

## **Federally Funded School Lunch Program for All K-12 Students to Run Through December 31**

A federal waiver from the USDA that allowed the Summer Food Service Program to operate amid the COVID-19 pandemic was set to expire on Aug. 31. But to the relief of many school nutrition administrators and child nutrition advocates, the USDA announced on August 31, 2020 that several flexibilities will be extended through as late as Dec. 31, 2020.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, USDA has provided an unprecedented amount of flexibilities to help schools feed kids through the school meal programs, and today, we are also extending summer meal program flexibilities for as long as we can, legally and financially," said USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue in a press release.

### **What Does This Mean for All Bethel Students?**

After waiting for guidance from the USDA on how to apply and administer the new "flexibilities" they announced on August 31, Bethel announces the following changes to our school lunch operations.

- 1) Beginning on Friday, September 11, 2020, all K-12 students will be eligible to receive a regular lunch free of charge. There will be no charges for lunch through the end of ~~December~~.
- 2) This is for students who are attending in-person instruction.
- 3) Students may use funds remaining on their lunch account to buy ala carte items or extra food items.
- 4) There will be no refunds on a child's account since we will start using those funds again in January.
- 5) With the implementation of this USDA program, school lunch programs will see a reduction in their available cash and coins to make change for students. It is respectfully requested that parents use the online lunch payment system rather than sending cash. If cash is sent, it is further requested that parents allow the change to be credited to the student's lunch account rather than exchanging currency or coins.
- 6) It is respectfully requested that parents and students use lunch fund balances to buy extra food items and to allow those funds to remain on account until lunch room fees resume in January 2021.
- 7) It should be understood that the availability of our food supply that we receive from our suppliers will fluctuate and vary as the demand for certain types of food increases with the implementation of this program. This may cause the menu to vary from what was published on any given day.
- 8) Parents who believe that they may meet the income/family threshold to qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program should continue to apply even though this current USDA food service program is in place. This will ensure that the typical Free and Reduced Lunch Program is available to your child beginning in January.
- 9) If your child already gets free meals, then he or she will not notice any difference.
- 10) Adults are not included in this program