

Policy 3550: Food Service/Child Nutrition Program

Status: ADOPTED

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CSBA NOTE: The following optional policy may be revised to reflect district practice. Education Code 49501.5, as amended by SB 348 (Ch. 600, Statutes of 2023), requires districts, during each school day, to make available, free of charge, one nutritionally adequate breakfast and one nutritiously adequate lunch to any student who requests a meal, regardless of the student's eligibility for a federally funded free or reduced-price meal. However, pursuant to Education Code 49431, as amended by AB 95 (Ch. 318, Statutes of 2023), a school is not prohibited from selling an additional nutritiously adequate meal that qualifies for federal reimbursement from the same meal service to a student who has been provided a free meal.

In order to receive reimbursements for the meals, a district is required to be approved for participation in the National School Lunch Program (42 USC 1751-1769j) or the School Breakfast Program (42 USC 1773). Additionally, pursuant to Education Code 49531, as amended by SB 348, a district must comply with state and federal guidelines or regulations in order to be eligible for state meal reimbursement. See BP/AR 3552 - Summer Meal Program, AR 5148 - Child Care and Development, and AR 5148.2 - Before/After School Programs for nutrition requirements pertaining to those programs. For food sales outside the district's food service program (e.g., by student and adult organizations, through vending machines, or at student stores), see BP/AR 3554 - Other Food Sales.

Pursuant to Education Code 49495, the California Department of Education (CDE) has developed guidance, "Breakfast and Snacks for Nonschoolaged Children," available on its website, which provides information on the allowability and options for offering nonschoolaged children breakfast or a morning snack at a school site that serves any of grades K-6.

The Governing Board recognizes that adequate, nourishing food is essential to student health and well-being, development, and ability to learn. The Superintendent or designee shall develop strategies to increase students' access to and participation in the district's food service programs and maintain fiscal integrity of the programs in accordance with law.

CSBA NOTE: Education Code 49501.5, as amended by SB 348, requires that a nutritionally adequate breakfast and lunch be made available to any student who requests a meal regardless of the student's eligibility for a free or reduced-price meal. However, the district still must determine student eligibility for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program in order to be reimbursed for such meals, as the funds provided under the California Universal Meal Program are meant to supplement, not supplant, federal funds.

Additionally, pursuant to Education Code 49501.5, as amended by SB 348, if a district offers independent study, the district must make available a nutritionally adequate breakfast and lunch on any school day that a student is scheduled for educational activities, as defined in Education Code 49010, lasting two or more hours, at a school site, resource center, meeting space, or other satellite facility.

Each school day, a nutritionally adequate breakfast and lunch shall be made available at no cost to any student who requests a meal, including a student enrolled in an independent study program on any school day in which the student is scheduled for in-person educational activities of two or more hours. A nutritionally adequate breakfast or lunch is one that qualifies for reimbursement under the most current meal pattern for the federal School Breakfast Program or National School Lunch Program.

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 49431, as amended by SB 95, a school is not prohibited from selling an additional nutritiously adequate meal that qualifies for federal reimbursement from the same meal service to a student who has already been provided a free meal.

After a student has been provided a school meal at no cost, the district may sell the student the entrée from an additional nutritiously adequate meal that qualifies for federal reimbursement, from the same meal service. (Education Code 49431)

Foods and beverages available through the district's food service program shall:

1. Be carefully selected so as to contribute to students' nutritional well-being and the prevention of disease

CSBA NOTE: 42 USC 1758b mandates each district participating in the National School Lunch Program (42 USC 1751-1769j) or any program in the Child Nutrition Act (42 USC 1771-1791), including the School Breakfast Program, to adopt a districtwide school wellness policy which includes nutrition guidelines for all foods available on school campuses; see BP 5030 - Student Wellness for language fulfilling this mandate. In

addition, Education Code 49501.5 requires that meals provided under the California Universal Meals Program qualify for federal reimbursement. Also see the accompanying administrative regulation for state and federal legal requirements pertaining to nutrition standards.

