

District Effectiveness Report

August 2021



**FOOD & NUTRITION
SERVICES**

- Executive Summary -

Food & Nutrition Services (FNS) administers the federal National School Breakfast, National School Lunch and Summer Food Service Programs. FNS has about 400 employees who planned, prepared and served 932,860 breakfasts and 2.3M lunch meals during SY 2020-2021. About 80% of students were on the meal benefit program, Free or Reduced, by the end of 2020-2021. The districts average daily meal participation was 20% for breakfast and 53% for lunch.

When COVID hit, FNS was able to successfully shift our service model from a traditional cafeteria service to a curbside service. The man-power needed to implement these changes on the fly showed how our amazing employees were flexible, prepared to adapt, and willing to put in the extra time and energy to feed the children of our community. The uncertainty and lack of direction from the Texas Department of Agriculture and other government agencies during the beginning phases of this rollout made it all the more difficult.

The FNS team bonded together and pitched in no matter what the task, regardless if it was outside of their normal job description. Managers and specialists were sent to different schools on the spur of the moment. Support staff worked to adapt their schools based on new needs due to COVID. Most support staff worked 10+ hours per day (and weekends) to ensure the changes in their area were completed and the information was distributed clearly to front-line workers.

Everyone was thrown curveballs and had multiple hurdles to jump on a daily basis. The stress levels were high, but everyone understood that the children must come first. It was truly touching to see members of our team go above and beyond when they could have "opted-out". Together, we served 1,209,450 meals from March 18, 2020 until school started in August 2020.

All sites except Mesquite Academy and Learning Center were open for curbside service. When the school year started, together, we served 149,452 meals while the district remained 100% virtual.

On top of working through and adapting to the new COVID processes in serving the community, our support staff was also working towards the reduced sodium Target II 20-21 menu and prepping for a 21 summer audit, which was passed with no findings!

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Menus and Meal Patterns

The dietitian plans a three-week menu cycle for breakfast and lunch to meet the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) requirements for a reimbursable meal, while also managing all diet modifications. We follow the Traditional Food-Based Offer vs. Serve menu planning approach, which must comply with specific component and quantity requirements by offering five components. Students must select three components with at least one being a fruit or vegetable for lunch. These components are: Meat/Meat Alternative, Vegetable, Fruit, Grain and Milk. Minimum portion sizes are established by ages and grade groups. A nutrient analysis is completed on all menus to ensure compliance with TDA regulations. All menus must fall within a maximum nutrient analysis based on a weekly average for calories, saturated fat, trans fat and sodium. By utilizing the Offer vs. Serve concept, FNS is able to reduce food waste and permits the students to choose the foods they want to eat within the guidelines of what constitutes a reimbursable breakfast and lunch.

Breakfast and Lunch

FNS has 28 schools that participate in the Universal Free Breakfast Program which provides meals to all students at no cost regardless of their eligibility. We operate Breakfast in the Classroom and On the House Breakfast under the Universal Free Breakfast Program. All other campuses have the Traditional breakfast. All campuses including Academy and Learning Center prepare meals for breakfast and lunch.

Financial Stability and Meal Prices

Food & Nutrition Services is financially stable and sustainable. Meal prices did not increase for SY 2021-2022. Even with the financial struggles of COVID, FNS was able to meet the needs of students without dipping into district funds.

Concessions and Catering

These departments are not federally funded and do not follow the guidelines of the TDA. Concessions consists of a manager and 65 part-time employees. Catering consists of a manager and five employees. Concessions provides food for outside field events as well as all home games at eight stadiums. Catering provides services for about 55 requested events per month. For 2021-2022, Concessions and Catering departments were combined.

