

September 2, 2020

Dear (Win-E-Mac) Families,

Many of you may have heard of the USDA's announcement earlier this week that free meals will be available again for all school children. In their announcement, USDA states "The flexibilities allow summer meal program operators to continue serving free meals to all children into the fall months." And "based upon the April data we currently have available, Food & Nutrition Services projects that it could offer this extension, contingent on funding, for the remaining months of 2020."

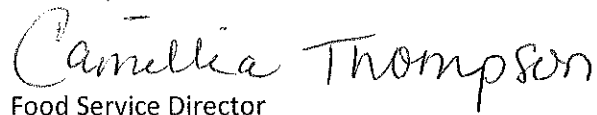
At this time, we are waiting for guidance from Minnesota Department of Education on whether our school district is eligible for free meals and if so, what the procedure is to begin receiving free meals for our students. MDE's only guidance to date is that we should continue planning to serve meals to our students under the National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program. As of now, your student will be charged for meals based on your income eligibility level.

If our district is eligible for free student meals, we will start them as soon as possible. Please keep in mind that if we do have access to free student meals, those free meals will only extend through December 2020 or possibly before that if USDA funding runs out. Once funding runs out, our district will be required to return to serving meals under the National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program and your student will be charged accordingly.

***We do ask all of you to fill out the free/reduced eligibility form whether student meals are free for a time or not. This eligibility form is critical not only to our food service program funding, but could also impact whether we receive USDA equipment grants as well as other school grants, technology funding, Home internet service through Garden Valley Telephone, scholarships, and funding. The more free/reduced students we have, the better we can access benefits and additional dollars for all of our students.***

As soon as we have news as to our next steps, we will be in contact with all of you. In the meantime, we ask your patience as we navigate this bend in the road to the start of our school year.

Sincerely,

Camellia Thompson

Food Service Director