



2021 Montana Cook Fresh Leadership Institute

A Montana Team Nutrition Success Story

In July 2021, Montana Team Nutrition held a hybrid Montana Cook Fresh Leadership Institute. The 2021 Institute provided 30 hours of professional development. It combined a week of virtual lessons on school nutrition management with a two day in person culinary workshop.

PART ONE: VIRTUAL SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM MANAGEMENT TRAININGS

Part One included 15 hours of live instruction and activities on video conferencing lead by Montana Team Nutrition and Montana OPI School Nutrition staff on topics such as the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Offer vs. Serve, production records, procurement, USDA Foods, farm to school, equipment grants, standardized recipes, salad bars, behavioral economics and more.

PART TWO: 2 DAY CULINARY WORKSHOP



In Part Two of the Institute, participants and trainers headed to the Great Falls High School Culinary Arts Center for a two day (15 hours) culinary workshop. On the first day, participants received a lesson on knife skills and mise en place from local chef Rhonda Adkins before making and tasting vegetable-focused soups and salads. After a lesson on measurements and weighing, participants enjoyed a hands-on whole grain baking class led by Cindy Giese, a Montana Team Nutrition School Food Service Peer Educator.

On day two, participants furthered their mise en place skills by working in groups to build various themed "build a bowl" recipes created by School Nutrition Specialist Deb Jones, RD. Each bowl featured a different whole grain, legume, meat or meat alternate, vegetable, and sauce. This activity gave participants the opportunity to practice different culinary techniques in one meal. Participants applied the knowledge and experience from the Institute to set goals for the next school year. Throughout the Institute, participants were encouraged to work together, and network among their peers.

Learn More

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PARTICIPANTS

The 2021 Institute reached 19 school food service professionals from 13 school districts across the state of Montana. Eight of the 13 participating school districts were in counties that are rural¹. Three of the school districts were located on or near a Native American Reservation². Ten of the participants were food service directors/head cooks and nine were frontline staff.

EVALUATION OUTCOMES

Participants were asked to complete pre and post Institute surveys. Participants had the greatest average increases in their likelihood and confidence in:

- Using a new recipe that includes fresh or dried legumes in the next school year*
- Participating in a virtual or remote professional development activity in the next school year*
- Using a new recipe that includes fresh, whole fruits or vegetables in the next school year*
- Setting and following through with at least one SMART goal for myself of my school food service operation*
- Overall, the Institute led to promising increases in overall comfort level* with 19 questions* related to using fresh, whole foods and scratch cooking.

Quotes from participants:

***"It was nice not to have to leave home for a full week and worry about childcare or work."
"[I enjoyed] working in different work groups [and] testing a variety of recipes."***

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The COVID19 pandemic has resulted in many changes to the school nutrition landscape, including professional development opportunities. The hybrid Institute built upon the lessons learned from previous in person and virtual Montana Cook Fresh Leadership Institutes to deliver training to school nutrition professionals in an accessible and impactful format. Montana Team Nutrition will continue to explore various training modalities in the future to provide the most effective and realistic professional development opportunities for school nutrition professional.

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*Indicates statistical significance ($p < 0.50$) from pre to post

1. Rurality determined by 2013 Rural-Urban Continuum Codes and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) designation of metro and non-metro counties.
2. [Directory of Indian Education Programs in Montana 2021-2022](#), Montana Office of Public Instruction, September 2021.