

PRAIRIE HIGH SCHOOL- COLLEGE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Cedar Rapids, Iowa



The modernization of Prairie High School's dining facilities marks a significant transformation in student dining, designed to meet the needs of a rapidly growing district while delivering an upgraded, retail-inspired experience. The 60-year-old High School was no longer sufficient to accommodate the district's growth, prompting the launch of this project with a vision to create a dining space reflective of contemporary food halls. The result is a dynamic and engaging environment that offers students an array of fresh, authentic options in an atmosphere more reminiscent of a modern retail setting than a traditional school cafeteria.

At the heart of the design is the commitment to offer variety and authenticity. The serving area includes multiple stations, each with its own identity, serving everything from made-to-order salads and subs to classic grill items, pizza, and global cuisine at the World's Faire concept. Grab-and-go stations offer quick and convenient choices, ensuring students have access to fresh options no matter what their schedule.

Details

Opening Date: Aug 2018

Equipment Cost: \$1,400,000

Kitchen/Servery Area: 9,000 SF

Concessions: 1,100 SF

Scope

Transformation of Prairie High School's dining facilities into a modern, retail-inspired food hall, and addressing the needs of a growing district. It included a redesigned serving area, a centralized bakery, and energy-efficient systems to enhance both functionality and sustainability.

The layout's strategic design connects these stations seamlessly to the back-of-house kitchen via heated and refrigerated pass-thru cabinets, enhancing operational efficiency and ensuring a constant supply of fresh food throughout meal periods.

A key feature of the project is the inclusion of a central bakery within the back-of-house kitchen, designed to serve not only Prairie High School but the entire district. This centralized production model increases capacity and improves resource efficiency. The kitchen itself follows a linear layout, allowing for logical flow from receiving to storage, prep, and production. A service corridor, separating the kitchen from the serving area, helps reduce noise and maintain the upscale, retail ambiance. Special attention was given to the island-based pizza and grill concepts, which feature adequate storage and self-sufficient production areas, as well as an a la carte window offering students menu options even if they're not participating in the school lunch program.

Sustainability and energy efficiency were also critical to the project's success. The facility incorporates a rack refrigeration system designed to maximize cooling efficiency and ensure redundancy, along with demand-controlled ventilation to reduce energy consumption. Composting bins support the district's ongoing sustainability efforts, helping divert waste and support local farms. The addition of a coffee concept with a full espresso bar at the a la carte window further enhances the breakfast program, offering hot breakfast sandwiches and other items designed to drive participation.

With its thoughtful design, enhanced functionality, and emphasis on student experience, Prairie High School's new dining space exemplifies the district's mission to provide a modern, efficient, and inviting environment that meets the needs of its growing student body.

