



HASTINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Culinary Specialist

Department: Food Service

FLSA Status: Non-Exempt

Bargaining/Work Unit: Food Service

Reports To: Director of Food and Nutrition Svcs

Band/Grade: TBD

Position Last Updated: 10.13.25

JOB SUMMARY

Under the direction of the Director of Food and Nutrition Services, the Culinary Specialist supports the overall goals of the Food and Nutrition Services Department by enhancing student engagement, menu quality, and program visibility across all district schools. The position prepares, tests, and promotes nutritious and appealing menu items while supporting kitchen staff in implementing scratch cooking techniques and local food initiatives. Traveling among sites, the Culinary Specialist conducts tastings and samplings, gathers student feedback, and uses data to guide menu planning. The role also assists with marketing, promotional efforts, and special events, ensuring menus reflect both student preferences and District nutritional goals.

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

None

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Culinary Development and Menu Innovation

Percent of Time: 50%

- Prepares, tests, and evaluates new menu items to improve quality, variety, and participation.
- Conducts food tastings, samplings, and demonstrations with students and staff across district sites.
- Gathers and analyzes feedback from surveys, taste tests, and plate waste studies to identify trends and preferences.
- Collaborates with the Director of Food & Nutrition Services to ensure menu items meet USDA and District nutritional standards.

Kitchen Support and Staff Coaching

Percent of Time: 20%

- Provides on-site coaching and training to food service staff to enhance culinary skills and recipe consistency.
- Supports kitchen teams in preparing and executing scratch-cooked menu items.
- Models and reinforces safe food-handling and production practices.
- Assists in troubleshooting production challenges and implementing standardized recipes across the district.

Marketing, Promotions, and Student Engagement

Percent of Time: 20 %

- Coordinates marketing and communication efforts for featured menu items, special events, and promotions.
- Creates and maintains attractive food displays and themed presentations.
- Leads and promotes Harvest of the Month and other farm-to-school or local food initiatives.
- Serves as an ambassador for the district's nutrition program, fostering enthusiasm and student participation.

Special Projects and Staff Development

Percent of Time: 10%

- Participates in professional development, certifications, and conferences to maintain and expand culinary and technical knowledge.
- Conducts research on emerging food trends, products, and preparation techniques.
- Assists with district-level initiatives, pilot programs, and special assignments supporting program improvement.
- Performs other duties of a comparable level or type as assigned by the Director of Food & Nutrition Services.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Technical Knowledge

- Understanding of USDA Child Nutrition Program requirements.
- Understanding of and ability to interpret and apply health, safety and nutrition standards, codes, regulations and guidelines.
- Knowledge of state and federal guidelines for food preparation and sanitation.
- Knowledge of all applicable health/safety precautions and proper use of production equipment.
- Knowledge of the application, use and proper storage of all chemicals and food items and materials.
- Knowledge of procedures of food production, preparation, baking and the serving of meals for a mass food production facility.
- Demonstrated ability to determine food quantities from determined menus.
- Maintain and improve technical knowledge and skills through certification and meetings/conferences.

Operational Skills

- Knowledge of department administrative, recordkeeping and purchasing procedures and requirements.
- Skilled in preparing and baking food items and ability to taste and evaluate all foods.
- Ability to use and operate food production tools and equipment.
- Ability to interpret a variety of instructions furnished in written, oral, diagram, or schedule form.
- Considerable knowledge of nutrition theory and principles and how large-scale food preparations affect quality.
- Considerable knowledge of computerized recipe costing, sizing and nutrient analysis.
- Understanding of and ability to use a variety of cleaning techniques utilizing appropriate chemicals and cleaning equipment.
- Ability to read, understand, and follow instructions, recipes, and safety procedures.
- Strong mathematical skills.
- Proficient computer skills in spreadsheets, word processing, data processing, graphic design, nutritional analysis software, and other food service related software.

Administrative/Organizational Skills

- Demonstrated skills in planning, prioritizing, and organizing production and serving tasks and functions and ability to manage multiple projects concurrently.
- Ability to adjust and calculate quantities and order products and supplies needed to prepare menu items and requirements.
- Excellent planning, time and workflow management, organizing, and coordinating skills and ability to keep accurate records.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills and ability to present information to individuals and/or groups.
- Ability to prioritize and manage workload with minimal supervision while meeting strict deadlines.
- Ability to clearly communicate technical information and teach areas of expertise to team members.
- Ability to use creativity to create materials for postings, signs, fliers, and other marketing materials.

Interpersonal and Leadership Skills

- Ability to coordinate, delegate, lead and train food service staff in areas of responsibility.
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with students, building and district personnel, and outside contractors and vendors.
- Ability to solve practical problems and deal with a variety of concrete variables in situations where only limited standardization exists.

EDUCATION/CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS*

- High school diploma or equivalent; post-high school training in Culinary Arts, Nutrition, Hospitality Management, or related field preferred.
- Valid Food Protection Manager certification (or ability to obtain within six months).
- Must hold a current MN Driver's License and have the ability to travel between district buildings.

EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS*

- Experience in K-12 food service operations.
- Minimum of three years of food service or culinary experience.
- Experience with marketing, promotions, or student engagement initiatives preferred.

* Such alternatives to the above qualifications as the District may find appropriate and acceptable.

PHYSICAL JOB REQUIREMENTS

The physical job requirements described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the primary functions of this job.

Physical Job Requirements:

Key: N=Never O=Occasionally (1-33%) F=Frequently (34-66%) C=Consistently (67-100%)					
Demands		Demands		Demands	
<i>Physical</i>		<i>Lifting/Carrying</i>		<i>Exposure to Environ. Conditions</i>	
Standing	F	Up to 10 pounds	C	Possible exposure to blood-borne pathogens through blood and/or body fluids	O
Walking	F	Up to 25 pounds	F		
Sitting	F	Up to 50 pounds	O		
Talking in person/on the phone	O	Up to 75 pounds	N	Toxic chemicals	N
Pushing/Pulling	F	Up to 100 pounds	N	Moving parts	O
Hearing	F	More than 100 pounds	N	Electrical shock risk	O
Feeling, grasping, finger dexterity	C	<i>Noise Levels</i>		Explosives	N
Climbing, balancing	O	Quiet (i.e. private office)	N	Fumes	N
Stooping (bend at waist)	F	Moderate noise (i.e. business office with typewriters/ printers, light traffic)	F	Extreme cold (non-weather)	O
Crouching, crawling, kneeling, squatting	O			Extreme heat (non-weather)	O
Stretching/reaching with hands & arms	F	Loud noise (i.e. many children laughing & playing, large earth moving equipment)	F	Varying weather conditions	N
				<i>Sight</i>	
Distinguishing smell	F	Very loud noise (i.e. jack hammer, front row rock concert)	N	Vision for close work/ability to adjust focus	F
Distinguishing temperature	F			Looking at computer monitor	O
Traveling by automobile	O			Color vision (identify & distinguish colors)	F
				Peripheral, depth perception	O

The duties listed above are intended only as illustrations of the various types of work that may be performed. The omission of specific statements of duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related or a logical assignment of the position. The job description does not constitute an employment agreement between the employer and employee and is subject to change by the employer as the needs of the employer and requirements of the job change.

The District is an Equal Opportunity Employer. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the District will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities and encourages both prospective and current employees to discuss potential accommodations with the employer.