2. Meet or exceed nutrition standards specified in law
3. Be prepared in ways that will appeal to students, retain nutritive quality, and foster lifelong healthful eating habits
4. Be served in age-appropriate portions

CSBA NOTE: The following paragraph is optional and may be revised to reflect district practice. In its, "Food and Nutrition Services Instruction 113-1," the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) states that a district must put in place a public notification system or grassroots effort to inform applicants, participants, and potentially eligible individuals of program availability, rights and responsibilities, and nondiscrimination policy related to federally funded nutrition programs.

At the beginning of each school year, the Superintendent or designee shall communicate information related to the district's food service programs to the public through available means, including, but not limited to, the district's website, social media, flyers, and school publications.

CSBA NOTE: The following optional paragraph may be revised to reflect district practice. Grant funding may be available through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (42 USC 1769a) to provide elementary students with a variety of free fresh fruits and vegetables throughout the school day as a supplement to school breakfast and lunch programs. Eligible schools are those that operate the National School Lunch Program and have 50 percent or more of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

Additionally, SB 114 (Ch. 48, Statutes of 2023) allocates funds for eligible districts which may be expended on kitchen infrastructure upgrades and implementing any of the following school food best practices: (1) procuring California-grown or produced, sustainably grown, or whole or minimally processed foods to support equity in procurement practices, (2) using California-grown, whole or minimally processed foods in plant-based or restricted diet meals, (3) procuring plant-based or restricted diet food options, and/or (4) freshly preparing meals onsite. Districts that do not receive the above funding are nonetheless encouraged to follow these school food best practices. In addition, grant funding may be available from the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) California Farm to School Incubator Grant, which includes a transitional kindergarten-12 Procurement and Education Grant for districts to procure California grown or produced, whole or minimally processed foods for incorporation into school meals and engage students in hands-on food education opportunities. See BP/AR 3551 - Food Service Operations/Cafeteria Fund for information regarding procurement.

The district's food service program shall give priority to serving freshly prepared onsite meals, using whole or minimally processed sustainable foods which are locally grown or produced, including fresh fruits and vegetables, and providing plant-based or restricted diet food options for students.

CSBA NOTE: Both state and federal law support the concept of using locally grown and/or organic produce in school cafeterias. Consistent with the state meal mandate, the Instructional School Gardens Program, established pursuant to Education Code 51795-51798, encourages the creation of school gardens as a means of providing children an opportunity to learn to make healthier food choices. Pursuant to Education Code 51798, a district that operates a school garden may sell produce grown in the school garden, regardless of whether the school participates in the Instructional School Gardens Program, if the district complies with applicable federal, state, and local health and safety requirements for the production, processing, and distribution of the produce. For more information about the benefits of farm to school programs, including the increase in student fruit and vegetable consumption associated with these programs, see CDFA's 2022 publication, "Planting the Seed: Farm to School Roadmap for Success." In addition, 42 USC 1769 permits a high poverty school (schools with 50 percent or more students eligible for free and/or reduced-price meals) that runs a community garden to use produce from the garden to supplement food provided at the school. Thus, such use is allowable provided the foods comply with health and sanitation requirements as well as applicable nutrition standards.

District schools are encouraged to establish school gardens and/or farm-to-school projects to increase the availability of safe, fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables for school meals, positively impact students' knowledge related to food and nutrition, support the district's nutrition education program, and increase students' consumption of these foods and participation in school meals.

CSBA NOTE: The following paragraph is optional. Education Code 49534 authorizes nutrition education programs to coordinate classroom instruction with the food service program and be of sufficient variety and flexibility to meet

the needs of students in the district.

To the extent possible, the school meal program shall be coordinated with the nutrition education program, instructional program for teachers, parents/guardians and food service employees, available community resources, and other related district programs.

To encourage student participation in school meal programs, schools may offer multiple choices of food items within a meal service, provided all food items meet nutrition standards and all students are given an opportunity to select any food item.

The Superintendent or designee may invite students and parents/guardians to participate in the selection of foods of good nutritional quality for school menus.

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 49501.5, as amended by SB 348, students must be provided adequate time to eat, as determined by the district in consideration of the recommendations provided by CDE on or before June 30, 2025.