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Challenges

- Coping with the challenges and hurdles presented by COVID-19 including food shortages, labor over and under staffing, reduced participation in meal service, stress, HR issues, added paper goods cost, additional training, etc.
- Purchasing high quality meat items and produce within our budget and controlling our inventory.
- Increase in students needing special diets with the three main modifications being allergies, diabetes and gluten intolerance.
- Staff to develop a community outreach program to provide nutritional support for students and parents.
- Adequate time for training and developing leadership skills.
- Hiring, onboarding, employee retention, labor cost and absenteeism affect our customer service.
- The cost of renovations and new equipment and the time to complete a project in the summer is challenging.
- Time required for federal, state and local audits, inspections and experimental studies.
- Contacting and collecting on unpaid meal charges.
- Controlling pests within the required pest management laws and protocols.
- Meeting the new Sodium Target II Regulations for 2021-2022.
- Reorganizing of the flat organization chart - so all decisions do not rely on the Director but gives staff more ownership of their specific role.
- Increased need for menu options for students with allergies or diet modifications.
- Understanding finances and how to best utilize the funding available.
- Meeting the individual needs of each campus during COVID along with sourcing paper goods to meet these needs and extra time needed to serve due to social distancing.

Vision for the Future

In the future, it may become advantageous for the district to participate in the Community Eligibility Program (CEP) which allows schools to provide free meals to all students without having to collect and process free or reduced meal applications each year. FNS would like to expand the program to provide the supper meal for students at several campuses. We would also like to add more training opportunities for team members and continue to restructure the office team to be more effective.

Though FNS is currently meeting TDA guidelines for nutrition, we would like to work toward a wider range of choices for simple scratch recipes and use fewer processed foods. Scratch cooking requires a skillset that most employees and applicants do not possess. In order to train 380+ staff members, it will take more time than is available in the school calendar year. First, we will need to assess current equipment and purchase more equipment, and unfortunately some sites do not have space for additional equipment. Recipe testing will need to take place in order to create proper guidelines and ensure scratch cooking will work at all sites. Our current heat and serve concept takes less prep and cooking time, switching to a scratch concept will require more hours and labor to execute properly. FNS is also working through a shift in culture with our new Director, Lark Stewart, who has restructured the FNS support staff. It is also important to note that moving into SY 21-22 FNS is operating under staffed in regards to our kitchen team, who are working at full capacity, would not be able to handle the extra workload necessary for scratch cooking at this time. Scratch cooking will need a strategic plan in place for proper roll out at all 51 sites. FNS plans to create a strategic plan after passing the 21-22 TDA Administrative Review (Audit).

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- Description -

Mesquite ISD Food & Nutrition Services administers 3 federally funded Programs: School Breakfast Program (SBP), National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Breakfast and lunch is prepared and served at each MISD campus.

Food & Nutrition Services goals and team strategies include: (3C's)

- To order and purchase food that is **clean**, safe, wholesome and prepare according to the proper food handling and sanitation procedures.
- To prepare, **cook** and serve meals that are high quality, nutritionally balanced and appealing to students and staff.
- To staff each kitchen with responsible employees, to provide excellent **customer service** and taking the concerns of our customers as a tool to improve.
- To increase participation, efficiency and accountability by getting input from students through taste testing, promotions and marketing.
- To ensure our program is self-supporting and sustaining.
- To develop new recipes, offering a variety of choices, focusing on presentation of food and promoting healthy selections for each meal.

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- Description -

The Food & Nutrition Services purpose is to provide healthy, nutritional meals to children at a low cost or free through the federally assisted School Breakfast Program (SBP), National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Meals must meet meal pattern requirements and nutrition standards such as calorie, sodium and saturated fat limits under the guidelines from the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). We receive entitlement funds to purchase USDA Foods (formerly known as commodities) for each meal we serve. For 2020-2021 our entitlement was \$2,140,561.45.

The Meal Benefit Program, better known as the Free or Reduced program, must be offered as part of the agreement for the National School Lunch Program. We receive a monthly reimbursement for all meals served to the students. The claim rates for 2020-2021 Breakfast and Lunch are: Free (\$2.35/ \$3.66), Reduced (\$2.05/\$3.26) and Paid (\$0.33/\$0.35), respectively.

In March of 2020, FNS responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by offering 10 meals (5 breakfast and 5 lunch) to families with children ages 1-18 at 20 campuses. These were delivered by curbside drive through. We continued to respond to COVID in 2020-2021 by providing curbside meals for the virtual students.

