



## **Food Services Participation Survey**

A survey was shared with staff, families and students on April 10, 2019. The survey was shared via email, online and through social media. The deadline for the survey was Friday, April 19. A total of 958 people took the survey. Feedback from students will continue to be collected and their input will be shared later.

### **Respondents:**

958 people took the survey, they were:

- 480 parents/guardians
- 251 staff
- 221 students

The schools with the highest survey participation were Bellingham High School (51 responses), Whatcom Middle School (49 responses) and Happy Valley Elementary School (44 responses). The schools with the lowest survey participation were Cordata Elementary School (11 responses), Alderwood Elementary School (9 responses) and Options High School (4 responses).

### **Parent/Guardian Survey:**

Of the parents/guardians taking the survey, 304 had students who participate in school lunch and 165 do not. Of the participating families, 104 reported their student has lunch “almost every day”, followed by 68 responses for “a few times a week” and then “a few times per month,” at 49 responses. More than half of the parents/guardians said the decision to have school lunch is decided together with their student.

#### **How do you feel about the overall quality of school meals?**

444 parents/guardians answered this question. The highest response was “lower quality than I would prefer” with 177 responses followed by “ok” with 158 responses.

#### **What’s the most important to you about your child’s lunch?**

Parents/guardians listed “nutrition” as most important with 364 responses, followed by “quality” with 298 responses and “whether my child will eat it” at 201 responses. The lowest selected option was “convenience” at 31 responses.

Comments: 14 parents/guardians commented that they would like more vegetarian options.

#### **What are some of the reasons your child might not eat school lunch?**

The overwhelming response to this question was “food doesn’t appeal to them” with 329 responses. The other options were “lunch line too long” at 89 responses and “not enough variety” with 59.

Comments: Parents/guardians commented that limited vegetarian options and not enough time to eat deterred their student from having school lunch. Other comments included poor quality, not enough healthy options and unappealing.

**If you currently do not participate in the school meal program, what would make you more likely to?**

148 parents/guardians said “new menu items” would encourage them to order school lunch, followed by “knowing what’s on the menu” at 34 responses and “ease of purchase/payment into account” at 25 responses.

Comments: Parents/guardians continued to suggest more vegetarian options, higher quality ingredients and more time to eat lunch.

**We recently added a salad bar in every school with fresh produce. Which of the following statements is true?**

The highest response was “my child is more likely to get school lunch because of the salad bar” with 185 responses, followed by “a salad bar does not make a difference” at 172 responses. Only seven respondents selected “my child is less likely to get school lunch because of the salad bar.”

Comment: Parents/guardians commented that they’d like more protein options other than meat. They also commented positive praise for the salad bar, but also a few comments that the options could be improved.

**What do you think of your children’s lunchtime experience in the cafeteria?**

Parents/guardians selected “good” more than any other option for every category. The categories included, “ease of getting a school meal,” “cafeteria atmosphere,” “interactions with students,” and “interactions with cafeteria staff.”

**Ways I would be likely to participate in changing school food?**

Parents/guardians selected “talk to my child about their school meals,” as the highest option for both “very likely,” and “likely.” The most selected item under “not likely” was “go to lunch with my child occasionally.”

