

WHY OUR DISTRICT DOES **NOT** PARTICIPATE

The Rye City School District **does not** participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). As a result, the district is not eligible to participate in the new NYS Universal Free School Meals Program. RCSD has taken a different approach – one that allows us to offer freshly prepared meals, larger portion sizes, fresh fruit and vegetables, and ethnic dishes that the program does not permit.

Please note that we continue to provide free and reduced-price meals for families who qualify under NYS eligibility requirements. All families who qualify for free and reduced-price meals are encouraged to apply on the district website.

WHAT ARE THE PROGRAM IMPACTS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE NSLP?

Participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the NYS Universal Free School Meals Program would have a variety of effects on our breakfast and lunch programs, with the biggest impact to our menu selections and food varieties. If the district had opted to participate, the changes would include, but not be limited to:

- Limits on portion sizes by grade
- Regulations around student selections (requirement to choose three of the following selections: fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, milk)
- Specific limits on ingredients, fat content and calories, resulting in overall reductions to food choices
- Significantly less scratch cooking (more frozen meals/pre-packaged foods)
- Fat-free milk only (district currently offers a variety of milk options)

Overall, many of the options currently offered for breakfast and lunch would either no longer be offered or be significantly modified to be allowable under the federal guidelines.

WHAT ARE THE FINANCIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROGRAM?

While participation in the NSLP would result in free breakfast and lunch for students, it can result in additional costs to the district.

Our food service program is currently self-sustaining and funded by meal purchases. All revenue is reinvested in the program for high-quality ingredients, new equipment and facility improvements.

NSLP participation limits total meal costs (food, labor, operating expenses) to the federal reimbursement rate (2025-26: \$4.60/meal).

If meal costs exceed this rate, districts must:

- Alter menus, portion sizes, or ingredients to reduce costs.
- Use district funds to subsidize the program gap.

OVERALL....

LESS FLEXIBILITY

Federal meal rules are strict and detailed—from portion sizes to ingredients. Opting out allows us to make decisions that are best for our students and community.

LESS VARIETY

Federal requirements limit the types of foods and recipes we can offer. By opting out, we can provide a wider variety of high-quality, nutritious meals students actually enjoy.

MORE COST CONCERNS

The program offers free, portion-controlled meals, but it often operates at a cost that requires the district to subsidize the program gap. By opting out, we avoid the limitations and run a self-sustaining program with revenue that can be reinvested.