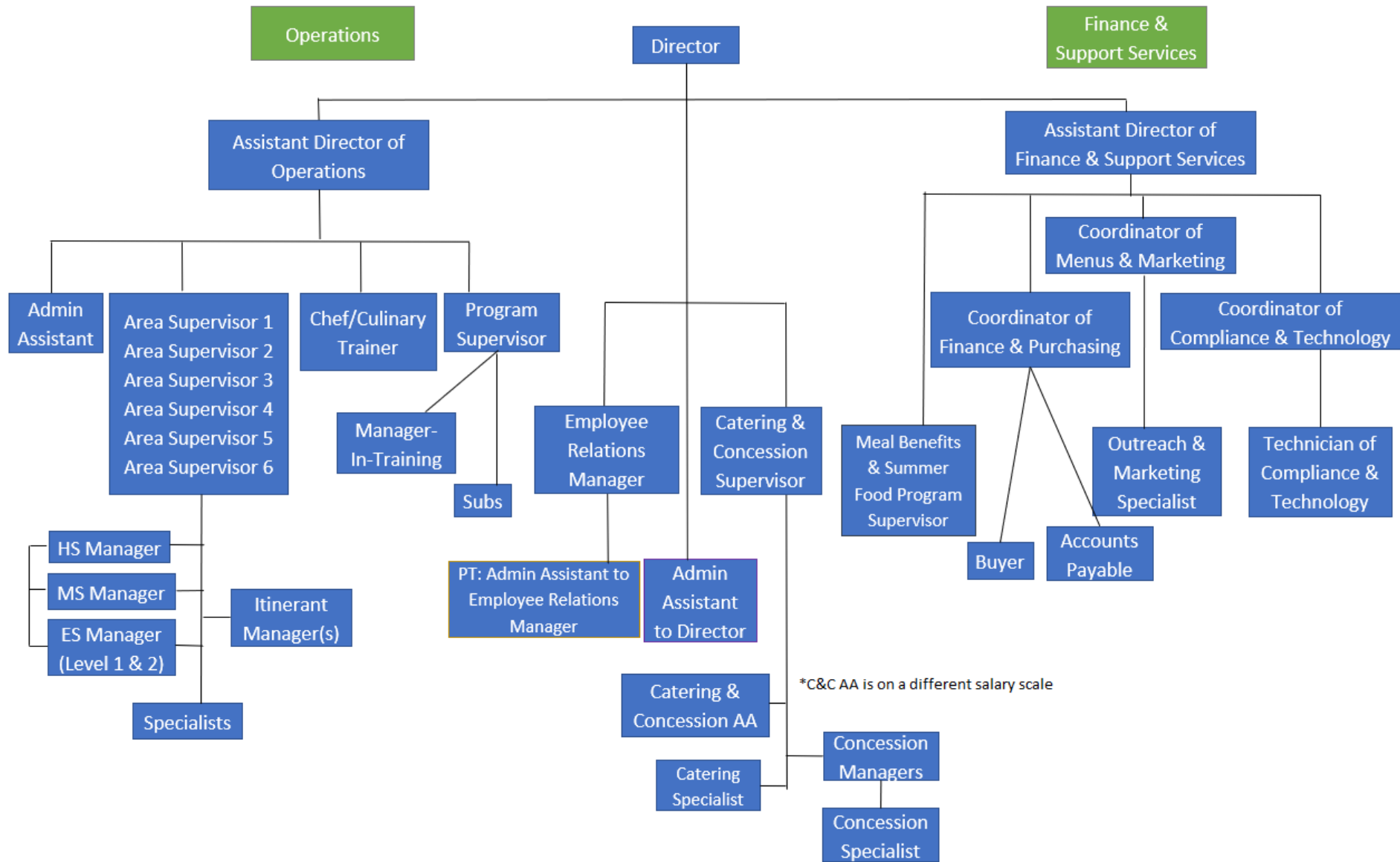
Summer Food Service Program provides healthy meals in a safe and temp controlled environment. FNS opened 46 sites for Summer 2021 to families with children ages 1-18. At the time this was written, FNS has served 18,170 breakfast and 19,669 lunches as part of summer feeding.