Students shall be allowed adequate time and space to eat meals. (Education Code 49501.5)

To the extent possible, school, recess, and transportation schedules shall be designed to promote participation in school meal programs.

The Superintendent or designee shall periodically review the adequacy of school cafeterias and facilities for food preparation and consumption.

CSBA NOTE: The district's food service program is subject to the food safety standards in the California Retail Food Code (Health and Safety Code 113700-114437). In addition, 42 USC 1758 and 7 CFR 210.13 and 220.7 require all schools participating in the National School Lunch and/or Breakfast Program to implement a food safety program for the storage, preparation, and service of school meals. See the accompanying administrative regulation for requirements of the food safety program.

In accordance with law, the Superintendent or designee shall develop and maintain a food safety program in order to reduce the risk of foodborne hazards at each step of the food preparation and service process.

CSBA NOTE: The following optional paragraph may be revised to reflect program evaluation indicators and reporting schedules determined by the district. Districts that participate in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Seamless Summer Feeding Option, and/or other federal meal program are subject to a state Administrative Review of district compliance with requirements for federal meal programs, including, but not limited to, a review of nutritional quality, meal patterns, provision of drinking water, school meal environment, and food safety. Each district is reviewed at least once every three years. Also see BP 3551 - Food Service Operations/Cafeteria Fund. However, Education Code 49431, 49431.2, and 49431.5 express legislative intent that the Governing Board annually review the district's compliance with nutrition standards for foods sold outside the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program.

Pursuant to USDA's, "Food and Nutrition Services Instruction 113-1," any district participating in federal meal programs must collect racial and ethnic data on potentially eligible populations, applicants, and program participants; see BP 3555 - Nutrition Program Compliance.

The Superintendent or designee shall annually report to the Board on student participation in the district's nutrition programs and the extent to which the district's food service program meets state and federal nutrition standards for foods and beverages. In addition, the Superintendent or designee shall provide all necessary and available documentation required for the Administrative Review conducted by the California Department of Education (CDE) to ensure the food service program's compliance with federal requirements related to nutrition standards, meal patterns, provision of drinking water, school meal environment, food safety, and other areas as required by CDE.

Policy Reference Disclaimer: These references are not intended to be part of the policy itself, nor do they indicate the basis or authority for the board to enact this policy. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

State References

5 CCR 15510
5 CCR 15530-15535
5 CCR 15550-15565

Description

[Mandatory meals for needy students](#)
[Nutrition education](#)
[School lunch and breakfast programs](#)

5 CCR 15575-15578	Requirements for foods and beverages outside the federal meals program
Ed. Code 35182.5	Contracts for advertising
Ed. Code 38080-38103	Cafeteria; establishment and use
Ed. Code 45103.5	Contracts for management consulting services; restrictions
Ed. Code 48432.3	Voluntary enrollment in continuation education
Ed. Code 49430-49434	Pupil Nutrition, Health, and Achievement Act of 2001
Ed. Code 49490-49494	School breakfast and lunch programs
Ed. Code 49501.5-49506	School meals
Ed. Code 49510-49520	Nutrition
Ed. Code 49530-49536	Child Nutrition Act
Ed. Code 49540-49546	Child care food program
Ed. Code 49547-49548.3	Comprehensive nutrition services
Ed. Code 49550.3-49562	Meals for needy students
Ed. Code 49570	National School Lunch Act
Ed. Code 51795-51798	School instructional gardens
H&S Code 113700-114437	California Retail Food Code; sanitation and safety requirements

Federal References

42 USC 1751-1769j	School Lunch Program
42 USC 1758b	Local wellness policy
42 USC 1761	Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Feeding Option
42 USC 1769a	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
42 USC 1771-1793	Child Nutrition Act
42 USC 1772	Special Milk Program
42 USC 1773	School Breakfast Program
7 CFR 210.1-210.33	National School Lunch Program
7 CFR 215.1-215.18	Special Milk Program
7 CFR 220.2-220.22	National School Breakfast Program
7 CFR 245.1-245.13	Eligibility for free and reduced-price meals and free milk

