



CASE STUDY | DISTRICT NUTRITION

Boosting Revenue and Simplifying K-12 Nutrition Operations

CHALLENGES

- District growing and becoming difficult to manage with paper-based processes
- \$50 cash limit necessitated daily bank runs, creating an additional burden on staff
- Need for financial stability and staffing retention coming out of the global pandemic

SOLUTIONS

[LINQ District Nutrition](#)
(formerly TITAN)

[LINQ Connect](#)

RESULTS

- Saving time by eliminating paper-based processes means pulling reports takes just minutes
- Transitioning to more digital meal payments and no longer giving change in cash
- Investing à la carte revenue in equipment upgrades, staff support, and program improvements

Suffolk Public Schools needed to simplify their K-12 nutrition program management with an all-in-one solution. As a growing Virginia district, it was time for their software to catch up. Paper-based processes and disparate software systems ran everything before the global pandemic, but it became unwieldy and unsustainable.

The district's nutrition program simply had too many schools and operations to manage. They also needed an option for team members to work remotely or off-site in the uncertain days coming out of the pandemic. Plus, they wanted to generate additional revenue with a district-wide à la carte program while meeting grade-specific nutrition compliance requirements.

Suffolk Public Schools discovered their solution in LINQ District Nutrition. They unified their nutrition program operations with a single digital platform and simplified processes across the board for their staff. Now they have greater program flexibility, accurate and timely data, and their à la carte sales generate thousands of additional dollars each month.

Too Many K-12 Nutrition Platforms, Not Enough Time to Manage it All

Nutrition Services Compliance Coordinator Angela Howell, M.A.Ed, and Coordinator of Nutrition Services, Tricia Kastelitz, RDN, SNS, both joined the district in 2020. They agreed from the start their legacy systems wouldn't cut it.

Howell says disparate systems used by the team before she began working there required too much paperwork and bogged down efficiency. "They had a lot of different platforms... we needed to condense everything into one." Tasks that should be simple, like pulling revenue reports, took too long and required logging in and out of different systems daily.

“Everything just goes in the system. It’s been very refreshing for our team. That’s why we went with it. It’s a one-stop shop.”

Angela Howell, M.A.Ed
Nutrition Services
Compliance Coordinator

Howell and Kastelitz knew simplifying operations with a single solution would make life easier for everyone and give back critical time to their staff. With 19 schools and growing, they also had other concerns about their program’s scalability and long-term success.

Seeking Financial Sustainability in Uncertain Times

Financial sustainability can be one of the toughest challenges K-12 nutrition leaders face. Howell and Kastelitz say their program traditionally fared well when it came to finances, but they knew meal reimbursements could decline in the years ahead as rules and national programs changed. They wanted to proactively ensure their program’s financial health, which meant dealing with cost increases and supporting necessary equipment upgrades.

“We’re working on a three-year plan,” says Howell.
“We’ve been working on upgrading.”

Improving efficiency would help, but they also looked to gain additional revenue from selling à la carte items. They needed their new single software solution to serve those needs, too.

Delivering a Simpler K-12 Nutrition Software Solution to Staff, Students, and Families

Suffolk Public Schools district leaders understood the need for a simpler way to manage their growing nutrition program, so Howell and Kastelitz began their search. LINQ District Nutrition [formerly TITAN] immediately impressed them with its capability to serve as a single platform across all their K-12 schools. It promised a solution for everything from menu planning and posting to inventory management, POS, and student meal accounts.

Howell says it’s the all-in-one solution they wanted from the start. “Everything just goes in the system. It’s been very refreshing for our team,” she says. “That’s why we went with it. It’s a one-stop shop.”

Closeouts now take less time, and employees can pull reports in minutes. They can even customize reports on the fly and get real-time data to inform decisions.

They chose to implement their new solution in stages as previous contracts ended. This enabled their team to fully grasp the new training as each function came online. “Everybody’s been so patient,” Howell explains. “A lot of training time went into it, but to see their confidence... it was totally worth it.”

