

SURRY COUNTY SCHOOLS

NEWS RELEASE

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NCDPI School Nutrition Services Press Release
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N.C. K-12 Culinary Institute Helps Improve School Meals Statewide

School nutrition managers from across North Carolina have had the opportunity this summer to participate in regional K-12 Culinary Institute workshops. The School Nutrition Services Section of the Department of Public Instruction designed the institute to increase the availability of appealing, nutritious meals at school.

“Appealing meals that are filling and nutritious help students focus in the classroom,” said Lynn Harvey, chief of DPI’s School Nutrition Services Section. “The North Carolina K-12 Culinary Institute provides school nutrition managers with tools and information they can take back and implement in their school nutrition programs to ensure students receive the meals they need to do well in the classroom.”

The North Carolina K-12 Culinary Institute, developed by DPI School Nutrition Services and nationally-accomplished chef Cyndie Story’s K-12 Culinary Team, meets five core objectives:

- Improve student health, well-being and academic success through nutritious, appealing meals at school;
- Increase participation in high-quality and enticing school nutrition programs;
- Expand capacity of local school nutrition programs to purchase, prepare and serve fresh, locally grown produce;
- Increase consumption of fruits, vegetables and whole grain-rich foods; and
- Provide continuing education opportunities for school nutrition personnel.

Instructional segments cover topics such as knife skills, weighing and measuring accurately, preparing foods for just-in-time service, work simplification and scheduling, effective use of equipment, and quality food preparation and service for a variety of meats, grains, fruits, vegetables, and condiments.

The menus and recipes developed for the North Carolina K-12 Culinary Institute include:

- Scratch, convenience, and modified scratch products and techniques;

- Instructions written for production amounts consistent with pack or pan sizes commonly available in school kitchens; and
- Nutritional analysis files for easy import into software programs by local education agencies.

Participants in the North Carolina K-12 Culinary Institute graduate as chef ambassadors and culinary specialists. These ambassadors are charged with teaching skills during the workshops to other school nutrition professionals at the local district or school level. Equipping school nutrition professionals with needed equipment, educational resources and skills can positively impact the preparation, service and consumption of school meals.

Since the N.C. K-12 Culinary Institute was launched in 2016, the program has graduated 992 school nutrition managers as culinary specialists in 123 school food authorities statewide, including traditional public school districts, charters, non-public schools and residential child-care institutions. The institute is funded in part by training grants DPI's School Nutrition Services Section received from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation.

Ms. Regina Patel, school nutrition manager at North Surry High School, and a graduate of the North Carolina K-12 Culinary Institute, said the program enhanced not only her own skills, but will also help her develop the skills of others with whom she works.

"My experience at the North Carolina K-12 Culinary Institute was amazing," Ms. Patel said. "The chef instructors were wonderful and professional. This training has increased my culinary confidence and helped me train the school nutrition professionals at my school and fellow school nutrition managers in knife skills, batch cooking, merchandising, work scheduling and more".

The workshops run from June through August. Local education agencies hosting the regional workshops this summer are: Alamance-Burlington Schools, Asheville City Schools, Bertie County Schools, Craven County Schools, Hoke County Schools, New Hanover County Schools, Pitt County Schools, and Yadkin County Schools.

Questions regarding the North Carolina K-12 Culinary Institutes may be directed to NCDPI School Nutrition Services, School Nutrition Specialist [Tracey Bates](#) or (919) 696-7207.

The NCDPI, School Nutrition Services Section is the State Agency (SA) administering the USDA School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, Special Milk Program, After School Snack Program, Seamless Summer Option, and Summer Food Service Program in North Carolina. NCDPI, School Nutrition Services works with school food authorities, or local education agencies, to operate School Nutrition Programs across the state. USDA and NCDPI are equal opportunity providers and employers. Additional information

regarding School Nutrition Programs in North Carolina can be found on the School Nutrition Services [website](#).