

Novato Unified School District

NUSD Food And Nutrition Services Policy Roadmap

"Healthy students not only excel academically but are more likely to be positively engaged in social, community, and extracurricular activities. The benefits of supporting student health and wellness are far-reaching..."

Tom Torlakson, State of California Superintendent of Public Instruction

Food and Nutrition Services Policy Roadmap is a supplement to the NUSD Student Wellness Policy, focusing the Department's practices to support NUSD in creating a healthy school environment.

Healthy School Environment

In a healthy school environment students, parents, staff, administration and community support the student wellness policy, nutrition education and school meals programs with the shared values of healthy eating, active living and sustainable environmental practices. A healthy school environment implements the policies and practices consistently throughout the day, every day, and in schools, before and after school programs, early childhood programs, and communities. Healthy bodies and brains translate into improved academic performance and attendance. It develops students that make informed healthy choices, establishing a positive example for the health and longevity of the community and the environment. A healthy school environment is a commitment.

FANS Role in a Healthy School Environment

Important guidelines are in place for a healthy school environment and are established in the NUSD Wellness Policies. Playing a key role in executing many of the policies, the Department of Food and Nutrition Services and its school meals program serves the mental, physical, and social wellness of our students, schools, and local communities.

About FANS

- *We are one of the largest providers of food assistance in Novato, helping more than 35% of the student body have access to healthy food so that no child goes hungry.*
- *We supports Farm to School Programs that serve to educate and reinforce the healthy school environment.*
- *We purchase and serve fresh, healthy, minimally processed food. We choose to support the region's food growers, processors, and local economy that improves student nutrition*
- *Our operational policies take into consideration environmental impact*

Identified below are the initiatives and goals for the FANS department. It is through constant improvement of the quality and appeal of the meals that we will increase student participation and do our part to create a Healthy School Environment. We acknowledge that it is through our ongoing collaboration with Community Partners that we have the strongest impact on the mental, physical, and social wellness of our students, school and local communities.

FANS Standards

We serve.....

- Locally grown, seasonal, organic produce when possible
- Fresh fruits and vegetables or salad bar served daily
- Whole grains and minimally processed foods
- Plant-based protein sources available daily
- Meatless Monday (promoted since 2010)
- Low fat and reduced sugar foods
- Low sodium

- Low fat and fat free milk

We offer

- No Trans Fats
- No Red Meat (since 2008)
- No Soda (all schools), (since 2003)
- No Chocolate Milk (all schools), (since 2006)
- No Juice (in elementary schools), (since 2007)
- No Desserts (in elementary schools), (since 2003)

Nutritional information for all meals ([link to FANS](#))

FANS Initiatives

- **Cooking from Scratch:** By increasing the number and type of meals prepared completely or partially within the district's kitchens we reduce the reliance on pre-processed, packaged, and frozen food.
 - **Cooking from Scratch Goal:** a minimum of one entrée made from scratch in the district's kitchens daily.
- **Organic:** Increasing the availability of organic food, particularly produce, to the greatest degree possible.
 - **Organic Goal:** high priority organic produce identified as the "Dirty Dozen" by The Environmental Working Group. Ex: apples, celery, strawberries, peaches, spinach, nectarines, grapes, bell peppers, potatoes, blueberries, lettuce, kale and collard greens.
- **Wholesome Foods:** Ensuring that all food products served are as clean of pesticides and as wholesome as possible, by following the following guidelines:
 - **Produce Goal:** To offer produce that is pesticide free, minimally processed; locally or regionally sourced and organic when possible.
 - **Poultry and Pork Product Goals:** To offer poultry and pork products free from hormones, steroids and antibiotics, minimally processed, and when possible, fresh (not frozen)
 - **Plant-based Protein Goals:** Increase the menu selections using plant-based proteins.
 - **Milk and Other Dairy Products Goals:** To offer dairy products free from rGBH, rBHT, antibiotics, hormones; locally or regionally sourced and organic when possible.
 - **Grains and Grain-based Product Goals:** To offer fresh (not frozen), minimally processed, locally or regionally sourced and organic grains when possible.
 - **Minimally Processed Food Goals:** To the greatest extent possible, all foods will be free from artificial colors, flavors, sweeteners, preservatives, and thickeners.
 - **Sustainability Goals:** To the extent possible, all foods served will be grown and processed using sustainable practices and without the use of toxic chemicals.
- **Seasonal Foods:** Planning, to the extent possible, seasonal variations in the menu that are fresh, locally or regionally grown foods. The commitment to this will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of working with local growers, while helping students understand seasonality and the regional growing culture.
- **Meatless Monday:** Since 2008 we have served plant-based proteins only on the Monday weekly menu in all district schools to reduce the reliance on animal-based proteins and to eliminate the risks associated with contamination.
- **Summer Feeding Program:** Implementation begins in 2014
- **Feasibility Study of a Supper Program:** Beginning in the Fall of 2014
- **NUSD Wellness Policy, Food and Nutritional Guidelines:** Continued observance of the Food and Nutrition Guidelines established as in the Novato USD Wellness Policy, section 3554 AR Child Nutrition.