Management Resources References

California Department of Education Publication	Healthy Children Ready to Learn, 2006
California Department of Education Publication	Professional Standards in the School Nutrition Programs, Management Bulletin SNP-13-2020, Updated January 2022
California Department of Food and Agriculture Pub	Planting the Seed: Farm to School Roadmap for Success, February 2022
California Project Lean Publication	Policy in Action: A Guide to Implementing Your Local School Wellness Policy, October 2006
CSBA Publication	Monitoring for Success: A Guide for Assessing and Strengthening Student Wellness Policies, 2012
CSBA Publication	Monitoring for Success: Student Wellness Policy Implementation Monitoring Report and Guide, 2008
CSBA Publication	Nutrition Standards for Schools: Implications for Student Wellness, Policy Brief, October 2007

CSBA Publication	Building Healthy Communities: A School Leader's Guide to Collaboration and Community Engagement, 2009
CSBA Publication	Student Wellness: A Healthy Food and Physical Activity Policy Resource Guide, April 2006
U.S. Department of Agriculture Publication	School Breakfast Toolkit
U.S. Department of Agriculture Publication	Civil Rights Compliance and Enforcement - Nutrition Programs and Activities, FNS Instruction 113-1, November 2005
U.S. Department of Agriculture Publication	Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020
U.S. Department of Agriculture Publication	Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs, May 2022
U.S. Department of Agriculture Publication	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program: Handbook for Schools, December 2010
U.S. Department of Agriculture Publication	Guidance for School Food Authorities: Developing a School Food Safety Program Based on the Process Approach to HACCP Principles, June 2005
Website	California Department of Food and Agriculture, Office of Farm to Fork
Website	CSBA District and County Office of Education Legal Services
Website	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service
Website	California Farm Bureau Federation
Website	Nourish California
Website	California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition)
Website	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Website	California School Nutrition Association
Website	California Department of Education, School Nutrition
Website	National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity
Website	California Department of Public Health
Website	California Healthy Kids Resource Center
Website	CSBA

Cross References

	Description
0500	Accountability
1312.4	Williams Uniform Complaint Procedures
1312.4-E(1)	Williams Uniform Complaint Procedures
1312.4-E(2)	Williams Uniform Complaint Procedures
1325	Advertising And Promotion
1340	Access To District Records
1340	Access To District Records
3000	Concepts And Roles
3260	Fees And Charges
3260	Fees And Charges
3510	Green School Operations
3514	Environmental Safety
3514	Environmental Safety
3517	Facilities Inspection
3517-E(1)	Facilities Inspection
3551	Food Service Operations/Cafeteria Fund

3551	Food Service Operations/Cafeteria Fund
3552	Summer Meal Program
3552	Summer Meal Program
3553	Free And Reduced Price Meals
3553	Free And Reduced Price Meals
3554	Other Food Sales
3554	Other Food Sales
3555	Nutrition Program Compliance
3555-E(1)	Nutrition Program Compliance
3580	District Records
3580	District Records
4131	Staff Development
4141.6	Concerted Action/Work Stoppage
4141.6	Concerted Action/Work Stoppage
4231	Staff Development
4241.6	Concerted Action/Work Stoppage
4241.6	Concerted Action/Work Stoppage
5030	Student Wellness
5141.27	Food Allergies/Special Dietary Needs
5141.27	Food Allergies/Special Dietary Needs
5145.6	Parent/Guardian Notifications
5145.6-E(1)	Parent/Guardian Notifications
5148	Child Care And Development
5148	Child Care And Development
5148.2	Before/After School Programs
5148.2	Before/After School Programs
5148.3	Preschool/Early Childhood Education
5148.3	Preschool/Early Childhood Education
6142.8	Comprehensive Health Education
6142.8	Comprehensive Health Education
6173	Education For Homeless Children
6173	Education For Homeless Children
6173-E(1)	Education For Homeless Children
6173-E(2)	Education For Homeless Children
6176	Weekend/Saturday Classes
7110	Facilities Master Plan