Procedure - Nutrition

Nutrition and Food Services Program
Meal Applications and Eligibility for School Meals

As a sponsor of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, the district will provide free and reduced-price breakfasts and lunches to students who qualify in accordance with the programs.

If operating standard counting and claiming, the district will annually distribute the Letter to Households and Free and Reduced-Price Meal Applications to all student households at the beginning of each school year. If a parent or guardian of a student needs assistance with application materials in a language other than English, the district will offer appropriate assistance to that parent or guardian. The district will protect the identity of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals in accordance with USDA guidelines for confidentiality and disclosure of student eligibility for such meals.

If the district has obtained available information from other sources that the student is likely eligible for free or reduced-price meals, but the parent or guardian has not submitted an application to determine the student's eligibility, the district will complete and submit the application for the student in accordance with the authority granted under 7 CFR Part 245.6(d). The completed application must set forth the district's basis for determining the student's eligibility. A district family determined eligible under this process will be notified that the family's children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals or free milk. This determination must be made family by family, and the district will not make eligibility determinations or certifications by categories or groups of children.

If operating the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or other non-pricing option, the district will distribute the Letter to Households and the Family Income Survey to all student households at the beginning of each school year. If a parent or guardian of a student needs assistance with application materials in a language other than English, the district will offer appropriate assistance to that parent or guardian. The district will protect the student's identity and the confidentiality and disclosure of the data on a Family Income Survey.

At least monthly, the district will directly certify students for free school meals if the students qualify because of enrollment in assistance programs, including but not limited to the supplemental nutrition assistance program, the temporary assistance for needy families, and Medicaid.

The district and its school staff will work to improve systems for identifying homeless students, students in out-of-home care, runaway students, and migrant students to ensure that each student has proper access to free school meals and that applicable accountability and reporting requirements are satisfied.

Students in prekindergarten through twelfth grade who qualify for reduced-price breakfasts or lunches will not be required to pay a copay.

Meal Patterns and Menu Planning

The district will follow the USDA meal patterns for the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Smart Snacks in School standards for all food and beverages sold to students on school campus during the school day.

Community Eligibility Provision
Each school with an Identified Student Percentage (ISP) of at least 40% must participate in the USDA CEP and offer meals at no cost to all students.

To the extent practicable, the district will group schools to maximize the number of schools eligible to participate in the CEP.

The Identified Student Percentage (ISP) is calculated by dividing the number of Identified Students, students categorically eligible for free school meals by direct certification or in other ways, by the total enrollment.

Free Meals
Certain elementary schools must provide free breakfast and lunch each school day to any student who requests breakfast, lunch, or both regardless of the student's eligibility for a federally reimbursed free or reduced-price meal. The meals must be nutritiously adequate and qualify for federal reimbursement under the school lunch program or the school breakfast program. Students may only receive one free meal in a meal service period.

The requirements described above apply to elementary schools that provide educational services to students in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, third grade, or fourth grade and where 30% or more of their students meet federal eligibility requirements for free or reduced-price lunches. However, those schools that are participating in the CEP are exempt from these requirements while participating in the CEP.

Schools where 40% or more of their students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches must meet the requirements described above beginning with the 2023–2024 school year. Schools where between 30 and less than 40% of their students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches must meet the requirements described above beginning with the 2024–2025 school year.

Despite the requirements described above, the district will continue collecting free and reduced-price meal eligibility applications when applicable and run direct certification at least monthly. Further, the district will annually monitor data for eligibility in the CEP and apply when eligible.

Breakfast After the Bell
Each high-needs school shall offer breakfast after the bell to each student and provide adequate time for students to consume the offered food. Schools that are not obligated by state law to offer breakfast after the bell are encouraged to do so.

High-needs schools with at least 70% of free or reduced-price eligible children participating in both school lunch and school breakfast are exempt from the requirements of the paragraph above. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction will evaluate individual participation rates annually.

Each high-needs school and the district may determine the breakfast after the bell service model that best suits its students. Service models include, but are not limited to, the following: breakfast in the classroom; grab-and-go breakfast; and second-chance breakfast. All breakfasts served in a breakfast after the bell program must comply with chapter 28A.235 RCW and federal meal patterns and nutrition stands for school breakfast programs under the federal Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, as well as any federal regulations implementing that act.

When choosing foods to serve for a breakfast after the bell program, schools must give preference to foods that are healthful and fresh, and if feasible, give preference to Washington-grown food.