Healthy Living: Teaching & Learning

Experts recognize the strong connection of experiential learning, nutrition education and making healthy food choices. The District will partner annually with the Food and Nutrition Services Department to fund supplemental food and nutrition education. These activities connect students and families to local food through farm tours and gleaning, or visits by local farmers to school lunchrooms to talk about the seasonal produce and process of growing food. The resources to fund these events may come through grants, donations, or other community-based sources, and will be targeted at elementary school levels.

- **Farm to School Goal:** to fund at least two farm visits or similar field trips per year, and at least one producer visit per school per year.

Marketing and Communications

Critical to participation in the school meals program, FANS must have effective marketing and communication of the appealing healthy selections created in the FANS kitchens. Efforts to improve the freshness, quality and taste of offerings, increase local and regional purchasing, and build partnerships requires strong communication within the school and local communities. The following actions will help ensure the Food and Nutrition Services Department can accomplish this objective.

- **Food Service Operations Manager Goal:** Create a Food Service Operations Manager position to expand the duties and responsibilities of the Director of Food Services to include Nutrition and Wellness for educating students, teachers, parents, and school community members about the importance and appeal of growing, preparing, and eating fresh, local, seasonal food., physical activity and nutrition education. Food and Nutrition Services Director will find creative, innovative ways to excite and engage students in trying new foods and understanding the connection between food and health, wellness, and achievement.
- **Wellness Advocacy Goal:** Establish peer-to-peer nutrition and wellness advocacy groups in all schools (Student Nutrition Advisory Councils, or SNACS), to incorporate student input into and participation in effective school meals marketing and communications. Facilitate innovative, student-led, campaigns such as an "Eat Ours, Not Theirs" campaign greater attention to and participation in the meals program.
- **FANS Website Goal:** Expand the FANS website to include detailed information about menu offerings, producers and suppliers. Increasing the transparency of our food and operations will help build trust and increase engagement.
- **Signage Goal:** Create signage for the cafeterias that highlights local or regionally sourced products, particularly in the salad bar.
- **Student Involvement Goals:** Include students and parents in menu development via tastings, requests for suggested menu items, and written feedback solicited via surveys in lunchrooms.
- **Promotional Wellness Event Goals:** Offer samples of new or signature dishes prepared by the Food and Nutrition Services staff at school or community events, such as Back-to-School Nights or other widely-attended city gatherings. Participate in at least three such events per year.

Dining Experiences

A welcome, inviting eating atmosphere encourages participation in and enjoyment of school meals. Students should be given sufficient time to receive and eat their meal before going on to the next activity or back to the classroom. FANS encourages the following modifications to the school dining experience to increase participation:

- **Elementary Lunch Goal:** All elementary students should eat lunch following recess, limiting the impulse to exchange meal time for play time.
- **Middle and High School Lunch Goal:** Middle and high school students should be served lunch in "waves," reducing line size and waiting times for meal service.
- **Dining Time Goal:** Increase lunch periods from 35 to 45 minutes.

Wellness Policy and the Ambassador Wellness Committee

The school nutrition standards are guided by District Wellness Policy AR 3554.

The Ambassador Wellness Committee will collaborate with the Food and Nutrition Services Director to ensure that:

- The goals and rationale of this Roadmap are clearly communicated to all members the school community, including students, parents, teachers, and local citizens.
- A Healthy School Environment develops that supports the role of the school meals program.
- There is effective communication, implementation and support of the innovative and creative menus, recipes, and nutrition education.
- There will be assistance in the monitoring and evaluation of progress toward the goals outlined in this Roadmap.

FANS Wellness Ambassadors

- Serves healthy food and beverages in the cafeteria, classroom and at campus events
- Promotes healthy eating and active living by offering nutrition education at Cafe Tastings, School Wellness booths and P.E. Events
- Supports local, organic farms by participating in the Farm to School Gleaning Events
- Practices environmentally sustainable waste management that teaches students to conserve natural resources
- Supports school gardens that offer healthy food experiential learning opportunities on campus
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Monitoring Impact and Implementation

- **Implementation Plan Goal:** Create an implementation plan to outline specific action items, owners, and necessary funds to make progress on above goals.
- **Assessment Meeting Goal:** Establish a bi-monthly meeting consisting of the Food and Nutrition Services Director and other key personnel to assess progress, identify challenges, opportunities, and potential partners from within and outside the District.

Professional Development

The FANS Director recognizes that professional development opportunities ensure that FANS staff understand their role in promoting health and nutrition and enhances their professional expertise.

- The Department commits to at least 2 days of training per year for all Food and Nutrition Services staff. Training may be in food preparation, safe serving and handling, nutrition, budgeting, or other relevant topics.

Purchasing

Increasing the amount of fresh, seasonal, and sustainably grown produce and products from local and regional sources increases access to healthy, fresh food for all students while support our regional economy and our environment.

