Two school nutrition training managers from Randolph County School System, Donna Campbell (above left) and Tina Blankenship (above right), are among school nutrition managers from across the state participating in the North Carolina K-12 Culinary Institute. They participated in a K-12 Culinary Institute regional workshop on July 12–14 at Chatham Middle School. The N.C. K-12 Culinary Institute, designed to enhance nutrition offerings, is funded by a U.S. Department of Agriculture Professional Standards Training Grant received by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) School Nutrition Section.

“The K-12 Culinary Institute is a unique opportunity for our school nutrition professionals to enhance culinary skills and glean tools and information critical to their important roles in providing quality, nutritious school meals,” said Donna Osborne, director for Randolph County School System, School Nutrition Program.

The face to face and virtual institute was developed by the NCDPI, School Nutrition Section, and Chef Cyndie Story's K-12 Culinary Team, in order to meet five core objectives:

- Improve student health, well-being and academic success through nutritious, appealing meals at school
- Increase participation in high quality, enticing school nutrition programs
- Expand capacity of local school nutrition programs to purchase, prepare and serve fresh, locally grown produce
- Increase consumption of fruits, vegetables and whole grain-rich foods
- Provide continuing education opportunities for school nutrition personnel.

The menus and recipes developed for the K-12 Culinary Institute include:

- Scratch, convenience, and modified scratch products and techniques
- Instructions written for production amounts consistent with pack/pan sizes commonly available in school kitchens
- Nutritional analysis files for easy import into software programs and adjustments for standardization in Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

Planned instructional segments include topics such as knife skills, weighing and measuring accurately, preparing foods for just-in-time service, work simplification and scheduling, effective use of equipment, and quality food preparation and service for a variety of meats, grains, fruits, vegetables, and condiments.

North Carolina K-12 Culinary Institute graduates become chef ambassadors prepared to teach other school nutrition professionals at the Local Education Agency/school level.

The NCDPI, School Nutrition Section is the State Agency (SA) administering the USDA School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, Special Milk Program, After School Snack Program, Seamless Summer Option, and Summer Food Service Program in North Carolina. Additional information regarding school nutrition programs in North Carolina can be found at http://childnutrition.ncpublicschools.gov. Randolph County School System administers school nutrition programs at the local level. More information can be found at www.randolph.k12.nc.us.

About the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction:
The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction provides leadership to 115 local public school districts and 160 charter schools serving over 1.5 million students in kindergarten through high school graduation. The agency is responsible for all aspects of the state’s public school system and works under the direction of the North Carolina State Board of Education.

For more information: NCDPI Communication and Information Division, 919.807.3450; Randolph County School System Public Information Office, 336.318.6100