

2021-2022 Becker Public Schools Nutrition and Wellness Report

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Thank you for the opportunity to share what we've been doing in the Food Service Department. We know just how important school breakfast and lunch is for children and we in the food service department strive to provide our students with a variety of healthful, appealing, and nourishing foods.

Seamless Summer Option (SSO)

Districts were allowed to operate the Seamless Summer Option for the 21-22 school year. Operating this program allowed for one **free** breakfast and lunch per day for **all** students. The reimbursement rate is higher than the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs at \$2.60 per breakfast and \$4.56 (+12.5 cents additional from the state) per lunch. Free meals resulted in higher participation rates than we've seen in the last 10 years. Participation rates also climbed throughout the year indicating increased acceptability and support of the school meal program from students.

Student Participation Rates:

1. Breakfast
 1. Primary School - 77%
 2. Intermediate School - 78%
 3. Middle School - 40%
 4. High School - 49%
2. Lunch
 1. Primary School - 88%
 2. Intermediate School - 90%
 3. Middle School - 74%
 4. High School - 67%

Wellness Policy

- Triennial Assessment - Every three years MDE and USDA requires districts to complete an assessment of their wellness policy. The assessment compares what's in the policy against what the district is doing to meet all that's included in the policy. The assessment also gives standards of practice or goals to set that are the gold standard. This was completed this winter and the District Wellness Policy 533 was updated in April 2022.
- Wellness Committee - This committee now has representation from all four school buildings and includes teaching staff, administration, nursing and food service. Initiatives this year included adding more staff wellness challenges with prizes, implementing a donation cart at the Primary School for unopened breakfast items, and increased discussion and ideas around student and staff wellness.

PEBT Benefits

When a student who qualified for educational benefits (free/reduced lunch) was absent during the 21/22 school year, they would have received PEBT benefits with funds loaded onto a debit card. Funds are to be used to purchase foods for each day they were absent. The district's MARSS coordinator has been submitting this information monthly.

Prime Vendor: Sysco Western

Outs/shorts – The food industry had a hard time meeting the demand of school food service orders. Even with pre-ordering, we were shorted hundreds of cases of ordered items and had to make menu changes on a weekly basis.

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Farm to School

- Becker was selected as 1/15 school districts to pilot the Minnesota Harvest of the Month program. Throughout the school year, 6 locally grown or raised foods were menued. The program also looks to connect the kitchen, classroom, and community. For Becker that meant partnering with the High School FACS class to have a recipe contest using MN grown wild rice. The winning recipe was featured on the lunch menu and shared with the community via the District Facebook Page.
- MN grown or raised foods on the menu this year included: apples, acorn squash, baby red potatoes, tomatoes, ground turkey, sliced cheese, wild rice, greens, onions, and dinner rolls.

MDE Administrative Review

An administrative review of our school nutrition program was conducted during December 2021. Any areas found out of compliance or needing follow up documentation were corrected and no findings resulted in any fiscal action.

A look at the 2022/2023 school year:

- Waivers that allowed us to provide meals at no cost to students have expired as of the last day of the 21/22 school year. Students will need to pay for meals based on eligibility, which they have not had to do since March of 2020.
- Clear communication to families will be key to getting eligible students qualified for educational benefits for the upcoming school year. The application for educational benefits isn't available until after July 1st, 2022. School meal information will be shared with families at this point.
- Effective July 2022 Minnesota's direct certification data will include Medicaid. Meaning, these individuals will qualify for educational benefits.
- Becker is the recipient of a Minnesota Department of Agriculture farm to school grant to purchase Minnesota grown or raised foods. Also in the grant award was an equipment portion. The primary, intermediate, and middle school will be receiving new reach in freezers.
- Becker is the recipient of a SHIP Mini Grant to use funds to hire a chef for a cooks training to improve school meals.

Respectfully Submitted,

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