

Minutes of the School Food Subcommittee
March 8, 2005

Present: Alfredo Sabillon, Jessica Reich, Maribeth Goldstein, Leah Rimkus, Ericka Lovrin, Meyla Ruwin, Ed Wilkins, Debbie Odiye, Philip Smith, Caroline Grannan, Ritu Khanna, Jan Link, Hydra Mendoza, Dana Woldow

Dana Woldow called the meeting to order at 4:00. The minutes of the last meeting were approved as read.

A discussion of the issue of tuna in school lunches, which had been raised by a parent last month, was continued. The parent had questioned the advisability of serving tuna to children when it is known to contain potentially unsafe levels of mercury. Ed clarified that tuna is never served in the K-5 lunch, where students would have no chance to reject it. It appears about once every two months in the MS/HS cooking schools, in the form of tuna casserole, but the cooking schools always offer a choice of entrees in the lunch line. In the beaneries, tuna is offered about once a week, but again there are always other choices. It was felt that as no child was ever being offered a choice of “tuna or go hungry”, and as the tuna used is light tuna, widely accepted as far safer than white tuna, it would be acceptable to continue to serve tuna as is presently done.

Dana explained that Provision 2 had been discussed at the last meeting of the full nutrition committee and it had been explained that at present, the district does not have sufficient schools with 85-90% free lunch-qualified students to make this program financially feasible. If an increased effort is made next year to get more students to return the meal application, and more schools increase their percentage of free lunch-qualified students, then Provision 2 can be revisited at that time. It was noted that the decision to put schools under Provision 2 would not rest solely with SNS, because even though there might be saving for SNS, there could be increased costs for other departments if the district wanted to continue to collect financial information each year.

Philip discussed the free lunch numbers for the 03-04 school year. There had been some software problems that had resulted in some of the counts of free lunch students not being accurate. The decision has been made that starting this year and in the future, the official count of free lunch students will be based on data from January, not October, as the school population in October is still extremely fluid. Free lunch numbers for the current school year have recently been posted on the district's website, and they reflect January 05 data. Figures from January are not comparable to figures from October, which is what has been posted in the past. Those whose work involves comparing data from one year to another year have requested that a baseline for 03-04 be established using data from January 04. SNS has produced that data and has agreed to send the figures and a memo to Ritu at Assessment and Accountability, requesting that the January 04 figures be posted on the district website. All agreed to this plan. With new software in place, SNS expects no future problems in obtaining accurate counts of free lunch students this year, or in future years.

The results of the targeted schools project were presented, including a list of 10 “lessons learned.” The schools which received phone calls from volunteers explaining the importance of getting more kids to return a completed meal application showed that it is possible to get schools to cooperate, that when they do cooperate the number of kids qualified for free lunch goes up, and that when that number goes up, the cash shortages at the school sites decrease. This will be discussed in more depth at next week’s meeting of the full committee.

Leah presented further results of the salad bar pilot at Harvey Milk. Financials are complete only through November. Philip indicated that Leah should work with both Pat Saturnio and Debbie Odiye to get the financial information for subsequent months.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05.

Next meeting: Monday April 11th, 4pm at Aptos Middle School