The Catering Department prepares and provides Food & Beverage catering services to the district for multiple events, meetings, and professional development trainings. The catering staff consists of five full time employees. The Catering Department averages 50 to 80 events per month and growing. Catering Department has a Mesquite community-focused partnership with the Mesquite Community for fundraisers, Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, PTA, and MEA. Concessions hires 65 part-time extra duty employees and provides Food & Beverage concession services for all events at 11 district concession stands and press boxes. Supports football, baseball, soccer, and track seasons, along with UIL and Band competitions, and provides support and partners with Mesquite Pee Wee Association and district Booster Clubs.

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- Organizational Structure -



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- Description -

The Food & Nutrition Services team consists of about 400 employees when fully staffed that work together planning, preparing and serving the students and staff with healthy menu choices for breakfast and lunch.

Staffing:

Due to COVID-19 and the unexpected school closures, participation rates dropped during 2020-2021 (fewer meals were served). This caused an issue of overstaffing. FNS bases staffing on the formula of Meals per Labor Hour (MPLH). Due to serving fewer meals, the MPLH dropped significantly. However, due to a healthy fund balance, FNS was able to keep all employees employed.

Meal Equivalents / Labor Hours = MPLH

Supervisors	4
Managers	50
Managers in Training (MITs)	3
Specialists	240
Office Staff	13

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- Effectiveness Indicators -

Meal Totals

932,859 breakfast and 2,347,013 lunch meals were served for the 2020-2021 school year.

Breakfast and Lunch Reimbursement

The total claim for breakfast and lunch reimbursement for the 2020-2021 school year was \$9,404,428.94. Student participation dropped significantly after COVID. While curbside was available to virtual students, most did not take advantage.

Meal Benefit Program

The Meal Benefit Program is available for all students who are economically disadvantaged. Manual applications are processed within 10 days. Households which are automatically approved from state agencies are on a Direct Certification list and do not require local processing. Approximately 79.75% of the total student enrollment are approved for free and reduced meals.

