

The Success of MN-Free School Meals

Daron Korte, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Student Support Services

Ten Minnesota Commitments to Equity

- 1. Prioritize equity.
- 2. Start from within.
- 3. Measure what matters.
- 4. Go local.
- 5. Follow the money.
- 6. Start early.
- 7. Monitor implementation of standards.
- 8. Value people.
- 9. //Improve conditions for learning.
- 10. Give students options.



MN Free School Meals Program

- MN Free School Meals Program (MN-FSM) signed into law on March 17, 2023
- Amended MN statute 124D.111
- Began July 1, 2023

Governor Tim Walz signs MN Free School Meal Program into law. GOV. TIM WALZ / INSTAGRAM



The Backbone Behind MN-Free School Meals Success

- 1. Increased State Reimbursement Rates
- 2. Required participation in the School Breakfast Program
- 3. Required participation in CEP for schools with ISP ≥ 62.5%

Over 150 Million Meals Served to Kids in the First Year of MN-Free School Meals

- Increase in number of students participating in SBP/NSLP and reimbursable meals being served
- Increase in availability of breakfast
- Increase in number of schools participating in SBP/NSLP



Increases in Participation at Breakfast and Lunch

Table 1. Comparison of Total Meals Served Before and After Free School Meals

Breakfast	Breakfast	Percent	Lunch	Lunch	Percent
SY 2022-23	SY 2023-24	Increase	SY 2022-23	SY 2023-24	Increase
35,011,480	48,860,416	40%	88,612,525	102,240,755	15%

Table 2. Month-by-Month Comparison of Meals Served Before and After Free School Meals

Month	Breakfast	Breakfast	Percent	Lunch	Lunch	Percent
	SY 2022-23	SY2 023-24	Increase	SY 2022-23	SY 2023-24	Increase
July	57,146	64,591	13%	68,387	81,673	19%
August	116,743	177,864	52%	262,863	366,415	39%
September	3,726,021	4,947,869	33%	9,986,740	11,212,701	12%
October	3,964,711	5,578,309	41%	9,917,946	11,843,942	19%
November	3,817,264	5,347,741	40%	9,683,625	11,239,908	16%
December	2,735,831	4,186,267	53%	7,263,352	8,877,713	22%
January	3,632,295	5,509,345	52%	9,609,466	11,786,379	23%
February	3,484,020	5,644,801	62%	8,885,453	11,636,247	31%
March	4,158,719	4,643,560	12%	10,321,533	9,421,772	-9%
April	3,683,675	5,894,590	60%	9,185,780	12,008,847	31%
May	4,985,508	6,310,559	27%	12,026,346	12,693,374	6%
June	649,547	554,920	-15%	1,401,034	1,071,784	-24%

Putting Dollars Back in MN Families' Pockets



• Saved MN families \$267.81 million in first year, or \$1,000 in savings per student per year.

 Savings included \$47.77 million for breakfasts and \$220.04 million for lunches not covered for students before MN-Free School Meals.

MDE Ensured Maximized Federal Funding

Targeted Outreach to Schools

*Targeted schools eligible for Community Eligibility
Provision allowing schools to maximize federal funding

*Requested extensions from USDA to give schools more time to apply

*Monthly claim audits to safeguard state resources



Student and School Community Successes





Significant increase in students eating school meals



More students trying new foods



Increased exposure to fruits and veggies

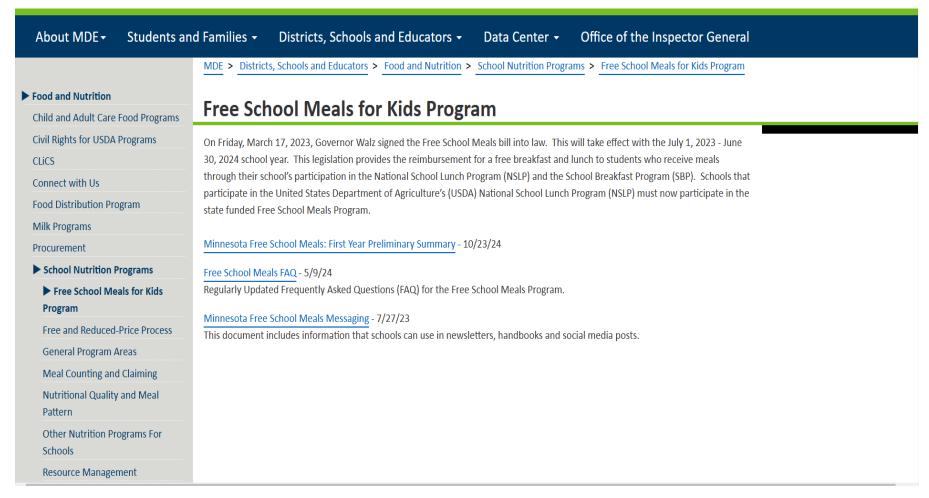


More reimbursement going to schools throughout the state



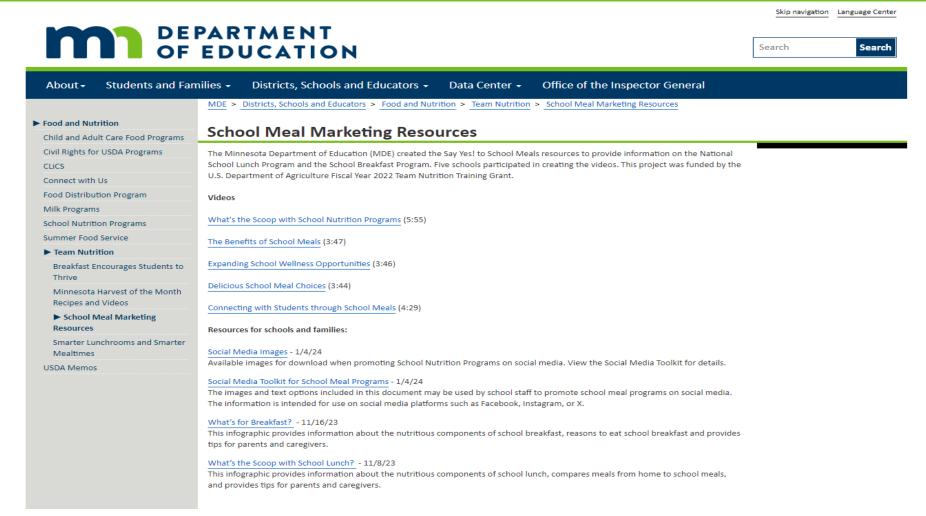
Positive stories and communication about school nutrition

MN-FSM Frequently Asked Questions



https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/FNS/SNP/free/

Say Yes! To School Meals



https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/FNS/Team/smm/

Farm to School and Early Care

What is Farm to School and Early Care?

- Farm to School connects Minnesota farmers and kids by serving local food in students' meals and teaching them about local agriculture in educational activities.
- Farm to School is funded through a Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI)
 Program grant from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MS 41A.12)
- Farm to School projects are very diverse and can look different depending on the communities doing them. They include at least one of these three core strategies:
 - Local purchasing: Local foods are purchased, promoted and served in the cafeteria or at mealtimes, as a snack or in classroom taste-tests.
 - **Education**: Students participate in educational activities related to agriculture, food, health and nutrition.
 - School gardens: Students engage in hands-on, experiential learning through gardening.

Farm to School and Early Care

Benefits of Farm to School and Early Care

- Good for Kids
- Good for Farmers
- Good for Communities



Thank you

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