

# Woodland Joint Unified School District

## Case Study



### The Client

Fifteen miles from Sacramento, in the heart of the state of California, sits the city of Woodland. Surrounded by farmland and nicknamed 'City of Trees,' Woodland has managed to retain a much valued 'small town' feel whilst having grown immensely over the past decade.

When it comes to education, Woodland's Joint Unified School District (JUSD) has its work cut out. Within the K-12 framework, it has 21 establishments: six pre-schools, ten K-6 elementary schools, one elementary charter school, two middle schools and two comprehensive senior high schools for grades 9-12, plus a continuation high school and an adult school. It also provides Alternative Education in the form of home study for grades K-8, Community Day School for grades 2-6, and the Independent Learning Center (ILC) for grades 9 through 12. With student numbers approaching 10,000, of which 55% enjoy a daily meal service, the provision of nutrition for all is a complex operation.



*"We're a forward-looking district and our investment in new Harris and J2 technology is part of our strategy to enhance online access to our systems for students and parents"*

Spencer Springer – Director, Food Services

### The Challenge

The District must comply with federal and state regulations for the provision of school meals and demonstrate the nutritional value of its provision. As a strategic goal, Woodland is keen to extend online systems accessibility to students and parents, particularly in the areas of free meal applications and account payment.

Harris School Solutions (Harris), a specialist provider in the education sector, has been Woodland's technology partner for several years. Explains Spencer Springer, Woodland JUSD's Director of Food Services: "As the Harris solution has evolved, so we've evolved." Woodland is now using the eTriton program from Harris at all of its serving lines.

For high performance, reliability and long life, Harris recommended the J2 625 PC-based touchscreen terminal, which combines fast transaction processing with low power consumption.

### The Benefits

- The Harris EZMealApp, accessed online by parents, speeds up the free meal application process and directs funds to where they are needed;
- The new Point-of-Sale (POS) that runs the 40 serving lines makes sure payment is correctly allocated to student accounts;
- Harris software makes easy work of reporting, both by individual school and as a District, to the regulatory authorities;
- The new touchscreen terminals are fast to program and fast to use, plus they are reliable;
- The J2 625's spill-proof and grease-proof display screen is ideal for the rough and tumble of school food service;
- Most importantly, real-time visibility of meal activity via the Harris application ensures no student goes hungry.



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### The solution

Woodland's elementary, junior and high schools offer a wide range of meals and snack options over a long catering day which lasts from breakfast to after-school. The core of food provision is the National School Lunch Program, which is subsidised for some students and free for others.

In 2010, President Obama inaugurated the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids' Act to deliver optimum and adequate nutrition to every child in the United States. Mr Springer explains, "For example, we now use only whole-grains. We offer lots of fruit and vegetables within meals and in free 'to go' baskets in every school."

#### Easy and fast meal applications

Observes Mr Springer: "We can't mandate parents or students to apply for free or reduced cost meals, but we encourage this. Applications can be completed online using our Harris EZMealApp, which come across to us electronically. We can process them far more quickly than paper applications. If there's hardship, it means we can speed the application through, which relieves the stress on parents and makes sure kids get fed. The whole process works well for everyone – our new system is a real improvement over past practice."

#### Efficient payment processes

Now, thanks to the Harris solution running on modern POS tills, any student coming through the lunch time queue can be identified and correct payment taken or logged to his or her account. Woodland customizes the touchscreen displays, finding it easy to predefine dishes and design each serving line according to what is being purchased.

Everything is streamlined and accounted for. Transactions are accurate and fast so queues don't build up," says Springer. "Each of our POS can take cash or cheque, but most parents opt to use the online EZSchoolPay application. Here, they can load funds electronically to pay for meals, including managing several kids' consumption through one family account."

#### Regulatory porting & statistical analysis

Both the US Department of Agriculture and the California Department of Education provide processes for the District to adhere to, covering the application for free meals, the provision of nutrition, payments management, and statutory reporting (which ranges from meals consumed to full nutritional analysis).

Accounting and reporting take place on a daily basis, locally and centrally. Schools can submit individual reports, and consolidated reports are submitted centrally from the system's back-office. "Harris software has strong reporting capabilities and generates all the necessary statistics. It makes easy work of this and is indispensable."

#### Local accountability

Student accounts are held onsite, making it easy for each school to generate payment reminders and negative balance reminders. According to Springer, "It's much better to do this locally." Not only can every school now manage its own transactions and provision, but it can also report to the federal and state authorities on what has been provided.

#### Control and care

Springer and his head-office team find it invaluable to be able to access the account of every student at every school. "We can see what's happening at any point. If parents call to ask if their child had lunch, we can look that up and confirm it straightaway."

"Our real-time reporting is great for both parents and school administrators. We can backtrack to see if a student has eaten consistently or had a charge to their account. This helps us to minimise kids getting lost in the system or using another kid's number, as could otherwise happen."

#### Good technical support

"Harris software has good functionality and their support crew is readily available. If I put in a support request, there is swift action. Their support services really do benefit our meals program."

#### Manageable hardware

School cafeterias have limited serving space so the neat, space-efficient J2 625s fit in well. "All the functionality is built into the monitor. The terminals look good and are quite compact and easy for me carry around or relocate if I need to," Springer notes.

#### Sound return on investment

Concludes Woodland JUSD's Spencer Springer: "I particularly value the accessibility to student records from our back-office and the ability to configure the machines just how I want them to run. We are definitely getting a positive return on our investment from our Harris and J2 technology."

[www.wjUSD.org](http://www.wjUSD.org)

### J2 Retail Systems, Inc

J2 Retail Systems, Inc. is a leading specialist manufacturer of integrated PC-based touchscreen monitors and LCD touchscreen monitors and point-of-sale hardware to the retail, hospitality and leisure industries. By controlling our own design and manufacture, we have built a reputation for innovation, reliability and cost-effectiveness.

Credited with introducing 'thin client' EPoS to the market, we use emergent technologies wherever possible and also utilise our close working relationship with the chipset manufacturers to ensure the reliability and longevity of our products. We work closely with partners in our chosen industries and together deliver solutions that create real business value.

### Harris School Solutions

Harris School Solutions provides a variety of software solutions for the public school market. Developed by school nutritionists, its eTrition program incorporates 40+ years of K-12 user experience into an integrated web-based nutrition solution. Focused on ease of use and customization, real-time information is available at any time from any computer.

Modules can be tailored to provide efficient workflows, flexibility, and to meet major reporting requirements. Authorized staff can input, retrieve, share, and analyze student, financial, and nutritional data and manage Free and Reduced Meal applications processing through EZMealApp.com (<https://secure.ezmealapp.com>) and online payments through EZSchoolPay.com (<https://www.ezschoolpay.com>).

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