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Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

December 5, 2024

() Action Required
Due date:
(X) Informational

BULLETIN NO. 070-24 Child Nutrition Services

TO: Educational Service District Superintendents
School District Superintendents
School District Business Managers
School District Food Service Supervisors
Administrators of Select Private Schools

FROM: Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: Open Public Comment for Seated Lunchtime Revisions through January 14

CONTACT: Elizabeth Beechler, Director of School Meal Programs
360-522-2103, elizabeth.beechler@k12.wa.us

Jessica Seale, State Initiative Program Specialist
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PURPOSE/BACKGROUND

The purpose of this bulletin is to inform you that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has initiated the rule-making process to address the amount of time students have to eat lunch. The proposed change to WAC 392-157-125 is now posted; public comment is open, and a public hearing is scheduled. Any requirements will not take effect until the 2025–2026 School Year or later.

BACKGROUND

The Washington State Auditor conducted a [Child Nutrition Performance Audit](#) to study lunchtime scheduling practices. This audit concluded that many Washington schools are falling short of the recommended best practice of providing students with 20 minutes of seated lunchtime. The audit recommended that OSPI consider requiring schools to provide students adequate seat time to eat as well as encourage and facilitate the best practice of offering recess before lunch.

INFORMATION AND DETAILS

Seated Lunch Duration

Seated lunch duration is the amount of time students have to eat their lunch after going through the lunch line and sitting down to eat, which is different than the total amount of time scheduled for lunch.

OSPI is proposing changes to [WAC 392-157-125](#) to better align with State Auditor's Office performance audit results, leading research, and national best practices by requiring a minimum seated lunchtime of twenty (20) minutes in K-12 public schools. Research shows that the way schools schedule lunch can significantly affect students' eating habits. Students who have more time to eat their lunch consume more nutritious food and waste less food.

Recess Before Lunch

Scheduling recess before lunch has many of the same benefits as longer seated lunchtime. Students who have recess before lunch also eat healthier, waste less food, and display better overall behavior. OSPI is not requiring recess before lunch at this time; however, recess should be scheduled before lunch whenever possible. See [B025-24 Recess Requirements for School Year \(SY\) 2024-2025 and Seated Lunch Duration](#) for more information.

PUBLIC REVIEW AND FEEDBACK

Public comment to the proposed changes is open through January 14, 2025. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and community members are encouraged to review the drafts and provide comments.

OSPI will host a public hearing to provide a summary of proposed rule changes and an opportunity for comments. Please share the following information with staff, colleagues, and families to support awareness and engagement:

- [Link to Public Hearing, January 14, 2025, 11:00 AM-12:00 PM \(PST\)](#)
- [CR-102: 392-157-125 Child Nutrition \(20-min Seated Lunchtime\)](#)

Resources

- [Performance Audit Report Summary](#) (Two-pager)
- [YouTube Video about Performance Audit](#)
- Performance Audit: [Schools Can Influence Student Eating Habits Through Lunch Scheduling Practices | Office of the Washington State Auditor](#)
- Reduction in Food Waste: [Use Food Well Washington Plan](#) (Department of Ecology)

To assist program operators with implementation, OSPI will create a Seated Lunchtime Toolkit which will include strategies, resources, and guidance around how to reach this important goal.

INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

For questions regarding this bulletin, please contact Elizabeth Beechler, Director of School Meals, at 360-522-2103 or email elizabeth.beechler@k12.wa.us. The OSPI TTY number is 360-664-3631.

This bulletin is also available on the [Bulletins](#) page of the OSPI website.

Tennille Jeffries-Simmons
Chief of Staff

Leanne Eko
Chief Nutrition Officer
Child Nutrition Services

CR:ln

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