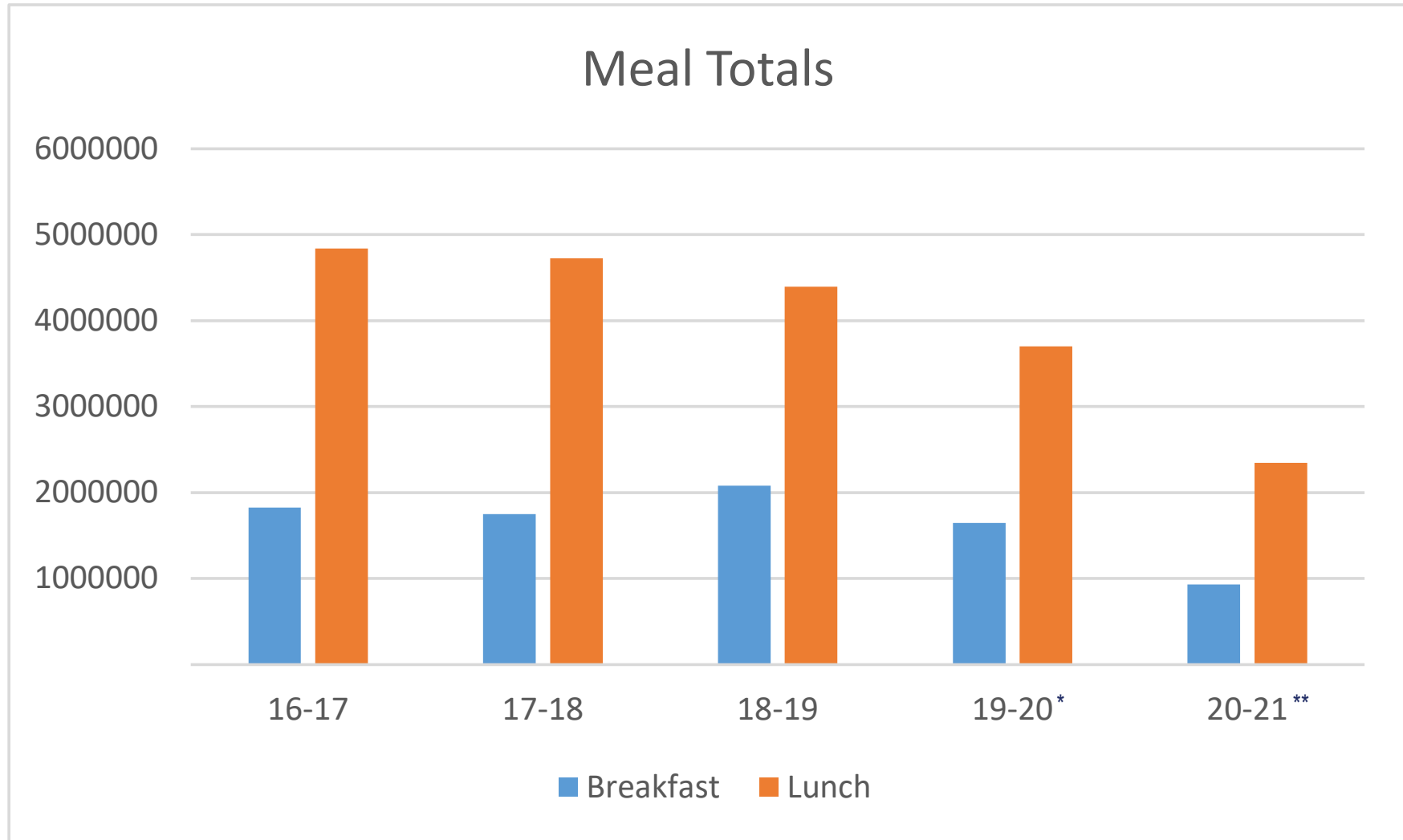
Alternate Meals/Unpaid Student Charges

Students are allowed to charge up to \$5 for a reimbursable breakfast or lunch meal. Once the \$5 charge limit has been exceeded, an alternate meal is given. The District had a no-charge policy until the 2015-2016 school year. A \$5 charge is now allowed. A courtesy meal is provided to the elementary students after they have reached