



## CASE STUDY | DISTRICT NUTRITION

# Accelerating K-12 Nutrition with Automation and Worry-Free Compliance

### CHALLENGES

- Very small staff lacked a nutrition management software solution
- Struggling to meet compliance for USDA review
- Needed a digital payments solution for families

### SOLUTIONS

[LINQ District Nutrition \(formerly TITAN\)](#)

[LINQ Connect](#)

### RESULTS

- Simplified program management creating more time for staff
- Director feels fully prepared for upcoming USDA review
- Offer families a modern, secure payments and information solution

Nationally recognized RISE Award winner Dawndrea Daly leads a rural Wyoming district's nutrition program that's making an oversized impact. With herself as Food Service Director and just two staff members, she put Platte County School District #2 in the headlines with student-focused initiatives like year-round vegetable gardening under a biodome on campus to supply their cafeteria salad bar.

And that's just one example of what makes breakfast and lunch at her schools amazing. She writes her own grants, works with community organizations and businesses to offer culinary education experiences, and even earned an invite to discuss her work over lunch at the governor's mansion. According to Daly, countless hours saved by [LINQ Nutrition](#) enable her to achieve all of this—the system automates many of the day-to-day tasks that once filled her day so she can focus on feeding students' tummies and minds.

## The motorcycle-riding, vegetable gardening nutrition leader searching for a tech solution

On a sunny June day in 2021, Daly rode her bright red Harley-Davidson to a special luncheon with Wyoming First Lady Jennie Gordon, where she received her RISE Award. The event recognized an exceptionally creative K-12 nutrition leader who's making a big difference in students' lives. But just a few years before that hard-earned day, she was a Food Service Director struggling to operate her program with manual processes.



She had two staff members to help with operations, but all the decisions, reporting, and compliance responsibilities were hers. Lacking a working software solution to help, she says it just wasn't possible. "We had this little icon on our computer screen," she says of nutrition software the district already had when she started, "but nobody knew how to use it." Although the district already owned the software product, it had never been fully implemented. Daly says the provider didn't offer the support she needed to get it up and running. Additionally, the school didn't have an easy way for families to pay fees digitally or manage student account balances.

Daly knew she needed a complete solution that is backed by consistent support, she could implement quickly, and rely on to save time while ensuring compliance. She set out searching and found LINQ Nutrition. From the start, she recognized it as the complete solution she needed as someone wearing many hats in her role. "I do everything," she says, "so I needed a system that would do everything as well. That way, I could focus on the things I wanted to do for the program." After a demo, she knew it was the solution they needed.

## Critical tech support during k-12 nutrition program management uncertainties

Platte #2 began implementing LINQ Nutrition right before the global pandemic upended their operations. Like every other district across the nation, they suddenly found themselves facing years of uncertainty. "Once COVID happened, all of our attention shifted to just getting through it," Daly says. Fortunately, they already started implementing LINQ Nutrition. While Daly says they hadn't fully rolled out the solution, it did help her save time in managing the program while adjusting daily to changing circumstances. Families could view digital menus and make meal payments through LINQ Connect. This helped them manage the challenges of the last several years, and Daly credits LINQ support for helping her get through it all. "Anytime I call, they get back to me that day," she says.

Food Service Director Dawndrea Daly, known for riding her bright red motorcycle to school, takes great pride in the geodome-covered garden where students help her grow fresh produce to stock the cafeteria salad bar.



**“The software absolutely saves me time, so I can focus on the student activities and grant writing.”**

**Dawndrea Daly**  
Food Service Director

As Daly and her small staff worked through the pandemic years, they only became more confident they'd chosen the right solution—and there was a lot of excitement about getting back to more normal operations so that they could take full advantage of the time and stress it could save them. “I do this job for the kids,” says Daly. Now, Daly's getting back to focusing more on her creative ideas to enrich the student experience at Platte #2 while LINQ Nutrition handles many of the daily tasks through automation.

## **Acing compliance and realizing the freedom provided by nutrition system automation**

Daly loves to spend as much time as possible on student-focused programs, but she must also keep her program running smoothly and in compliance. That's where she says LINQ Nutrition helps her the most. With a USDA review approaching, she's never felt more ready. “Since COVID, we've really been learning how to get the most from the reporting and automation, so I know we're ready for the next review.” In years past, she said reviews were more stressful than they'll be going forward.

Automating processes and reporting also helps Daly focus more of her time on the parts of her job she enjoys most. “The software absolutely saves me time, so I can focus on the student activities and grant writing,” she says.

Daly writes all her own grants to finance projects like her student-run vegetable garden and the geodome that covers it in the winter. “That's how I get the funding to do more for the students,” she explains. “The automation and reporting save me so many hours. I couldn't write all of the grants and do all of the other fun stuff without it.” Daly says it's hard to put a figure on it, but LINQ Nutrition lets her manage her program in at least half the time it would have taken by doing everything manually.

**“I love LINQ, I tell everyone about it.”**

**Dawndrea Daly**  
Food Service Director

See how LINQ District Nutrition supports districts like Platte #2

[EXPLORE LINQ NUTRITION](#)

## **Giving families an easier way to pay with LINQ Connect**

Everybody’s busy, and Daly recognizes that also applies to families. An additional benefit she notes with LINQ Nutrition is the family portal and payment system it includes. [LINQ Connect](#) lets families manage and fund school meal accounts, pay school fees, and access information like digital menus and nutritional information.

“It’s so easy,” says Daly. “We have a link right on our district website, and families can click there to get access to everything they need.” With the LINQ POS system they’re using, students can use digital meal payments to get through lunch lines faster. The system processes payment from any major credit card or a checking account simply and securely. Balances update in real-time, so students can spend funds within seconds of their family loading them.

## **Leading the pack with k-12 nutrition automation and digital simplicity**

Daly says she’s excited for the future at Platte #2. She sees even more opportunities ahead to make nutrition much more than a meal for her students. Through the Platte #2 kitchen, they’re even building connections with their community. She recently partnered with a flour producer to donate bags for her students to learn baking. They delivered their baked goods around the community, donating to those in need. Even the extra produce from their garden goes to a local senior center.

It’s a lot of work to make all of this happen, so it’s no wonder Daly received the prestigious RISE Award—she’s truly a groundbreaking leader. With her valuable team of two and a software system that makes many manual tasks a thing of the past, she says she sees nothing but an open road of opportunities ahead. “I love LINQ,” she says, “I tell everyone about it.”

We’re proud to partner with innovative K-12 nutrition leaders like Daly and to support the continued success of leaders like her.