Closeouts now take less time, and employees can pull reports in minutes. They can even customize reports on the fly and get real-time data to inform decisions. From menu planning to ordering ingredients, tasks that once took more than a day are done in minutes.

Beginning the Switch to an Efficient Cashless System

LINQ Nutrition also helps Suffolk Public Schools move their program toward a cashless system. “We have to go to the bank if we have over \$50 cash. That’s a district rule,” Kastelitz explains. For now, that means staff members routinely make a daily bank run.

Even though LINQ Nutrition simplifies closeout procedures so that managers can finish up and leave around 30 minutes early to make their daily bank run, they’d still like to eliminate that extra task. To ease the transition to cashless, Suffolk Public Schools now convert cash change into funds added to a student’s LINQ Nutrition account.

“We accept the cash, but if you give us a \$5 bill and you buy a \$1 bag of chips... we put the change right on your account,” says Kastelitz. Students can use those funds to digitally purchase their next meal or snack. This policy means staff members do not need to prepare a cash bank daily, and it encourages more digital payments in the future. Using the [LINQ Connect](#) app, students and families can easily access their account to see available funds and reload it when necessary.

“It’s hard to justify extra expenses if you don’t have the additional funds.”

Tricia Kastelitz, RDN, SNS
Coordinator of Nutrition
Services

Boosting K-12 Nutrition Program Revenue, Staff Morale, and Program Quality with à la Carte

Chips and ice cream are huge hits among students, and sports drinks sell well at high schools. Howell and Kastelitz say they’re still growing their à la carte sales, but schools already generate as much as an additional \$2,500 in a single month. “We have a bunch of schools that are over \$2,000,” she reports, “and most are in the \$1,000 range.” Suffolk Public Schools reinvests much of this into equipment upgrades and staff wellbeing initiatives.

New ovens, refrigerators, and kitchen tools help support staff members’ efforts every day. Giving back to the team is a core value of the Suffolk nutrition program. Howell explains, “The biggest thing for Trish and I is we try to give back to the staff.” From updating kitchen equipment to providing new winter coats for trips into the freezer, she says boosting team morale is priceless—and it supports better long-term retention.

“Everybody got a personalized branded polo, book bags, and gifts for the holidays... it just helps boost them because they’re the ones actually there in the schools every day with the kids.” According to Howell, that’s a huge benefit of bringing in additional revenue.

They also work to elevate the program’s overall image in the community. That includes a current project to display student art on their two large box trucks. “We had an art contest with our students,” Kastelitz says, “and the trucks are getting wrapped with student art.”

Instead of simply repainting the trucks plain white, their extra à la carte revenue provided a means to show off students’ creativity all over town. “It’s hard to justify extra expenses if you don’t have the additional funds... but we get to do a lot of the ‘want to’ things,” she explains. In this way, à la carte sales are vital to their program’s continued growth and success—and software that enables them to operate it efficiently and meet compliance requirements is essential.

**“We just can’t
say enough about
LINQ Nutrition.”**

Angela Howell, M.A.Ed
Nutrition Services
Compliance Coordinator

Nutrition Fuels the Future at Suffolk Public Schools

Operating efficiently, adapting to changing needs, and realizing big-picture goals help the nutrition team at Suffolk Public Schools better serve students while keeping the staff happy and engaged. Howell and Kastelitz know their team feeds the future every day—delivering healthy meals to students and ensuring they’re fueled to learn, play, grow, and thrive. With LINQ Nutrition as their all-in-one K-12 food service solution, they’re proud of the progress they’ve made and look forward to an even brighter future ahead.

“We just can’t say enough about LINQ Nutrition,” Howell says. As partners in their success, we’re proud to support their innovative and people-first approach to managing a sustainable K-12 nutrition program.

See how LINQ District
Nutrition supports
districts like Suffolk
Public Schools

EXPLORE LINQ NUTRITION