

## Dear Parents and Community Members,

Our school was recently informed by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) that, effective for the upcoming school year, we have been suspended from participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). As a result, we will not receive federal reimbursement for meals served, nor will we be required to follow USDA nutrition guidelines regarding daily or weekly quantities of whole grains, sodium, calories, protein, fat, vegetables, etc.

We understand that this news may raise questions, and we want to provide clarity on what this means for our students and families. Below are answers to some frequently asked questions:

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### **Q: What led to this suspension?**

**A:** According to DPI auditors, concerns about our compliance with USDA regulations, dating back to an audit conducted in 2013, led to this decision. It's important to distinguish between the DPI auditors and our regular state health inspector. The DPI audits focus on USDA meal program compliance. In contrast, the state health inspector—who visits twice annually—reviews our kitchens for safety, cleanliness, and proper food preparation and handling. The state health inspector has consistently found our operations to be safe and well-run. If you would like to contact the state inspector directly, you may contact Ms. Schneider at [emily.schneider@wisconsin.gov](mailto:emily.schneider@wisconsin.gov).

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### **Q: Can this decision be appealed?**

**A:** Yes. We have submitted a formal appeal to the Wisconsin DPI and are awaiting a response.

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### **Q: How will next year's meals compare to those in the past?**

**A:** One benefit of no longer being bound by USDA meal pattern rules is the flexibility to improve menu options. We've heard your feedback in past years about limited food choices and small portion sizes. While we will continue to provide meals that are healthy and safe, we are genuinely excited to plan a menu that takes student preferences into consideration.

Menu items will likely include:

- **Entrées:** Cheeseburgers, chicken with gravy, pasta goulash, Pizza Hut pizza, Chicken Cordon Bleu
- **Sides:** French fries, corn, baked beans, mashed potatoes with gravy
- **Extras:** Fruit, dessert, and a drink (milk or water)

We are confident that this new approach will be more satisfying for students while maintaining our commitment to food safety and nutritional value.

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**Q: Will this affect any other school funding?**

**A:** No. This change applies only to the food service department and will not impact any other funding sources.

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**Q: Will free meals still be available to students in need?**

**A:** Yes. Students whose families receive food assistance through programs like SNAP will continue to receive free meals. We estimate that 25–30% of our student body will qualify, and we're working closely with local agencies to streamline this process.

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We will continue to update you as more information becomes available. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me directly at (608) 776-2006 or via email at [jacksonc@darlington.k12.wi.us](mailto:jacksonc@darlington.k12.wi.us) with any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

**Cale Jackson**

Administrator

Darlington Community School District