

Foodservice

equipment & supplies.

e&s segment spotlight

Just like their parents, U.S. children's food preferences have expanded.

K-12 School Foodservice Revised

The K-12 foodservice segment may not be big in revenues, but it is big business. In the fall of 2009, nearly 49.8 million students attended more than 10,000 public elementary and secondary schools in the United States, reports the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) National Center for Education Statistics. Close to 35 million children were enrolled in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, and there were 14.8 million kids in grades 9 through 12. An additional 5.8 million students were enrolled in private schools last fall.

For the 2009/2010 school year, overall expenditures for public elementary and secondary schools are estimated at \$543 billion, according to ED. This school year's national average expenditure per student is projected to be \$10,844, up from \$9,683 in actual expenditures four years ago.

In the last several years, hot lunch programs have become more prevalent in the K-12 segment, with 94 percent of public elementary schools providing student meals, according to ED. To help generate funds to support school and district foodservice operations, 36 percent of these schools offer food for sale in

Key Equipment for K-12 Foodservice

- Convection oven
- Steamer
- Cook-and-hold oven
- Skillet
- Walk-in Cooler and Freezer

addition to standard meals.

In response to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) school nutrition initiatives, foodservice professionals in this segment report they now use fewer fryers, kettles and mixers than in past years, according to The Dream Kitchen Survey conducted by Y-Pulse, a research and consulting firm with offices in Chicago and Alexandria, Va. Instead, a growing number of

school kitchens now use combi-ovens, milk coolers, tabletop steamers, refrigerators, freezers and multifunctional equipment.

The prevalence of fresh and healthy foods, increase in shelf-stable products, greater interest in buying local ingredients and development of school gardens has had a strong influence on the layout and equipment of school kitchens, according to the Y-Pulse survey. School foodservice directors seek kitchen designs that are more stylish than institutional.

School foodservice professionals also are frustrated with outdated equipment and want more user-friendly pieces that ensure safety, ease of use, quality and consistency, according to Y-Pulse survey. Green equipment also is a key consideration for school foodservice operators, with 75 percent of the Y-Pulse survey participants reporting that energy efficiency is a major concern. In addition, a growing number of those working in school foodservice seek equipment that helps reduce labor costs, such as grab-and-go systems.

"For many school districts, new equipment is out of their price range," says Diane Pratt-Heavner, director of media relations for the School Nutrition Association (SNA), based in National Harbor, Md. As a result, the SNA offers Winston Equipment Award grants in conjunction with equipment manufacturer Winston Industries, based in Louisville, Ky. Schools can apply for 10 pieces of equipment, including holding cabinets, holding drawers, steamers, and cook-and-hold ovens. Grant winners are chosen based on need, the impact of new equipment on school foodservice programs and the proposed plan to integrate the equipment into their facilities.

Schools also can apply for federal stimulus money to upgrade equipment through The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009.



School District 111 in Kankakee, Ill., has moved from total scratch cooking to mostly heating pre-made product. The transition has allowed more options for the students.