



Feeding Bodies. Fueling Minds.™

2025 Position Paper

As the dedicated professionals planning, preparing and serving healthy free meals to nourish students, MSNA requests state and school district officials continue working in partnership with each other and nutrition professionals to ensure quality school meal experiences are available to all Minnesota students.

As expected, implementing Minnesota's Free School Meals Program has resulted in increased student participation in breakfast and lunch programs. The positive outcome of feeding more students yields additional operational requirements and considerations, as such, MSNA shares the following requests:

Preserve the integrity of the nutrition account (Fund 2):

Legislation passed in 2024 provides flexibility for school districts to use surpluses in the nutrition account for costs directly associated with providing school meals, including cafeteria chairs and tables. Expanding allowable uses to include remodeling negatively impacts the nutrition account from covering meal plan improvements and cafeteria labor costs, all of which are experiencing inflationary pressures.

Avoid state-imposed meal pattern mandates:

School meals are already heavily regulated by USDA. Imposing state nutrition standards would add a severe layer of complexity and cost, making the program financially unfeasible for schools and unworkable for industry partners as they develop menu items to meet new federal requirements.

Require a 15-minute minimum for individual student seat time in the cafeteria:

Students and families consistently share their experience that the current allotted time for lunch is insufficient for students to comfortably consume meals. 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 the nutritional benefits of complete, balanced school lunches.

Ample seat time lessens the amount of uneaten food being thrown away. Adequate nutrition and social breaks support students' physical and mental well-being, contributing significantly to overall academic performance. **MSNA supports formal inclusion of cafeteria time in the calculations for student instruction time.**

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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.