



## GETTING STARTED WITH AFTERSCHOOL MEALS – CADDO PARISH, LOUISIANA

Kashundra Lynch, School Nutrition Director of Caddo Parish Public Schools, loves what she does. Ms. Lynch runs the Child Nutrition Programs at Caddo Parish Public Schools in northeast Louisiana. Caddo includes 58 schools representing rural, suburban, and urban communities that are home to many students of color. The district is committed to equity, and they proudly present their equity statement on their district homepage.

Providing nutritious meals is a crucial piece to equitably serving the community, and Ms. Lynch is always asking, "What else can we be doing for our students?" This approach and the support of the Louisiana Department of Education led Caddo Parish Public Schools to start the CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program in January 2022, adding a third meal to the student's day at 15 schools and Saturday meal service at 11 schools. Caddo had previously served afterschool through NSLP Snacks, but CACFP At-Risk Afterschool allowed Caddo to serve a full five-component third meal on schooldays and breakfast and lunch on Saturdays. Providing extra meals made sure none of Caddo's students went without three healthy, nutritious meals every day.

This feat wasn't easy. Caddo, like many districts, faced staffing shortages and supply chain disruptions. However, Ms. Lynch had cultivated a team to overcome barriers to service. The staff is passionate about the job of providing meals to children. While prior directors required all department employees to have a high school diploma, Ms. Lynch focuses on those most dedicated to the students, school, and program.



**“People make the program.”**

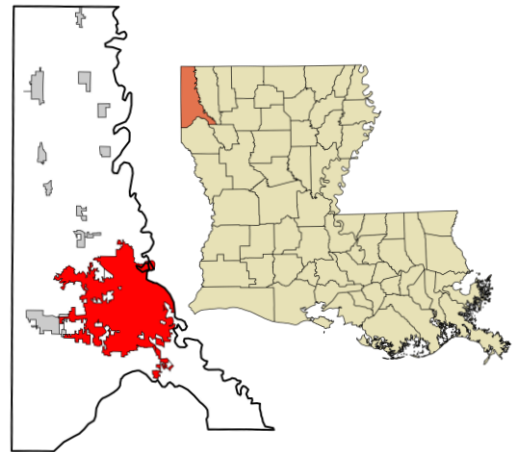
*– Kashundra Lynch, School Nutrition Director, Caddo Parish Public Schools*

She encourages staff members without a high school diploma to further their education by pursuing a General Educational Development (GED) while working for the nutrition department. Ms. Lynch also encourages the team to build relationships with students, principals, and administrators and weave supporting children into the fabric of the school community. Leaning into Ms. Lynch's belief that "people make the program," the team at Caddo relied on these strong relationships to make the afterschool meals program work.

In January 2022, Caddo started serving afterschool and Saturday meals. Principals were excited to have nutritious meals available to students free of charge. The students were happy about tasty meals outside the traditional school day – especially when it was hamburger day!

No new program is without lessons learned. Moving forward, Ms. Lynch plans to streamline rosters by using printed sign-in sheets. That way, the staff managing point of service only has to check off a student's name as they go through the service line to pick up a meal. While they will continue to use CACFP At-risk Afterschool Meals for Saturday service, they will work with principals to see if an afterschool supper or a snack is preferred. No two schools are exactly alike, and Caddo works to tailor the meal programs to fit the needs of the students at that school.

What won't change next year is the Caddo team's commitment to serving their students. Nutritious meals are central to students' success, and Ms. Lynch looks forward to ensuring her students have what they need to learn and grow.



***Want to learn more about the Afterschool Meals Program? Check out [bestpractices.nokidhungry.org](https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org) to learn more. Don't forget to share this resource with a friend or coworker!***

*Caddo Parish is located in northeast Louisiana. Caddo Parish Public Schools serves the city of Shreveport and surrounding area.*

### **Acknowledgements**

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