



AN AFTERSCHOOL MEALS CASE STUDY

PARTNERING FOR SUPPER IN THE CLASSROOM SUCCESS

The question wasn't "if," but "how."

Jim Faggione, Director of School Nutrition Services for Guilford County Schools in North Carolina, felt an obligation to offer afterschool suppers. Nearly two-thirds of Guilford's 72,000 students come from households with incomes low enough to qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. Jim knew that many parents were busy or working second-shift jobs, plus lots of students ate lunch early and left school ravenous. So, the need for good nutrition beyond the school day was there. But Jim was busy managing a team of well over seven hundred school nutrition employees producing eight million lunches and six million breakfasts each year. On top of that, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which funds suppers through its At-Risk Afterschool Meals component, is run by a separate agency from the school meals programs in the state of North Carolina, and it requires a separate application. Jim didn't have the capacity to submit an application, learn the ropes, and oversee a new program.

With more than 35 years of experience and 23 staff members across three offices in North Carolina, Vicki was able and willing to provide the administrative support that Jim needed. In fact, Vicki's expertise and oversight combined with a grant from No Kid Hungry gave Jim the confidence to try something bold: Supper in the Classroom. They wouldn't just offer afterschool meals to a small group of students staying for formal after care or enrichment programs. Instead, they would offer a supper to every single student by working with principals and teachers to serve the meal in each classroom in conjunction with an enrichment activity.

"Since day one, I've been pleased with how this partnership has allowed me to navigate and grow this program."

- Jim Faggione, Director of School Nutrition Services, Guilford County Schools

**Guilford County Schools
by the Numbers (SY 2017-2018)**

SCHOOLS: 126

ELEMENTARY: 69 MIDDLE: 22

HIGH: 28 OTHER: 10

STUDENTS (K-12): 71,928

FREE/REDUCED-PRICE ELIGIBILITY: 65%

Vicki and Jim formalized their agreement, with Child Nutrition Program, Inc. (CNP) taking responsibility for the CACFP paperwork, reporting, training, monitoring, and overall compliance. CNP would work directly with the CACFP state agency and distribute the reimbursement payments. Guilford County School Nutrition Services would handle the meal preparation, distribution, and other day-to-day tasks, billing for the cost of the suppers. This arrangement allowed both Jim and Vicki to play to their strengths. Jim knew how to manage the operations and provide meals to students, and Vicki knew how to manage the CACFP paperwork and other requirements.

Fortunately, Jim met Vicki Lipscomb in 2015. Vicki is the founder and president of Child Nutrition Program, Inc., a non-profit sponsoring organization dedicated to supporting child care homes and centers as well as afterschool programs that want to offer meals through the CACFP.



Jim and Vicki started by piloting Supper in the Classroom in two elementary schools during the 2016-2017 school year. Jim found principals who were supportive of the idea and willing to get teachers on board. Jim credits the widespread support from teachers to the decision to find principals who wanted to champion the cause. Those principals were also willing to adjust their bell schedules to accommodate the meal without disrupting bus schedules. Since the afterschool meal must be served after the final bell rings¹, the final bell was moved back by 20-25 minutes. This was possible because the two schools had exceeded North Carolina's minimum annual curriculum-hour requirements. The schools informed parents that they could pick up their children at the new, earlier dismissal time or pick them up after the meal when other students would be leaving to catch the bus.

Vicki handled the application by adding these schools as sites under CNP's sponsorship. CNP also handled training teachers and other staff on the meal service requirements and paperwork. Taking the meal counts by name aligned well with other systems of accountability already in place for teachers, like daily attendance. Teachers' experience with Breakfast in the Classroom was also valuable, making Supper in the Classroom a logical progression rather than a new concept. Jim still appreciated the external support from Vicki's team, though. He thinks that guidance from another organization adds weight to the importance of following the rules and procedures in a way that his staff alone could not create, and his own staff is sometimes hesitant to approach principals.



Jim hired a four-hour employee at each school to handle a bulk of the supper preparation, but the existing school nutrition staff also helped to prepare and distribute the suppers within their established hours. Jim opted for a menu that included hot entrees, which could be delivered to the classrooms in insulated carriers on carts used for Breakfast in the Classroom.

The enrichment activity paired with the supper was left to the discretion of the principal and classroom teachers. According to Jim and Vicki, some teachers use the time for homework help and tutorials while others use it for silent reading or reading aloud. Vicki recalls visiting one school to find a student reading aloud from a Harry Potter book over the school's intercom system, and every student was eating silently while listening attentively.

Site monitoring at a school with so many children served simultaneously in different rooms posed a new challenge for CNP. To be as thorough as possible, Vicki leverages her large staff to send as many monitors as needed, which depends on the school's size, for each visit that requires a meal observation. With her staff able to observe every teacher on a regular basis, they can provide guidance and oversight on properly offering meals, implementing share tables, and taking a meal component off-site. The teachers appreciate the feedback from the monitors because of the supportive environment that CNP has created.

“Working with Jim, his staff, and the classroom teachers – folks willing to go the extra mile to be sure that their children’s needs are met – has been an exceptional experience for our staff. When our monitors come back from a review, they are energized!”

- Vicki Lipscomb, President, Child Nutrition Program, Inc.

After a successful pilot year, Jim and Vicki expanded to three additional elementary schools during the 2017-2018 school year, serving over 200,000 suppers across the five schools that year. Through their partnership, they were also able to offer meals on Saturdays when schools were offering test preparation help. They continue to explore opportunities to expand the afterschool program so that all students who need a supper have access to one. Both parties are pleased with the partnership since it allows them to do what they do best, and they know that they can depend on the other to do their part well. They both appreciate the peace of mind that brings. Most importantly, they appreciate that their partnership allows them to provide healthy meals to kids who need them.

To learn more about the Afterschool Meals Program, visit bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/afterschool-meals.

¹ The one exception is for schools that qualify as expanded learning time or extended day, which means that the official school day is one hour longer than schools of comparable grade level within the local educational agency (LEA) or surrounding LEAs. Extended day schools may serve an “afterschool” meal or snack before the final bell.