For this program, the following definitions shall apply:

- "Breakfast after the bell" means a breakfast that is offered to students after the beginning of the school day. Examples of breakfast after the bell models include, but are not limited to, the following:
    - "Grab-and-go," in which easy-to-eat breakfast foods are available for students to take at the start of the school day or in between morning classes;
    - "Second-chance breakfast," in which breakfast foods are available during recess, a nutrition break, or later in the morning, for students who are not hungry first thing in the morning, or who arrive late to school; and
    - "Breakfast in the classroom," where breakfast is served in the classroom, often during homeroom or first period.

- "Eligible for free or reduced-price meals" means a student who is eligible under the national school lunch program or school breakfast program to receive lunch or breakfast at no cost to the student or at a reduced cost to the student.
- "High-needs school" means any public school:

    - That has enrollment of 70% or more students eligible for free or reduced-price meals in the prior school year; or
    - That is using provision two of the National School Lunch Act or the CEP to provide universal meals and that has a free claiming percentage of 70% or more.

- "Public school" has the same meaning as provided in RCW 28A.150.010.
- "School breakfast program" means a program meeting federal requirements under 42 U.S.C. Sec. 1773.
- "School lunch program" means a program meeting federal requirements under 42 U.S.C. Sec. 1751.
- "Instructional hours" means those hours students are provided the opportunity to engage in educational activity planned by and under the direction of school district staff, as directed by the administration and board of directors of the district, inclusive of intermissions for class changes, recess, and teacher/parent-guardian conferences that are planned and scheduled by the district for the purpose of discussing students' educational needs or progress, and exclusive of time actually spent for meals. If students are provided the opportunity to engage in an educational activity that is part of the regular instructional program concurrently with the consumption of breakfast, the period designated for student participation in breakfast after the bell must be considered instruction hours.

Mealtimes

The district will set mealtimes to allow breakfast to be served as close to the start of the school day as possible (except the Breakfast After the Bell program, above) and lunch to be served between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm. The length of the meal period will allow enough time for students to be served and eat a complete meal as well as take care of personal hygiene needs. The district will strive to identify and remove barriers to every student receiving 20 minutes of seated lunch time and scheduling recess before lunch for elementary students. The superintendent or designee will

periodically monitor district schools for progress in implementing these provisions to the extent appropriate and feasible and report to the board.

Food Safety Plan
The district will establish a Food Safety Plan based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points. Because of the potential liability of the district, the food services program will not accept donations of food other than as provided in this policy without board approval. Should the board approve a food donation, the superintendent or designee shall establish inspection and handling procedures for the food and determine that the provisions of all state and local laws have been met before selling the food as part of the school lunch menu.

Meal Pricing
The board shall determine paid meal prices annually and for the National School Lunch Program and follow Paid Lunch Equity regulations.

Adult meal prices shall be set to allow teachers, administrators, and parents to demonstrate their support for school meal programs by occasionally eating with students. The price must be the price charged to students paying the full meal price plus the value of federal reimbursement for paid meals and the USDA Food Value.

USDA Foods
The district will use the full entitlement of USDA Foods made available under the Federal Food Distribution Program for school meal programs.

Non-Profit School Food Service Account
The district will maintain a non-profit school food service account. All revenues shall be used solely for the school meal programs and to improve the quality of the food service program for the students being served. Food sold a la carte and food sold to other school entities will be priced to recover, at a minimum, food costs.

Charge Policy
To allow students to receive nutritious meals, to prevent over-identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school means, and to maintain the financial integrity of the nonprofit school nutrition program, the district will establish a written meal charge process for students eligible for reduced price meals and students that are not eligible for meals. The meal charge policy will be communicated to households each year so that district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges.

Unpaid Meal Charges
If a student has not paid for five or more previous meals, the school will determine whether the student is categorically eligible for free meals. If no application has been submitted for the student to determine their eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, the school will make no fewer than two attempts to contact the student's parent or guardian to have them submit an application. A principal, assistant principal, or school counselor will contact the parent or guardian to offer assistance with completing an application to determine the student's eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, determine whether there are any household issues that may prevent the student from having sufficient funds for school meals, and offer any other appropriate assistance.

No school or school district personnel or school volunteer may do any of the following:

- Take any action that would publicly identify a student who cannot pay for a school meal or for meals previously served to the student, including but not limited to requiring the student to wear a wristband, hand stamp, or other identifying markers, or by serving the student an alternative meal;
- Require a student who cannot pay for a school meal or for meals previously served to the student to perform chores or other actions in exchange for a meal or for the reduction or elimination of a school meal debt, unless all students perform similar chores or work;
- Require a student to dispose of an already-served meal because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because of money owed for meals previously served to the student;
- Allow any disciplinary action that is taken against a student to result in the denial or delay of a nutritionally adequate meal to the student; or
- Require a parent or guardian to pay fees or costs in excess of the actual amounts owed for meals previously served to the student.