their \$5 charge limit. After a courtesy meal has been received, a reminder meal (alternate meal) is provided until the balance in the student account reaches the cost of a meal. The cost to the district this year for unpaid meal charges was \$32,057.62.

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- Effectiveness Indicators -



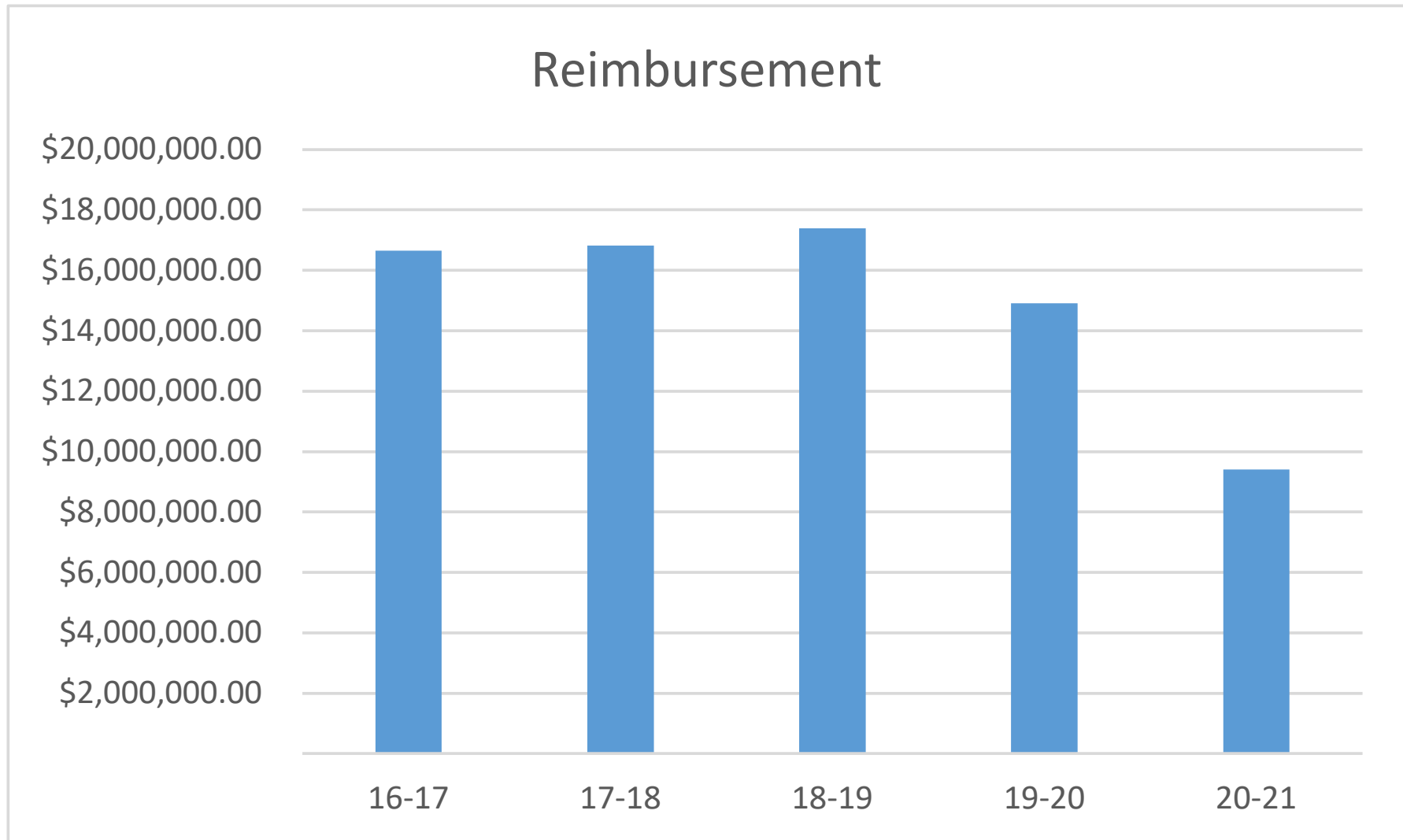
* Includes curbside and regular meals.

