



Minnesota School Nutrition Association Releases Position Paper in Support of Minnesota Free School Meals

January 13, 2025 - The Minnesota School Nutrition Association (MSNA) is requesting support and collaboration for school meal programs as they continue serving more lunches and breakfasts under the MN Free School Meals Program. The Association, representing 3,000+ school nutrition professionals across the state, released its [2025 Position Paper](#) outlining priorities to ensure continued success in nourishing students with balanced school meals that contribute to academic success and health.

In particular, the Paper seeks to preserve the integrity of school nutrition funds by ensuring only expenses directly associated with serving school meals are allowed under Fund 2. Already covering many indirect costs related to serving meals, these funds are critical to address increasing costs of continued menu improvements and labor.

"Financially self-sufficient school nutrition programs must be able to reinvest funds to ensure students continued access to appealing, nutritious foods and to preserve long-term meal program sustainability," said Emily Malone, MSNA President and Child Nutrition Services Director for Prior Lake - Savage Area Schools.

The Paper also reiterates the need for all students to have adequate seat time to consume lunch, a priority outlined in SY 23/24 that remains to be addressed.

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.

MSNA also warns about the infeasibility of additional state-imposed nutrition rules for school meals, already heavily regulated by USDA. Research shows school meals are the healthiest meals American children eat, *current* federal standards require meals meet calorie, sodium and fat limits and offer students fruits, vegetables, whole grains and entrees with lean proteins. Schools must also meet forthcoming USDA final rule requirements being phased in starting July 2025 with new limits on added sugar and additional limits on sodium in 2027.

“Additional state-imposed rules create costly and complex mandates that risk many unintended negative consequences; we urge support and collaboration to build on our collective successes,” added Malone.

For more information and to read the [2025 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 3,000 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.