Communications for a school or school district about amounts owed for meals previously served to a student under the age of fifteen may only be directed to the student's parent or guardian. Neither this policy nor chapter 28A.235 RCW prohibits the district from sending a student home with a notification that is addressed to the student's parent or guardian.

A parent or guardian will be notified of a negative balance of a student's meal account no later than ten days after the student's school meal account has reached a negative balance. Within thirty days of sending this notification, the district will exhaust all options to directly certify the student for free or reduced-price meals. Within these thirty days, while the district is attempting to certify the student for free or reduced-price meals, the student may not be denied access to a school meal unless the district determines that the student is ineligible for free or reduced-price meals.

If the district is unable to directly certify the student for free or reduced-price meals, the school district will provide the parent or guardian with a paper copy of, or an electronic link to, an application for free or reduced-price meals with the negative-balance notification described above and encourage the parent or guardian to submit the application.

The district's Meal Charge Policy will also address unpaid meal charges. Students who qualify for free meals will not be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from previous purchases. Students with outstanding meal charge debt will be allowed to purchase a meal if the student pays for the meal when it is received. *[District Note – Insert here the following language if opting to provide alternate meals: "The District will provide alternate meals meeting federal and state requirements to students who have charged the maximum amount allowed to their student account and cannot pay out of pocket for a meal."]*

The district will make reasonable, discrete efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low through use of *[insert notification method, e.g., automated calling system, letters sent home]*. Families will be notified of an outstanding negative balance once the negative balance reaches $*[insert dollar amount]* or reflects a total of *[insert number]* meals.

Negative balances of more than $*[insert dollar amount]* not paid prior to *[enter time period (e.g., end of the month, end of the semester, end of the school year)]* will be considered delinquent debt and will be turned over to the superintendent or designee for collection. The district will make reasonable, discrete efforts to collect delinquent (overdue) unpaid meal charges, which is an allowable use of

National School Food Service Account (NSFSA) funds, and will coordinate communications with families to resolve the charges. Options may include collection agencies, small claims court, or any other collection method permitted by law and consistent with the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act.

District employees may use a charge account for meals, but may charge no more than $*[insert amount]* to their account. When an account reaches this limit, the employee will not be allowed to charge additional meals or a la carte items until the negative account balance is paid.

Children with Special Dietary Needs
The district will establish procedures to accommodate children with special dietary needs when a diet prescription form is signed by a licensed medical authority. The district food service department will work with the school's 504 Coordinator to accommodate students' special dietary needs.

Civil Rights
The district will follow USDA Food and Nutrition Civil Rights and nondiscrimination policies.

Procurement
The district will follow all state and Federal guidelines when procuring food for the Federal School Meal Programs. And as part of district procurement procedures, the district will establish a procurement plan and Code of Conduct consistent with the Uniform Grant Guidance (2 CFR Part 200). Food specifications shall be written in a manner to procure food products that meet the school meal pattern requirements.

Smart Snacks Standards in School
All foods and beverages sold to students on campus during the school day (e.g., vending machines, DECA school stores, bake sales, and other school fundraisers) must meet USDA Smart Snacks standards. No food or drink items will be sold unless they have been approved by the principal or school official responsible for oversight of the Smart Snacks standards or as designated in the wellness policy.

Best Practices for Meal Service
The superintendent or designee will make reasonable efforts to ensure the following occurs:

- Student participation in the breakfast and lunch programs is encouraged;
- Any student may eat in the school cafeteria or other designated place;
- Schools provide varied and nutritious food choices consistent with the applicable school meal program guidelines;
- Healthy foods are competitively priced;
- Meal prices are conspicuously posted in each cafeteria or designated meal area;
- Seating for meals is uncrowded and occurs in a pleasant and safe environment;
- Supervision during mealtime is appropriate and rules for mealtime behavior are consistently enforced;
- Implement recess before lunch;
- Bus schedules allow students to arrive in time for participation in the School Breakfast Program;
- Alternate breakfast service models are implemented so that students have access to breakfast meals; and

- Community Eligibility Provision or Provision 2 Special Assistance Program is implemented in qualifying schools.

