

The Food Service Department at Hamilton Township School District in Mays Landing, NJ serves three school sites, including the largest elementary school in the state. While enjoying many successes, William (Bill) Trackman and his food service department have also faced challenges not unique to Hamilton Township: the cafeteria staff decreased from 24 to 18, 10 pre-K classes were added, breakfast programs structured differently based on school site and grade, and staff outside of food services (such as school nurses and teachers) played integral parts in their program.

Pain Points:

With tardies and socializing students causing a decrease in breakfast participation, Bill had to get creative to capture those sales. He deduced that if premade meals were available in the nurse's office, he could sell to students there, since many students that skipped breakfast ended up in the nurse's office throughout the morning.

With breakfast in the classroom at the elementary level and family-style serving in the pre-K classrooms, feeding students outside of the lunchroom was growing in popularity. While typically one of the many benefits of these programs is the concealment of a student's eligibility status, when printing rosters for teachers from his previous software system, he realized that teachers and even students could plainly see a student's status.

The Solution:

With the implementation of Solana, Horizon's cloud-based solution, Bill had the ability to streamline these processes and ensure privacy for his students. Everything is in real-time, showing Bill accurate student rosters, which roll down from their student information system into Solana.

By offering breakfast from the nurse's office via the most up-to-date reports, he was able to increase participation by 5-10% while protecting the privacy of free and reduced students. "With my previous system, I wasn't able to hide eligibility status in the reports I was printing from nurses and teachers. And Solana was phenomenal at creating different categories for us, so that the only people that know a student's status is myself and our food services secretary."

Unexpected Benefits:

While this may not have been one of the driving factors for switching to a cloud-based system, Hamilton Township School District has seen many benefits since implementation. With their previous system, they didn't have control over rollovers, and their free and reduced statuses were getting garbled. "Solana took the pressure off our IT department, and rollovers are simple. I turn it off at the end of the summer, and when I turn it back on, it's not a difficult upgrade. This is a huge win for me because I am one of the few year-round employees and I don't always have others here to help me," said Bill. And again, with real-time updates,

student statuses are automatically updated in the system.

The technical support for Solana was also much easier. "If I have an issue, it doesn't take days to fix. They remote in, and it's fixed in a few minutes. And PIN pad installations are seamless."

But what Bill has especially enjoyed from a cloud-based system is the ability to access information from anywhere.

“ I can look up a student's account on my phone. It's amazing that if I have a computer, I can get into Solana. I've even logged into reports during meetings with my superintendent. ”

Bill Trackman
Food Services Program Manager

Immediate access to data helps with all stakeholders, including parents. "I can easily diffuse a parent's issue. I can communicate with parents easier than any other system I've used. And I always ask if they are using MyPaymentsPlus.com so that they can access their student's information as well."

Overall, Bill says that Solana "is a big win for us. The reports are great, and it's easy to toggle around and find what I need. I talk up Solana every chance that I get. It's a win-win all around."