

2022-2023 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 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.

School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program

Due to the expiration of federal waivers, students were charged for lunches purchased according to eligibility status (free/reduced/paid) during the 2022-2023 school year. The district continued to offer breakfast for free to all due to the positive fund balance and to encourage participation.

Lunch participation rates decreased in some areas from last year when all meals were free due to Covid-19 related waivers. However, lunch participation rates are still higher than the pre pandemic numbers at all buildings indicating acceptability. This is shown in the table below.

Student Participation Rates:

Lunch	2016-2019 Average (pre pandemic & waivers)	2021/2022 (free lunch for all)	2022/2023
Primary School	69%	88%	70%
Intermediate School	69%	90%	77%
Middle School	54%	74%	63%
High School	53%	67%	69%

Breakfast	2022-2023
Primary School	65%
Intermediate School	52%
Middle School	38%
High School	48%

Wellness Committee

- The committee 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.
- A donation from the Bounce Back Program helped support the committee and we were able to purchase an end of the year treat for all staff.

Farm to School

- MN grown or raised foods on the menu this year included: apples, zucchini, peppers, sweet corn, baby red potatoes, tomatoes, ground turkey, wild rice, watermelon, greens, onions, asparagus, beef hot dogs, and turkey hot dogs.

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- MN Department of Agriculture FY22 Farm to School Grant recipient for \$5,000 in local food purchases and \$9,344.58 in equipment; used for new reach in freezers for PS, IS, and MS.

A look at the 2023/2024 school year:

- **On Friday, March 17, 2023, Governor Walz signed the Free School Meals bill into law. This will take effect with the July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024 school year. This legislation provides the reimbursement for a free breakfast and lunch to students who receive meals through their school's participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP).**
 - We are still asking families to apply for educational benefits (free and reduced meals) for the upcoming school year. At the point of sale, students are still coded based on their eligibility. The only change is the State of MN will cover the difference between the state and federal reimbursement amount for paid and reduced price status students.
 - The Free School Meals Program legislation contains a "hold-harmless" provision for the next two years related to compensatory funding.
 - Other benefits to completing the application is reduced activity and technology fees.
 - The application for educational benefits isn't available until after July 1st, 2023. School meal information will be shared with families at this point. Applications will be available and families encouraged to fill out during back to school days.
- Becker is the recipient of a Minnesota Department of Agriculture farm to school grant in the amount of \$17,000 to purchase Minnesota grown or raised foods. We will be focusing on bringing in ground beef from a Becker farm to be used in our beef recipes.
- All 4 school buildings will be receiving new serving lines in August.
- Each year the department works to increase the amount of scratch cooking or quick scratch cooking to increase the quality and nutrition of foods served. New ovens being installed at the PS, IS, and MS will help with this.
- Staffing shortages have been ongoing and currently the department has 5 open positions.

Respectfully Submitted,

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