

2020-21 Becker Public Schools Nutrition and Wellness Report

07.06.2021

1. As we all know there were many changes and differences in the 2020-2021 school year than any year prior throughout the Becker School District and it was no different for the Food Service Department. We altered feeding models to best meet the needs of our students throughout the year. We know just how important school breakfast and lunch is for children. It provides them with nourishment for learning whether they are in person in the cafeteria or if they are heating a meal between virtual classes that they took home for a distance-learning day. Food service staff took the challenges faced throughout the year and conquered them to provide our students with a variety of healthful, appealing, and nourishing foods.

2. Food Service Models

In Person

- Students in person learning received grab and go breakfast options and a hot lunch meal daily. Mitigation strategies used to decrease the spread of Covid-19 included no self service salad bars (all items on the salad bar were individually packaged), clicker counters used to tally breakfast and lunch counts in grades K-8 versus having students enter their pin numbers on a pin pad, increased cleaning and sanitizing. Overall meal participation for the year was up from previous years in all buildings when students were in person learning. This was likely in part to the free meals all students were able to receive the entire year.

Distance Learning/Hybrid Learning

- Students in distance learning or hybrid learning by choice or by learning model were able to pick up meals for the days they weren't in school. Pickup was one time per week and covered breakfast and lunch for all of the days students were learning from home.

Friday Meals

- While K-5 students were in hybrid learning mid year, Food Service sent home a breakfast and lunch with all elementary students as they left class on their last in person learning day of the week. When 6-12 graders had distance learning Fridays, they had the option to take home a shelf stable meal kit on Thursdays each week.

Preschool Meals

- AM and PM preschool students received a meal during their preschool class.

Summer Feeding

- Any guardian with a child 18 or under is able to pick up a weekly meal kit on Tuesday's from June 8-August 24. Each meal kit contains 5 breakfast and 5 lunches and includes a variety of items such as pizza, corn dogs and quesadillas to scratch made items like tacos, pasta and meat sauce, and stir-fry. Fruits, vegetables, and milk are included with each meal. Meals are sent in bulk packaging as much as possible versus individually packaged items i.e. students receive a 1/2 gallon of milk vs. 10 milk cartons. We currently have around 600 participants each week. Food Service has also provided meals for pre-k and high school summer school participants.

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3. USDA Waivers

- **SFSP** – Districts were able to operate the Summer Food Service Program for the entire 20-21 school year and through summer 2021. The SFSP is typically reserved for districts with >50% free/reduced rate to operate when school is not in session. This waiver allowed for ALL students to eat a free breakfast and lunch daily regardless of socioeconomic status and without the need for a completed free and reduced price meal application. This waiver is in effect until the first day of school in September 2021.
- **Meal Service in a non-congregate setting** – This waiver allows us to send meals home with students to eat outside the school premises. This was utilized during the school year for students' distance learning or hybrid learning. It is also utilized this summer as meals are sent home as meal kits 1x/week rather than having students eat in the cafeteria each day.
- **SSO** – District are allowed to operate the Seamless Summer Option for the 21-22 school year. It allows for the same reimbursement rate as the SFSP, but the nutrition standards match the National School Lunch and Breakfast program and therefore are more stringent than the SFSP. This waiver will also allow for free meals for ALL students again this coming school year.
- **Triennial Assessment Waiver due by June 30, 2022** - 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. The assessment also gives standards of practice or goals to set that are the gold standard. This waiver pushes the due date for the assessment back until June 2022, to allow districts to focus on other operating challenges.

4. PEBT Benefits

Students that qualified for free/reduced price meals during the 20-21 school year received a Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer card beginning in March 2021. The card was loaded with funds to purchase food determined by how many days the student spent in the hybrid or distance learning model on a given month. Student's distance learning full time received \$135 dollars and hybrid learners received \$75 per month. For our district, that meant students in K-5 received the \$75 for December and January, because they were in person learning the rest of the year. Students in grades 6-12 that qualify received \$75 for most months and \$135 for the months they were full time distance learning. The same students who received PEBT benefits for the school year will also receive a one-time summer benefit of \$430.

The amount of students who qualified for free and reduced price benefits decreased from about 18% in the 19-20 school year to about 12% in the 20-21 school year. This is likely because families didn't feel the need to submit applications since they were receiving free meals at school regardless. This does mean however that there were students who could have benefited with the PEBT benefits that did not receive them. Families were contacted multiple times through Skyward messenger informing them of PEBT benefits and to complete an Application for Educational Benefits.

5. Prime Vendor: Sysco Western

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Outs/shorts – The food industry as a whole had a hard time meeting demand with certain products. Even with pre-ordering and giving lead time we were shorted ordered items and had to make menu changes on occasion.

6. Farm to School Partners

We received a \$3,000 grant from MN Dept of Agriculture this school year and used the funds on peppers, squash and apples from Norm's Farm Market and purchased Dinner Rolls from Backwards Bread Company located in St. Cloud who uses flour from Winona, MN. Both of these groups have been great to work with and we plan to continue to use them in the future to add more local foods to our menus.

10. MDE Administrative Review

The Becker School district was due for a full food service administrative review this past year, but because of all the waivers and because we weren't operating the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program only the resource management portion was completed. This portion of the review looks at the finance side of the department. Any findings were corrected approved by MDE. We did have a summer food service review in July 2020, since it was our first time operating the program and MDE completed the review with no findings.

Respectfully Submitted,

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