

Child Nutrition Services



Overview of our Department

Child Nutrition Services serves about 7,200 total lunches per day to all students at 10 sites. We participate and comply with National School Lunch Program regulations to serve healthy and quality meals. Prior Lake High School continues to remain off of the program to better meet the nutritional needs of our active high school students.

We are inspected twice per year by the State Health Department and once every 3 years by the Minnesota Department of Education for compliance. We are federally funded at all our schools, with the exception of Prior Lake High School, and are a self-sustaining department meaning we do not use money from the general fund to operate.

Per school board decision, Prior Lake High School went off the federal meal program in May of 2015. The main purpose was so that we could better meet the nutritional needs of our students with larger portion sizes. We continue to follow many of the same healthy guidelines such serving low-fat meals along with fruits, vegetables, and milk daily. Since being off the program, more students now participate in the lunch program and student satisfaction survey scores have improved.

Our purpose is to provide nutritious meals to students to help them achieve their full potential. We foster a healthy learning environment at all schools through offerings, messaging and programs. Our current initiatives include:

- Increasing local products on our menus through partnerships with Wozupi Tribal gardens in Shakopee, Ferndale Farms and Thousand Hills Cattle Company in Cannon Falls, and Thompson's Orchard in Lakeville.
- Providing nutrition education to students through weekly taste testing of fruits and vegetables.
- Increase the amount of scratch recipes in our menus as well as sourcing foods with "cleaner" labels.
- Working with student nutrition teams within district to gain student input on menus.
- Assisting schools with implementing school gardens

Impact of Increased Growth

The Increased growth impact has been most evident at Prior Lake High School, Westwood, Edgewood/LODL, and Twin Oaks Middle School:

1. Prior Lake High School: Serves approximately 2,400 students daily from the Laker Marketplace cafeteria and the Lake House Café. To accommodate the growing population of students, lunch starts as early as 10:08am and ends at 12:51pm. We have 4 lunch periods and in one lunch alone we have 700 students coming through in a 30 minute period.

Impact- Students are waiting in long lines which leaves them little time left to eat. Feedback from students has been mainly around frustration with not having enough time to eat due to a crowded lunch room. Studies show that students who have less than 20 minutes to eat, consume less food especially fruits and vegetables. They tend to choose foods that can be consumed quickly and require less “chew time” which are often foods that tend to be more processed. We will be adding a remote serving line at the entrance of the high school to help accommodate more students for the short term. MN Dept. of Health is allowing this only as a temporary solution and is to be revisited at the end of this year. As student enrollment increases in the upcoming years, this overcrowding issue will continue to become an even larger and we predict more students will not be able to participate in the lunch program. As we add more serving areas to serve more students, our kitchen preparation and storage footprint has not expanded to meet the growing needs. We have now more employees and food flowing through. We are limited as to what we can menu due to the size of the kitchen and space for equipment and storage.

2.) Westwood/Edgewood: Up until 2015, Westwood and Edgewood shared a cafeteria. In 2015, multipurpose room at Edgewood was converted into a temporary cafeteria to better meet student needs and increase classroom instruction time. In 2017-18 there will be at least 80 more students at Edgewood/LODL. This will push serving times most likely to 11:15 and last lunch served at 12:45.

Impact- The earlier and later serving times are not ideal for students due to the late start time of school; pushing lunch to less than 2 hours after they arrive at school. The MN Dept. of Health is only allowing us to serve at Edgewood/LODL as a temporary solution due to food code.

3.) Twin Oaks Middle School prepares approximately meals per day (includes ala carte). TOMS has to split the serving area into 2 areas: ala carte and main serving line.

Impact-This forces kids who can and choose to buy ala carte, to go through 2 separated serving areas which gives them less time to eat. We also have additional labor and less efficiency due to setup and physical footprint. We have had to add additional labor hours to accommodate the lack of space and configuration of the serving area and kitchen. Our limited storage and prep area does limit our ability to expand our menu to students.