

NORTHGATE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Food and Wellness Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 9, 2026 | 4:30 p.m.

Members Present

Dr. Johns, Dr. Amick, Dr. Bergmann, Dr. Garczewski, Dr. Zyhier, Mr. Brian Talbert, Mr. Jason Porterfield, Mr. Wagstaff, Mrs. Amanda R., Mrs. Amber Lehman, Ms. Laura Pollanen, Mrs. Lee, Mrs. Patalano, Ms. Ash Emrich, Ms. Emily Brinker, Mrs. Leigh Thomas

Food/Allergy Procedures for After School Events

Dr. Garczewski provided an overview of Northgate's student allergen guidelines, including procedures for controlling allergen exposure and training staff to handle allergy-related emergencies. She also described the district's process for translating documents into other languages to ensure families whose primary language is not English have access to relevant materials. No commentary from committee members.

Sodexo Annual Recap

Mr. Jason Porterfield presented an annual recap of food service operations, covering final meal costs, meal counts and participation statistics, operating costs, commodity funding, and meal reimbursement rates. He noted that a scheduling adjustment at Avalon Elementary now allows students sufficient time to eat breakfast before their first class. Dr. Bergmann raised the option to diversify breakfast offerings to attract more student participation. Mr. Porterfield responded that building the habit of eating breakfast is the most effective approach to increasing participation, and noted that "second chance" breakfast options exist on a situational basis. Dr. Garczewski suggested organizing a "field trip" experience to help students become more comfortable with the breakfast process, and Dr. Zyhier expressed interest in implementing this approach at Avalon Elementary. Dr. Johns recommended that cafeteria staff actively encourage students at the door and in hallways to participate in breakfast.

Dr. Bergmann requested an overview of the prior year's lunch diversification efforts. Mr. Porterfield shared that the district has implemented halal-safe (though not certified) meals and ensures a vegetarian option is available at each lunch service. While diverse options have not sold in high volumes, participation numbers have remained stable, suggesting a gradual upward trend is possible. Mr. Porterfield expressed a desire to expand and offer diverse options more frequently, though in a gradual manner, and noted that these items are cooked on-site rather than being pre-prepared. Mr. Porterfield reported that approximately \$22,000 of the \$60,000 food fund is allocated to fresh vegetables, and that students' consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables is unrestricted. Current reimbursement rates are \$4.71 per lunch and \$2.97 per breakfast,

with PDE projecting a 10-cent increase in reimbursement rates for the following school year.

Chill Project Annual Recap

Mrs. Leigh Thomas presented the Chill Project's annual recap, covering a program overview, updates on therapy services, the Chill Room™, and the Horticulture Program, including data and trends for each area.

Program strengths for the year included conflict intervention, emotion management, grief support, connecting students with external resources, promoting school adherence, and suicide and self-harm prevention. She shared that Chill Project staff partner with local outpatient centers as part of their process for working with students and families around suicide prevention. Case and safety concern data by building was as follows: Avalon – 52 cases, 7 safety concerns; Bellevue – 52 cases, 7 safety concerns; MS/HS – 50 cases, 12 safety concerns. Chill Lessons were delivered once per month per class. Teacher Tuesdays were established as designated times for teachers to visit the Chill Room to speak with Chill Project staff and learn strategies for supporting students.

Goals for the upcoming school year include curriculum focused on healthy conversations and relationships, cognitive distortions, and self-investment. The program also aims to tailor Chill Rooms to the specific needs of each building, improve monitoring of student arrivals and departures from Chill Rooms, and adjust therapy session lengths to better align with school schedules, as the one-hour sessions preferred by insurance providers are not compatible with the school day. Additional goals include expanding the number of students served and transitioning students who no longer require therapeutic support to lower-level services, as well as increasing student familiarity and comfort with all available Chill Project staff and options.

Ms. Ash provided an update on the Horticulture Program, reporting expansion of the greenhouse project and growth of the Life Skills curriculum. The program collaborated with Student Council during the school year. Lunch Bunch groups were launched, offering students time with Ms. Ash in the greenhouse during a portion of the lunch period. Sixteen students signed up for the summer greenhouse program. Mrs. Pollanen requested that the Chill Project share the data presented in the PowerPoint with the School Board.

No closing commentary. The meeting was concluded at 5:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emily Carter

Emily Carter
Board Secretary