NEWS RELEASE
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SPS Delivering More Meals to Students  
*Meal distribution and partnerships grow*

SEATTLE – Thanks to dedicated staff and growing partnerships, the number of meals served to Seattle Public Schools students and families continues to trend upward during the Covid-19 pandemic school building closure.

Since the first Monday after all SPS school buildings were closed on Thursday, March 12, 2020, the district’s Nutrition Services Department has provided breakfast and lunch five days a week at 26 school-based meal distribution sites.

The number of students has now increased to an approximate average of 6,500 students served daily, which works out to an approximate average of 13,000 meals served daily.

As the numbers have increased, so has the contribution from community partners.

**Backpack Brigade**

“Our first partner was the Backpack Brigade,” said Aaron Smith, SPS Nutrition Services Director. “Toward the end of March, right after schools closed and we started meal distribution, the Backpack Brigade started supplying weekend meals for any students and families who needed them.”

The Backpack Brigade, a non-profit, volunteer-based group which has been providing weekend meals to students for several years in King County, puts together 60 weekend meal backpacks for each of the 26 school-based meal distribution sites. The meals are available for pickup during regular distribution hours on Fridays, and are designed to last the students through the weekend until Monday morning.

**FareStart Dinners**
Thanks to Seattle’s FareStart, students can access dinners to take home and heat, in addition to the regular breakfast and lunch meal distribution. FareStart, a non-profit that transforms lives through job training in its restaurants and helps people overcome barriers by teaching work and life skills to succeed in the food service industry, partnered with SPS Nutrition Services just last week.

FareStart is providing made from scratch dinners to families at the school-based meal distribution sites. FareStart’s volunteers are assisting in the effort and delivering the meals directly to the sites.

For more information about FareStart, please see the FareStart website at https://www.farestart.org/.

Amazon Deliveries

Amazon is providing another service for a select number of SPS students and families experiencing particularly high need. Amazon – leveraging its logistical expertise and delivery network – is providing meals to approximately 300 students with special needs.

In total, it’s estimated that through June 30, 2020, Amazon will deliver more than 35,000 meals to SPS students who are medically fragile, students with disabilities, and students who are experiencing homelessness. Amazon’s delivery network is delivering meal kits, prepared by SPS Nutrition Services, that provide 10 meals at a time to the students. The meal kits are delivered directly to the family and are contactless.

Bus Delivery

Just two weeks into the school closure, SPS began a meal delivery pilot program using school buses to provide meals along several different routes. The number of routes was incrementally increased during the initial program rollout.

Beginning last week, the number of buses and routes increased again, adding additional meals to meet the need.

As of this week, 43 buses are delivering an average of 1,400 meals to approximately 700 students. That number is expected to climb as awareness of the program grows.

The bus routes aren’t normal school routes. Instead, the meal delivery routes have been designed to reach areas closer to where students and families live.

For more information on accessing meals along bus routes, please see the SPS website at https://www.seattleschools.org/district/calendars/news/what_s_new/coronavirus_update/resources/student_meals.
Shelters and Childcare Facilities

The Nutrition Services team is also delivering more than 800 meals daily directly to students at seven local shelters throughout Seattle. That program, with guidance from SPS Student Support Services, is expected to expand to more shelters in the coming weeks.

Additionally, SPS Nutrition Services is delivering meals to 16 school-based childcare centers, providing 100 meals to the attending students.

Take Home-and-Heat

While the daily meals served at the 26 school-based locations are primarily “grab and go” sacks filled with breakfast and lunch items, the Nutrition Services team worked to also include frozen meals that students and families can heat and serve at home.

“The grab-and-go meals are great, but we want to provide as much variety as possible for our students and their families,” said Director Smith. “There are logistical limitations now, as compared with our school meal service in normal conditions, but the Nutrition Services team is always looking for ways to do more.”

Increased Meal Supply for Weekends

Additionally, the Nutrition Services team is now supplying weekend meals for students and their families at each of the 26 school-based meal distribution sites. The meals are an additional option, comprised of a variety of different food items, to the weekend meals supplied by the Backpack Brigade.

“All of us at the district are so grateful for the support from all our community partners,” said Director Smith. “Personally, I am so thankful for the Nutrition Services team — in the central kitchen, the buses, at all the meal distribution sites and everywhere else. The team has gone above and beyond in these very challenging times.”

For more information about the SPS Nutrition Services Department, please see the SPS website at https://www.seattleschools.org/departments/nutritionservices.

For more information about SPS response to the Covid-19 pandemic, please see the SPS website at https://www.seattleschools.org/home.

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