

## Subject: IMPORTANT INFORMATION – SCHOOL MEAL CHANGES

During the 2021-2022 school year, the federal government extended waivers allowing school districts to offer meals to all students at no cost due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, Congress did not extend these waivers for the upcoming 2022-2023 school year. As a result, Leon County Schools will return to standard operations under the federal regulations governing the child nutrition programs.

### **Will all meals be free?**

Unfortunately, the flexibility allowing us to provide free meals during COVID has expired. We are no longer able to serve free meals to all students. However, LCS participates in the Community Eligibility Program (CEP), providing free meals to all LCS elementary students and several secondary schools. To see if your school is eligible for CEP, please visit our website at <https://www.leonschools.net/nutritionservicesforparents>.

### **What if my school isn't part of the CEP Program?**

For those schools not eligible for the CEP program, families will do what they did prior to COVID. Families will need to fill out a meal benefit application and use family income to qualify students for free or reduced-price meals. The online application process for free and reduced-price meals is live and can be accessed at <https://www.myschoolapps.com/>. Hard copies of the meal applications are available at your school location. However, the online application process is the most efficient method to apply for meal benefits.

### **If my school is part of the CEP Program, do I need to apply?**

We encourage all eligible families, even those in CEP schools, to submit applications for free and reduced-price meals to qualify for other assistance, such as reduced internet service costs.

### **It seems like my child's school isn't always serving what shows on the school menus. What is going on?**

Our schools are facing the same challenges many grocery stores and restaurants have struggled with in getting food and supplies. When this happens, our school nutrition professionals continue to do everything we can to serve healthy meals to your child. Occasionally, this means making minor substitutions to our posted menus. Please be patient with us! We are committed to making sure LCS students get the healthy meals they depend on during this challenging time.