

CASE STUDY

Montrose County School District RE-1J

District Goals & Vision	Strategic Action Plan Tactics	Results
Make healthier meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimize highly processed meats Add salad bars to all elementary schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moved from 5% to just under 95% scratch-cooked foods
Transform program balance sheet from red to black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase free/reduced meal applications Increase meal prices Shift commodity processing dollars to fresh produce purchases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food service revenue exceeded expenses by approx. \$95,000 (2011-12)
Find cost-savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All canned goods are now ordered at the district level and bulk shipped to the warehouse to save on delivery fees Decrease commodities processing (the practice of diverting products like whole chickens to processors to make chicken nuggets) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saved more than \$12,000 Saved \$19,000 in chicken processing
Reduce plate waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement recess before lunch in several schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students clean their plates, visit nurse less often, pay attention better



*Kathy DelTonto
Nutrition Service Director*

LOCATION:
Montrose, CO

SCHOOLS: 15

STUDENTS: 6,009

FOOD SERVICE TEAM MEMBERS: 42

KITCHENS: 12

The transformation at Montrose School District is nothing less than incredible, especially given the fact that its leader was a self-described skeptic when it came to school food reform. Prior to participating in culinary trainings, Nutrition Service Director Kathy DelTonto and her staff served up to 95 percent processed food. After all, remembers DelTonto, the food met federal guidelines and the kids were satisfied. “I was defending what we were doing, not realizing that we could do better,” she states. Now the menus feature just under 95 percent scratch-cooked food. Homemade lasagna replaced canned ravioli. Shredded pork sandwiches are served instead of a pre-formed pork patty. Scratch-cooked meat loaf replaced a processed, packaged product. With insights from the School Meal

Assessment process, DelTonto immediately eliminated the top five highly processed items on her menus, as well as flavored-milk. She also recouped the \$19,000 she was paying to have her chicken processed into preformed items like chicken nuggets. “Seeing the hidden fees in food processing was a revelation,” recalls the food service director. She and her staff also looked closely at their internal processes. “Instead of having three people do nothing but serve the main entrée, we now have one and the kids move themselves through the line,” she explains. In this way, she has more hands for meal and ingredient preparation using her existing staff. “We really were our own worst enemy,” reflects DelTonto on life before the shift to freshly prepared meals. But seeing the light go on for her staff after they attended culinary training was encouraging. Now, her cafeterias are staffed with professionals in chef coats and hats who engage the students in conversations about healthy food. Best of all, the Montrose School District easily met the new USDA guidelines released early in 2013 without a single tweak to its menus. 🍷



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