



Minnesota School Nutrition Association Releases 2024 Position Paper Requesting Support for School Meals

Minneapolis, MN (February 5, 2024) - The Minnesota School Nutrition Association (MSNA) released its [2024 Position Paper](#) urging state and school officials continued partnership with school nutrition professionals. The Association, which represents 3,000+ school nutrition professionals across the state, is requesting increased support for Minnesota school meal programs as they nourish more students following the implementation of the MN Free School Meals Program in SY 23/24. In particular, the Paper addresses the need for all students to have adequate seat time to consume lunch, calls for a milk reimbursement to ensure all students have access to a free serving of milk outside of those choosing a reimbursable meal, and requests funding to eliminate school meal debt.

"As expected, implementing the Free School Meals Program has seen widespread success in ensuring students are nourished and ready to learn, with increased student participation in breakfast and lunch programs," said Michele Hawkinson, MSNA President and Food Service Director for Tracy Area Schools. "The positive outcome of feeding more students yields additional operational requirements and considerations."

With consideration for schools' unique operational and service factors, allotting ample time once a student is seated with their meal is crucial for them to maximize nutritional benefits of complete, balanced school lunches and lessen the amount of uneaten food being thrown away. MSNA supports requirements to ensure all students have a minimum 15 minutes of actual seat time within the lunch period to consume meals and reduce food waste.

Additionally, students should have equal access to a free serving of milk stand-alone during school meal service if they bring a meal from home. MSNA is requesting the state reimburse schools 50 cents per one serving of milk provided to students who otherwise do not choose a reimbursable meal.

Finally, MSNA requests a one-time infusion of state funds provided to Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) for school nutrition programs to apply for to retire old meal debts. Alleviating accrued unpaid meal debt will relieve the burden on families that also threatens school district budgets.

For more information and to read the [2024 Position Paper](#), visit mnsna.org.

About the Minnesota School Nutrition Association

The Minnesota School Nutrition Association (MSNA), founded in 1956 as a state-wide association with local chapters, is a non-profit association of over 2,500 members who work to ensure that all children have access to healthy meals and nutrition education in Minnesota. For more information about MSNA and upcoming events, please visit www.mnsna.org.