedback to the menu planner on compliance with nutrition goals. This can be used for marketing balanced school meals as well as planning them.

Reduced food costs

Because NSMP does not require specific amounts of the meat/meat alternate component, schools have found that meals are less expensive.

System for sharing recipes and menus with schools in district

The USDA approved NSMP software products include recipe databases. Central school food service staff may easily print out the recipes and share these with staff in all schools. Schools may also share recipes in an electronic format.

Consistency in food preparation

Each menu item entered into the NSMP system must be in the form of a recipe. When menu planners distribute the recipes to district schools and require school staff to follow the recipes, there is greater consistency in food items served.

Information for diabetic students and others with nutrition related medical conditions

School food service personnel are frequently asked for information on the carbohydrate content of foods offered so that nurses and other medical personnel may assist diabetic students in planning their meals. Students with other nutrition related medical conditions can also benefit from the availability of nutrition information. NSMP is a great vehicle for providing this information.

Enhanced image of school food service program within the school community

Many school food service personnel who are using NSMP have reported that their stature within the school community has improved. Administrators, health professionals and parents are impressed with the amount of information available through the NSMP software. They are equally impressed that the school food service staff is using software to conduct a nutrient analysis of the school meals and is able to assure that meals served are nutritious. Providing nutrition information on all menu items can assist students in learning to make balanced food selections.

Decreased time on the back end

School food service personnel have found after the initial data entry, menu planning with NSMP is much faster and more efficient. The information has already been entered; menu days can be duplicated and rearranged from month to month. Entering new menu items is a quick process.

Confidence that planned menus meet requirements prior to USDA evaluations

Regardless of the menu planning process being used, USDA requires that all menus meet the Nutrient Standards. NSMP gives the menu planner tools to ensure that these standards are being met.

"[One of the greatest benefits has been] the additional variety possible since we are not required to offer 2 oz. of meat."

Ruth Giffin, RD,
Food Service Director,
Needham Public Schools,
Needham, WA

"[Parents are] very happy with it. It helps make the food service look more professional."

David Schwake, RD,
Foodservice Director,
Litchfield School District,
Phoenix, AZ

"For a large school district [NSMP] is the only way to go; it offers flexibility and gives the user a mechanism for knowing the nutritional value of meals served."

Shirley Brook,
Director, Food & Nutrition Services,
JEFFCO Public Schools,
Golden, CO