** Student participation dropped significantly after COVID. While curbside was available to virtual students, most did not take advantage.

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- Effectiveness Indicators -

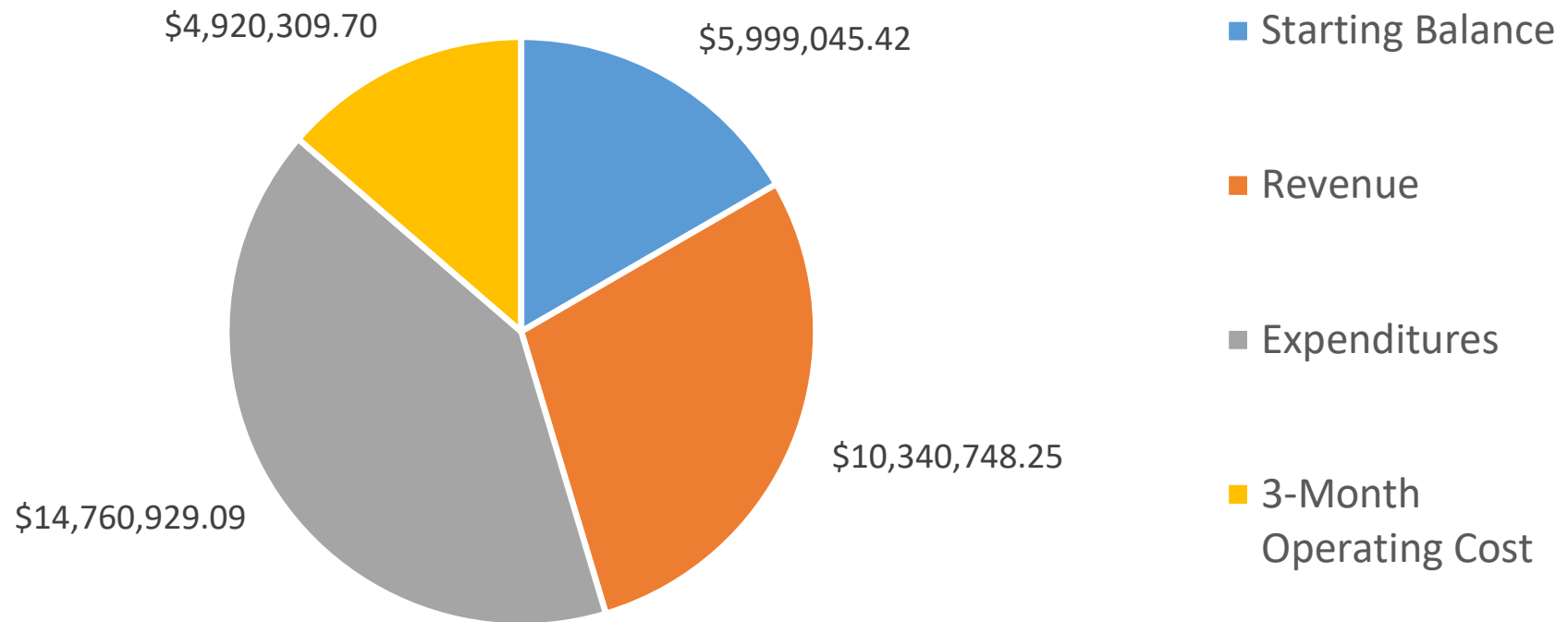


NOTE: Reimbursement is tied directly to the # of meals served/student participation.

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- Cost of Program -



NOTE: FNS was able to work down the excess fund balance to bring FNS into compliance.

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- Cost of Program -

Program Food Expenditures / Commodities	\$5,018,341.72
Supplies (Non-Food)	\$543,127.83
Salaries	\$5,810,919.89
Employee Benefits	\$831,238.83
Purchased Services	\$14,211.73
Equipment Purchases	\$179,769.28
Supplies / Misc	\$177,652.29
Utilities	\$0
Total Expenditures	\$12,575,261.57

* Updated on July 27, 2021. Utilities and Commodities will be added upon finalization by the business office.

District Effectiveness Report

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- Breakfast -

Food & Nutrition Services operates 28 schools that participate in the Universal Free Breakfast Program (SB376) either as: Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) or On the House Breakfast (OTH).

BIC schools are:

Floyd	
Gray	Mackey
Henrie	McWhorter

OTH schools are:

A.C. New	Price
Black	Range
Cannaday	Rugel
Florence	Rutherford
Frasier	Seabourn
Galloway	Shands
Hanby	Tisinger
Hodges	Tosch
Lawrence	Vanston
McDonald	Wilkinson
McKenzie	West Mesquite
Motley	

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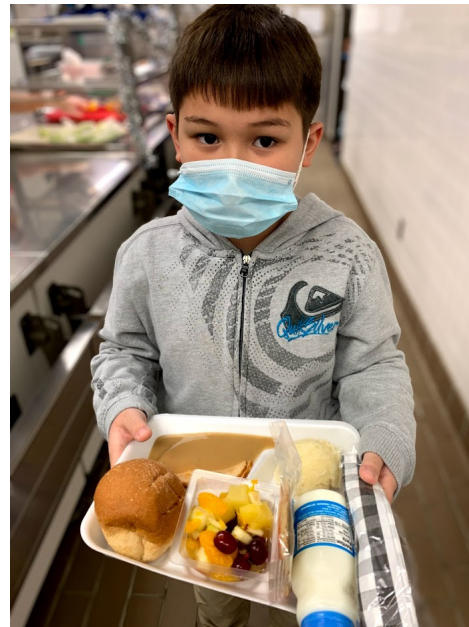
- Vision for the Future -

- To evaluate the Community Eligibility Program (CEP) for all MISD campuses. This program allows schools to provide free meals to all students, without having to collect each year or process free and reduced priced applications. The reimbursement is based on the number of “identified students” from the Direct Certification downloads. As of April 2020, MISD has 45 schools that meet the 40% threshold to qualify for CEP and 4 schools that are potentially eligible meaning they could be aggregated with another area school to meet the 40% threshold.
- To provide the supper program for students who have food insecurity after the last bell.
- To modify more menu items from highly processed to simple scratch cooking.
- To develop a tiered level training program for the specialist who would like to improve their leadership skills. These specialists may not meet requirements for our Manager in Training program, but are very beneficial for the manager to build a strong team.
- To have a test kitchen and technology lab that can be utilized by our culinary trainer and our technology coordinator for hands-on demonstrations and teaching opportunities.

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- Photo Gallery -



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- Photo Gallery -