On testing days, the district may provide free, nutritious meals to all students, including those who do not qualify for free or reduced priced federal school meal benefits. However, the district must use non-federal funds to cover the cost of providing such meals.

Water
To promote hydration, free, safe, and unflavored drinking water will be available to all students throughout the school day and throughout every school campus. The district will make drinking water available where school meals are served during mealtimes. In addition, students will be allowed to bring with them and carry throughout the day approved water bottles (filled only with water).

Celebrations and Rewards
All foods offered on the school campus will meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards, including the following:

- Foods brought for celebrations and parties. The district will provide a list of healthy party ideas to parents and teachers, including non-food celebration ideas.
- Classroom snacks brought by parents. The district will provide parents with a list of foods and beverages that meet Smart Snack nutrition standards.
- Rewards and incentives. The district will provide teachers and other relevant school staff with a list of alternative ways to reward children. Foods and beverages will not be used as a reward, or withheld as punishment for any reason, such as for performance or behavior.

Fundraising
Foods and beverages that meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards may be sold through fundraisers on the school campus during the school day. The district will make available to parents and teachers a list of healthy fundraising ideas.

- Schools will use only non-food fundraisers and encourage those promoting physical activity (such as walk-a-thons, Jump Rope for Heart, fun runs, etc.).
- Fundraising during and outside school hours will sell only non-food items or foods and beverages that meet or exceed the Smart Snacks nutrition standards.

Nutrition Promotion
Nutrition promotion and education positively influence lifelong eating behaviors by using evidence-based techniques and nutrition messages, and by creating food environments that encourage healthy nutrition choices and encourage participation in school meal programs. Students and staff will receive consistent nutrition messages throughout schools, classrooms, gymnasiums, and cafeterias. Nutrition promotion also includes marketing and advertising nutritious foods and beverages to students and is most effective when implemented consistently through a comprehensive and multi-channel approach by school staff, teachers, parents, students and the community. Instruction for marketing nutritious foods and healthy lifestyle will, as resources allow, be incorporated into DECA courses.

The district will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all students throughout the school campus, as well as encourage participation in school meal programs. This promotion will occur through the following:

- Implementation of at least ten or more evidence-based healthy food promotion techniques through the school meal programs using Smarter Lunchroom techniques.
- Ensuring 100% of foods and beverages promoted to students meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. Additional promotion techniques that the district and individual schools may use are available at http://www.foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org/.

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development
All school nutrition program directors, managers, and staff will meet or exceed hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements in the USDA professional standards for child nutrition professionals. These school nutrition personnel will refer to USDA's Professional Standards for School Nutrition Standards website to search for training that meets their learning needs.

Family and Community Involvement
To promote family and community involvement in supporting and reinforcing nutrition education in schools, the school principal is responsible for ensuring that the following occurs:

- Nutrition education materials and breakfast and lunch menus are made available to parents;
- Parents are encouraged to promote their child's participation in the school meals program. If their children do not participate in the school meals program, parents should provide their children with healthy snacks/meals;
- Families are invited to attend exhibitions of student nutrition projects or health fairs;
- Nutrition education curriculum includes homework that students can do with their families (e.g., reading and interpreting food labels, reading nutrition-related newsletters, preparing healthy recipes, etc.);
- School staff are encouraged to cooperate with other agencies and community groups to provide opportunities for student projects related to nutrition, as appropriate; and
- School staff consider the various cultural preferences in developing nutrition education programs and food options.

Nutrition Education
The district's K-12 nutrition education curriculum will align with the Washington State Health and Physical Education K-12 Learning Standards and will be designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote healthy behavior.

The district's nutrition education K-12 curriculum should include, but not be limited to, the following concepts:

- Age-appropriate, developmentally-appropriate, and culturally relevant nutritional knowledge, including:
    - The relationship of nutrition and food nutrients to physical performance and body composition;
    - The benefits of healthy eating;
    - Essential nutrients;
    - Nutritional deficiencies;
    - The principles of healthy weight management;
    - The use and misuse of dietary supplements;
    - Safe food preparation, handling, and storage; and

    - Appreciation of cultural diversity related to food and eating.

- Age-appropriate nutrition-related skills, including how to:
    - Gather and analyze health information;
    - Analyze nutrition information to plan and prepare a healthy meal;
    - Understand and use food labels,
    - Evaluate nutrition information, misinformation, and commercial food and advertising; an
    - Assess one's personal eating habits, set goals for improvement, and achieve those goals.

Classification: **Essential**
Prior Revised Dates: **Revised: 09.09, 03.16, 4.25**