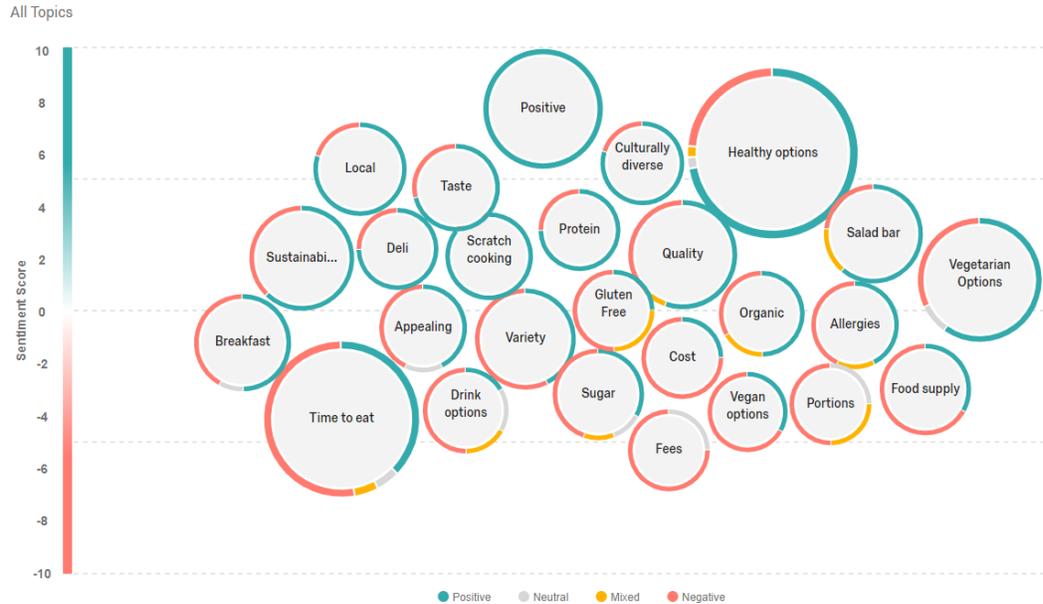
**How would you like to be informed about changes to school meals?**

Parents/guardians selected “district emails with updates from food services,” as their top choice, followed by “printed menus in backpack mail,” and “website updates.”

**Do you have additional feedback about the school lunch program?**

The main themes included a desire for more healthy options (47 comments), vegetarian options (25 comments) and a need more time to eat (40 comments). Parents/guardians also encouraged sustainable practices (16 comments) and more local foods (10 comments). Parents/guardians were concerned about the quality of the school breakfast (12 comments) and the amount of sugar in meals (9 comments). Parents/guardians also encouraged more options for students with food allergies (7 comments), or foods that honored cultural or religious traditions (5 comments).

There were 23 comments of praise or positive affirmation of the direction the program is taking. See chart below for more information.



### Staff Survey:

Of the 240 staff who took the survey, 120 participate in school lunch and 120 do not. Of the participating staff members, 34 selected that they have school lunch “a few times per month,” followed by 17 who selected “once a week,” and 16 who selected “a few times a week” and “once a month.”

### What’s most important to you about your lunch?

Staff picked “nutrition,” as their top choice with 176 responses, followed by “quality,” (155 responses) and “taste” (147 responses). The lowest item selected was “variety,” with 22 responses.

Comments: Request for vegetarian options, organic foods, gluten-free and low carb options.

### Overall, what do you think of the daily menu choices in the cafeteria?

Staff selected “somewhat agree,” more than any other option for every category. The categories were “there is variety,” “it is fresh,” “it looks good,” and “it’s consistent.”

### What are some reasons you might not eat school lunch?

Of the options provided, staff selected “food doesn’t look good,” with 93 responses, followed by “not enough variety,” (55 responses) and “lunch line is too long,” (27 responses). Staff wrote 116 comments related to this question.

Comments: Concerns about cost of the lunch, not convenient, foods are too processed, they don't have enough time, the options don't support different diets or allergies, no delivery service to district/non-school facilities.

**If you currently do not participate in the school meal program, what would make you more likely to?**

Staff selected “new menu items” as their top choice with 65 responses, followed by provide meal delivery to my building,” (32 responses) and 10 responses for both “knowing what’s on the menu,” and “ease of purchase/payment into account.” Staff left 43 comments related to this question.

Comments: Request for healthy, local/fresh food, allergy awareness, vegetarian options.

**We recently added a salad bar in every school with produce. Which of the following statements is true for you?**

Staff overwhelmingly selected “I am more likely to get school lunch because of the salad bar,” with 171 responses.

Comments: Concerns about the plastic packaging, contamination/germs and type of options provided.

**Do you have additional feedback about the school lunch program?**

Main themes included comments about the salad bar, mostly positive (23 comments) and a request for more healthy options (18 comments). Staff shared concerns about the amount of sugar (14 comments) in the school breakfast (11 comments). Otherwise, staff called for meal delivery (6 comments), sustainable practices (5 comments) and vegan or vegetarian options (8 comments). There were also 8 comments of praise or affirmation of the changes being made.

