

Healthy Meals for All

Priority 3	Improving Infrastructure, Operations, and Sustainability	Short Initiative:	All students enjoy healthy school meals with the appropriate space and amount of time to enjoy it.
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Overarching Goal

What is the outcome that this initiative seeks to achieve in five years?	All students will be provided with the opportunity to eat healthy meals in supportive spaces and with adequate time dedicated to nutritious habit-forming. All students in APS will also enjoy access to high-quality, healthy food choices and will contribute to improving food and nutrition programming.
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Responsible Department	Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations
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Summary

A summary of what we are trying to accomplish and why

One of the most beneficial early pandemic decisions of policymakers was fully subsidized meals for all children in the public schools across our nation. This decision immediately impacted families, particularly families from low-income backgrounds, and as noted in the Priority 3 Needs Assessment, participation in Arlington Public Schools' meals increased dramatically. In 2021, APS also opened up breakfast service for all students, serving breakfast at our schools for any students who arrive early to school.

With this dramatic increase in participation also comes the opportunity to reimagine our meals program and to ensure that all students are arriving in class well-nourished and ready to learn. This initiative outlines how APS will go about ensuring that all students are provided with healthy meal options, opportunities to learn about food and nutrition through their meal times at school, and opportunities to socialize, interact with peers, and enjoy meals while they are at school.

One challenge this initiative seeks to interrogate is the amount of time allotted to meals in APS. The breakfast program currently operates at different times at various schools and is supervised with different models at each school, perpetuating inconsistencies of student experience and family access to before-school care (Initiative 4.1). Furthermore, Arlington Public School students are scheduled 20 minutes for lunch each day. Elementary and middle school aged students and families frequently report that this is not enough time for the necessary nutritional and social-emotional benefits that healthy school lunch can provide. Currently, students report feeling rushed, skipping meals, or being unwilling to explore different food varieties, opting instead to go with what's quick and familiar. Current options on the APS menu, which are aligned with FDA regulations, are not always the most nutritious parts of their meals. Furthermore, some students and families have reported that lunch menus aren't culturally responsive to the many identities in our schools.

The objective of this initiative is to ensure that every student has access to quality, healthy school meals, and that time and space allotted support healthy eating and peer interaction. This effort seeks Increased engagement at school due to quality nutrition and break time where students can choose how to spend their time.

Major Milestones

These are the highest priority, most meaningful deliverables, and actions we must achieve to successfully arrive at the desired outcome from our current state.

Financial Impact provides amounts for the community to use as estimates in understanding the cost of undertaking these crucial initiatives. Figures represent the estimated amount that this work would cost in a given year. Annual budgets will implement this plan, which will at times lead to other services being changed and eliminated as we develop aligned budgets that account for the initiatives in this plan.

Major Milestones	<u>Year 1:</u> <u>2023-24</u>	<u>Year 2:</u> <u>2024-25</u>	<u>Year 3:</u> <u>2025-26</u>	<u>Year 4:</u> <u>2026-27</u>	<u>Year 5:</u> <u>2027-28</u>
Review menus & operations in order to enhance meal quality and variety in partnership with students and families	Develop evaluation criteria and data tracking system to assess meal quality and variety	Review lunch menu & operations and identify opportunities to enhance quality / nutrition through surveys and focus groups with families, students, and staff	Implement revised menus and operations based on ongoing feedback Revise feedback mechanisms as needed Review & adjust menu & operations (ongoing) for nutrition, participation, required personnel, and costs.		
Financial Impact	\$55,000	\$75,000	\$75,000 + TBD		
To Fund	Food Services Administrative Assistant	Adjusted menu options based on initial feedback	Staffing and additional costs determined by audit; all to be funded from food services enterprise fund.		
Assess spaces	Assess current	Implement space /	Review and adjust space / furniture as needed		

and furniture and create action plan for cafeteria improvements	spaces and usage rates; generate recommendations for consideration as part of Capital Planning process	furniture changes that are possible immediately Include recommendations for space and furniture adjustments in capital planning	Implement any planned capital/ facilities changes
Financial Impact	TBD		
To Fund	Space improvements and enhancements, furniture improvements for school meal spaces		
Review and adjust Mealtime Programming Across APS	Audit school lunch schedules, APS breakfast program, and expand breakfast program to begin at 7:30 at all schools.	Establish meal program partnerships with APS Sustainability Coordinator and Science Department to connect meal programs with student learning experiences. Use partnerships to inform planning. In bargaining and planning, consider adjustments to scheduling and timing of meals and expansion of programming.	
Financial Impact	\$12,000	TBD	
To Fund	Breakfast supervision (hourly)	TBD	

Key Metrics

These are metrics that can serve as strong indicators of performance and are directly representative of successful execution of the initiative.

Outcome metrics are the indicators that will be tracked whereas targets are the specific benchmarks to be achieved by specific deadlines.

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Outcome Metric 1	100% of lunches meet nutritional quality expectations set during year 2.				
Annual Benchmark	Establish baseline		Improve towards 100%		
Outcome Metric 3	When surveyed, students report an increasingly positive experience with school meals relative to the baseline established in the first two years. Participation in school meals also continues to increase.				
Annual Benchmark	Establish baseline and improvement goals		Improve relative to baseline		