



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Status of School Food Service Programs

2022

Authorizing Legislation: Senate Bill 5693 (2022) Sec. 508 (2) [2022 Supplemental Operating Budget]

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Background	4
Elimination of Reduced-Price Co-pays	4
Summer Food Service Program.....	4
Meals for Kids Grants	4
Breakfast Assistance.....	4
COVID Assistance.....	4
Update Status.....	5
Conclusion & Next Steps	5
Legal Notice	6

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Financial support provided by the Legislature helps to ensure Washington children have access to healthy school meals. In fiscal year 2022, the Legislature provided \$11.5 million to eliminate the co-pay for reduced-price meals, support summer meal programs, provide school districts with financial support for breakfast meal service, and provide grants to improve and expand meal programs. State funding is required as a match to secure approximately \$300 million in federal funds.

As part of ongoing pandemic recovery, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) allowed schools to operate a universal school meal program during the 2021–22 school year, providing school meals free of charge to all students. This allowed a significant portion of the \$11.5 million to be shifted to the other categories of meal support.

BACKGROUND

The Legislature provides funding to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to help support child nutrition programs in the following ways.

Elimination of Reduced-Price Co-pays

The USDA requires a standard co-pay for reduced-price meals—30 cents for breakfast, 40 cents for lunch. Normally, school districts would collect this fee from households that participate in child nutrition programs. However, the Legislature provides funding for the reduced-price breakfast and lunch co-pay, allowing students eligible for reduced-price meals to eat school meals at no cost.

During fiscal year 2022, the USDA allowed statewide universal school meals, eliminating the reduced-price co-pays. A small number of schools operated a traditional meal program. In those schools, students that qualified for reduced-price meals continued to benefit from the state co-pay elimination.

Summer Food Service Program

State funding supports statewide program promotion to raise program awareness.

Meals for Kids Grants

Grants are available for program operators to buy equipment and supplies that help them start or expand a breakfast or summer food program, and for community outreach.

Breakfast Assistance

The state provides additional funding for each free and reduced-price breakfast served to help support the cost of providing breakfast.

COVID Assistance

To support child nutrition programs during the pandemic, funding was distributed to help offset increased food and equipment costs and supply chain challenges, and to assist with changing program requirements.

UPDATE STATUS

In fiscal year 2022, the Legislature provided \$11.5 million to OSPI for child nutrition programs. See Table 1 for a breakdown on how these funds were allocated.

Table 1: Funds Spent by Category

2022 Program	Funds
Elimination of reduced-price co-pays and breakfast support	\$10,410
Safe School Meals Grants	\$506,120
COVID Assistance	\$10,776,645
Summer Food Service Program Support and Grant	\$99,928
Total	\$11,383,103

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

State funds support student access to healthy meals through child nutrition programs. Additionally, state funds meet USDA requirements and allow Washington state to secure approximately \$300 million in matching funding from the federal government. These funds are essential in helping provide access to healthy school meals.

OSPI will continue to report on these programs.

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