



Arlington
Public
Schools



Food & Nutrition Services BRIEFING REPORT

APRIL 2021



FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES

The Food and Nutrition Services department is a self-supporting \$9.1 million business. Over 150 food service professionals take pride in serving 18,000 customers daily at 34 schools and satellite centers.

The food service program, as an extension of the educational programs in the schools, is operated under the federally-funded National School Lunch Act and Child Nutrition Act.

MAJOR SERVICES PROVIDED

- administering the school breakfast and lunch programs
- processing, verifying and maintaining the federal free and reduced meal program, including PEBT verification
- creating menus that meet all federal nutrition standards
- allowing and monitoring all online meal payments and accounts

BRIGHT SPOTS

When schools closed on March 13, 2020, the Food and Nutrition Services staff quickly pivoted to a grab and go meal service at two locations. Since that time, we have grown to 32 sites including bus drops and have served more than 2 million meals. We are grateful for the flexibility and dedication of the entire staff.

Within days of the emergency closure we safely and responsibly managed our food inventory to maximize the financial integrity of our program. During this process, we also donated food to AFAC and to the Chefs Feeding Families program in Arlington.

We were invited to join the Cooperative for a Hunger Free Arlington in May. This was a wonderful opportunity to collaborate with the county to address the ongoing food insecurity issues within the community. The county has now created a position to spearhead this important work of which we are proud to be a part.

We continue to be committed to serving local produce as often as possible. During the

pandemic, through our continued partnership with Kilmer Orchard, we utilized 100% of our local produce allocation. We served 4,306 cases of local apples, cucumbers, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums and pumpkins.

On February 4, 2021, we offered shelf-stable snow day meal kits to families. The kits included enough food for three days of breakfasts and lunches. Over 3,100 families took advantage of these meals. We have also served additional meals to cover families during school holidays.

Food and Nutrition Services Director Amy Maclosky was appointed to serve on the DOE Food Services Advisory Council for a term of two years and to represent our district on the public policy and legislative committee for the Virginia School Nutrition Association.

WHAT WE LEARNED

With determination, hard work, and a little creativity, we learned we could quickly reinvent our serving model and continue to meet the needs of our students while managing a fiscally sound program. The pandemic has allowed us to see that support services plays a vital and integral role in the overall health and wellbeing of our students and impacts their educational success.

MOVING FORWARD

We will continue to focus on meeting the needs of our students while we plan for summer school and beyond. Our commitment and passion to improve the food we serve to our students by using local products, cooking more freshly prepared meals, and focusing on farm-to-school learning opportunities will continue to be our highest priority.



DATA THAT PROVIDES INSIGHT

A new survey from the School Nutrition Association (SNA) reveals the severe financial toll on school meal programs as they adapt to safely meet the nutritional needs of students during the pandemic. Fifty-four percent of responding school districts reported a financial loss in School Year (SY) 2019-20 and a harrowing 62% anticipate a loss this school year, with an additional 28% of respondents unsure of what to expect.

Among the 844 districts that reported their SY 2019-20 losses, the median loss was \$150,000, however districts with an enrollment of 25,000+ saw a median net loss of \$2.3 million. Total combined losses exceeded \$483.5 million.

During this challenging time, we continue to be self-supporting. We have implemented a variety of strategies to continue to manage our fund responsibly. The best examples of this are quickly adopting USDA waivers and planning meal service to meet the needs of our community, adapting our menus and utilizing our inventory, and carefully managing our workforce while providing every staff member an opportunity to continue to work.

Monthly Meal Participation, March 2020-February 2021