- **Local Grower, Processor and Supplier Goals:** Increase the number of local and regional growers, processors, and suppliers working with NUSD. Achieve at least 45% locally sourced products by 2015-2016, where local is defined as (ideally) within 25 miles (moving then to the nine Bay Area counties, and finally to within the state). The following steps will help achieve that target:
 - Find and developing long-term relationships with regional purveyors for USDA commodity foods (e.g., Petaluma Poultry for chicken products).
 - To the extent possible, partner with neighboring school districts to purchase collectively, increasing the opportunity to work with local suppliers and improving their economic incentives to work with schools.
 - Build and expand existing relationships with local suppliers and distributors featuring source-verified, local and regionally grown food (e.g., Marin Organic, Daylight Foods).
 - Collaborate with neighboring districts to share information and resources.

- Build on current pilot project testing contract produce production by local and regional farmers, expanding to at least 3-5 contract relationships by the 2015-2016 school year, for at least 3-5 different types of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Create and implement an Invitation for Bid process that clearly identifies desired criteria for all suppliers, including application of the USDA's Geographic Preference rule. Ensure that all suppliers are familiar with this bid language, that they provide written verification for sources when possible, and that the bid criteria are applied to all vendors during selection process.
 - Geographic Preference criteria will specify first priority given to suppliers within 25 miles, then within Bay Area, then within state.
- **Minimally Processed Food Goals:** Procuring as many items in a fresh, whole, un- or minimally processed state as possible, given resource constraints.
- **Cooking From Scratch Goals:** Undertaking a cost-benefit analysis of preparing select dishes from scratch, using minimally processed ingredients (sourced as locally as possible), versus procuring them in prepared, heat-and-serve versions. Analysis will be prioritized based on the feasibility of from-scratch production, desirability of dish among students, and with USDA Nutritional Guidelines (e.g., housemade pizzas, chilies, soups, burritos, enchiladas).

Note: In order to effect some of the above changes, modifications to the Department's cooking facilities will be needed. These are discussed in more detail below.

Waste Management

To ensure that the school meals program reduces waste and helps students understand the need to conserve natural resources, FANS will pursue the following actions:

- **Reduced Plastic Goals:** Build on current initiatives to reduce reliance on plastic and packaged food, serveware and beverages (including utensils and plastic water bottles). Reduce plastic purchases/waste by 25% by 2014-2015 school year.
- **Recyclable Packaging Goals:** To the extent possible, ensure that packaging containing schools meals is recyclable and/or compostable, and containers for recycling are provided at school sites.
- **Composting Goals:** Work with Facilities to study the feasibility and cost of adding compost bins to both lunchrooms and kitchens, and either a) creating compost for school gardens and/or b) having it picked up by a compost disposal service
 - Switching to compostable serveware is an important goal. However, compostable paper or plastic goods will not break down as designed unless they are separated and handled in a facility with the proper equipment and processes.
 - Composting and recycling may significantly reduce solid waste disposal costs. These savings should be tracked and savings rebated to the school or kitchen facility for use in furthering the waste-reduction and food programs.

Facilities

Upgrades to the District's cooking and storage facilities and equipment must be made for the procurement and production of raw, un- and lightly-processed foods, The following actions will accelerate the Department's transition to a meals program that incorporates more fresh, locally grown foods and increased on-site cooking.

- **Central Kitchen Goals:** Funding, design, and completion of a central kitchen facility that accommodates increased space for receiving, dry storage, cold storage, and food production. This space will enable the Department to prepare and serve a variety of Cooking-from-scratch foods, including popular items such as pizza and burritos, contributing to both increased participation and improved quality and nutrition of offered items.

- **School Site Kitchen Goals:** Complete renovations to individual school kitchens to enable on-site finishing, heating, serving and cleaning. At a minimum, each school should have working:
 - Service lines or windows (all students should be able to see food options)
 - Stovetop
 - Oven
 - Increased refrigeration space
 - Sinks for washing cooking equipment
 - A working hood

Each school cafeteria should also be supplied with a salad bar. (Currently, resource constraints on both equipment and labor prohibit salad bar service in many schools. All schools are, however, supplied with a fresh salad or sandwich option prepared daily in the district's central kitchen).

Finances

As the demographics of the NUSD district evolve, so do the budget and finances. To achieve the goals laid out in this policy, the district will need to ensure that participation rates among all students, and particularly those eligible for free and reduced price lunches, increase. This shift will require coordinated effort across the school community, within and outside the lunchroom. While improving the quality and appeal of the food offerings is critical, so is a Healthy School Environment that values and supports the school meals program. As this culture develops the following actions could improve student participation quickly:

- Consider making high schools "closed" campuses, limiting access to unhealthy foods purchased offsite, and encouraging participating in the school meals program
- Consider eliminating the reduced price category for school lunch, breakfast, and snacks, so that all low-income students have healthy food available at no cost
 - At a minimum, in schools with eligibility for free/reduced meals greater than 80%, enable all students to participate in the meals program at no cost.

While some of these policies may appear to add cost to the department budget, the increases in reimbursed participation may offset cost increases. Reimbursement dollars may then be used to fund the continued investment in food quality, staff, and equipment needed to maintain the quality, taste, and appeal of the school meals program.