

**HISD to provide meals to students at no charge for 2018-2019 school year**

*Aug. 6, 2018* – Parents of Houston Independent School District students soon will have one less expense, as Nutrition Services has announced that all students will eat meals at no charge during the 2018-2019 school year.

All HISD schools are now qualified to operate under the USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service Community Eligibility Provision, which allows HISD to provide breakfast, lunch, and dinner at no charge to all students, eliminating the need for free and reduced-price meal applications.

The program allows the nation’s highest poverty schools and districts to serve meals at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household applications. Schools are eligible for the program if they have a certain percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced meals based on their participation in programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

“We know that students have a difficult time learning when they are hungry. This program will allow us to provide up to three full meals a day to our students,” HISD Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan said. “This allows us to meet a critical need that will help our students be ready and able to learn throughout the school day.”

According to HISD Nutrition Services Officer Betti Wiggins, the designation helps remove the social stigma from students who qualify for free or reduced meals because all students now eat meals at no charge.

“We are committed to providing students with as many opportunities as possible for them to get complete, healthy meals. This program expansion allows us to remove a roadblock to that access for many of our students,” Wiggins said. “It also allows us to grow our program in a way that help us to better serve our students.”

Parents will no longer have to complete the free and reduced-price meal application. They instead will be asked to complete a socioeconomic information form, which will be distributed to parents during school registration, teacher meet and greets, back-to-school events, and other campus activities.

This approach reduces burdens for both families and school administrators while helping ensure students receive nutritious meals. Information gathered from the socioeconomic form will be used to determine the amount of federal funding that is disbursed to schools. The data also will be used as a performance indicator for student achievement.

HISD is no stranger to offering meals to students at no charge. The district has provided free breakfast to all students since 2009. The district also offers a dinner program at 178 schools that serves dinner to students at no charge.

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