

School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: January 15, 2021

Presenters: Speaker 1 - Fionnuala Brown, Speaker 2 – Susan Alston, Speaker 3 – Monica Pacheco, Teri Dandeneau, Terese Maineri, Caroline Cooke

0:05

Speaker 1 - Good morning, everyone.

0:07

Looks like we have some folks on for our second School Lunch Tray Table Talk, so we have the, um, team here today. And just to review that, we will be going over all the items that were sent out on Wednesdays for the School Lunch Tray. So we are just going to jump right in.

0:29

And, um, each of the team members here, from the Department of Education, Child Nutrition, are going to be jumping on to speak to you about some of the items today will not be, I will not be doing the whole thing, which is fantastic.

0:47

And we have just keep the questions coming.

0:54

No questions we had 1 or 2 questions that came in before the Table Talk today, and we're going to cover those. So if you have any other questions, you can just enter those into the chat, and we will try and get to that.

1:08

And as a reminder, this is going to be a half an hour, and we're just covering the items in the School Lunch Tray um that went out on Wednesday.

1:20

So can everyone see my screen?

1:27

I'm gonna assume that's a yes, alright. So I'm gonna go right in. We're gonna flip flop things today, and we're gonna start off with the last bullet, which is the report from the, from FRAC, Food Research and Action Center, and this went out. It's a snapshot of participation during COVID, and Susan Alston is going to cover this topic.

1:54

Speaker 2 - Hi. Good morning.

1:56

So I'm like, now, listen, this is a FRAC report and it's a little deceiving when I use a registry. You just read the title that, it's just looking at April. So while they focused on them, the information, and comparing April 2019, April 2020, they really did some extra research through the time, from April, also into September, and are continuing to look at. So I really would think, if you have a few minutes, maybe, yeah, maybe 10 to 15. It really is, would be a good idea to read it all, it has some

School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: January 15, 2021

great information. I'm just gonna pull out some, some important points that I thought were interesting as I was reading it. So, really, what they wanted to do was to look at. We know that in March when all the schools closed down, we had to do this.

2:39

You know, rapid switched from NSLP, and SVP over to the Summer Program, and, really, how did that impact be the schools, and the families, and children, and everybody who rely on school meals in their every day, in their everyday life.

2:56

So one of the things that I thought was just I mean when you put it into perspective and we know what we're doing in Connecticut, but just thinking, nationally that from when they compared April 2019, April 2020 there was a decrease of 292 million lunches and 50 million breakfasts and that was just for that one month.

3:20

I mean, that's, that's huge when you look at it, along that. Then, they focused in a little bit more on each of the programs, you know, and then breakfast, one of the things that caught my attention, that, you know, eleven point three million children receive Free or reduced price breakfast, on an average day. That's in April in 2020.

3:40

And that with a decrease of 396,000 children, or 3.4%, as compared to the previous month.

3:49

So, looking at that, I mean, on a daily basis of how many less kids that normally would rely on breakfast, weren't getting it.

3:56

You know, it's eye opening, when you think about when they looked at lunch, some of the things that I that I found were kind of neat, to, to analyze or to think about how this was affecting everyone.

4:11

Only 31 states saw an increase in the number of free and reduced price breakfast that were served.

4:16

And they kind of attribute that to the fact that with all the meal pattern collected. I mean, I'm not certain flexibilities with the waivers that, you know, all schools that were normally maybe just giving out lunch.

4:28

We're now able to give out breakfast at the same time, so that automatically gave, a lot of the, schools, or states that normally don't have such a high breakfast, I'm an increase in their breakfast participation, and meals being distributed.

School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: January 15, 2021

4:42

Um, another thing, without lunch, and eleven point eight million children received a free or reduced price, lunch, on average, an average day. In April, 2020, but this was a decrease of over eight million children, or 41.2% compared to the previous year. Again, these statistics are crazy when you look at how many children are not receiving the meals that they would.

5:08

Um, 18 states saw the number of free and reduced price lunches served decreased by over 50%.

5:15

Um and at the end of this report, it gives you a stateless all 50 states and compares breakfast, breakfast lunch to lunge lunches and breakfast. I mean, it's really need to kind of look down and see how all of the states did. Connecticut is one of the states that actually had an increase in their breakfast participation.

5:35

So that I thought was need some really, I mean, like when they say over 50% less meals. Some states are really hurting or we're really hurting and I'm sure since April if tried to mitigate some of the things that they could do with their meals.

5:51

You know, part of what was doing also at this thing was Monday. They also talk about PVT.

5:59

And how they would like that to all that help students and families over the summer that they would like to say that, become a permanent complement to the Child Nutrition Programs. Because, you know, it's not just in these circumstances that families need extra help.

6:15

Then, they kind of talk about what could be done. And what Congress needs to be to do to provide more relief.

6:22

Because while the all these flexibilities gave us more opportunities and helped us to serve our children, it also created barriers, you know, as far as funding with staffing issues and different things that popped up, so trying to balance all of that.

6:41

And I'm sure, as we move through this year, that we do it and work with them, between different months and possibly even all of last year.

6:50

So, that's about it. If you have a few minutes, I think it's really worth looking at it, especially when it compares our state to all the other you know 49 states there to see how everybody fared in April. And I think that might probably a good snapshot of you know what continued. And that's it.

School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: January 15, 2021

7:11

Speaker 1 - Thank you so much, Susan, for that snapshot of the report.

7:15

So, I'm just going to click into the report and kind of show that, but that did not happen quite often for that. And so we're going to move on in the school lunch tray.

7:29

We have just going up from the bottom here, we wanted to point out a webinar that's being hosted by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, and that will be on January 26th.

7:44

And um the topic is the important contribution of school nutrition programs to student mental health. So this is going to be interesting, it's in the evening, and it is specifically information, you know, coming out of the um California Local School Wellness Collaborative, and just looking at the impact of these programs, and the positive support, uh mental and physical growth and development with children. So I encourage you to check that out, if you have time.

8:18

And now I'm going to turn it over to Monica.

8:23

There was a lot of information in the School Lunch Tray this week, uh, specifically about USDA Foods.

8:31

So I'm gonna turn it over to Monica and she is going to cover the first three bullets in the School Lunch Tray, and just let me know when you need me to, uh Scroll down on this document, Monica, okay? Speaker 3 - I'm going to start with the, obviously, from the top so, so, for the first, notice that we put out was the fact that, as of Wednesday, we are making available now, those excess items that we've talked about last week, for those who could join us during the focus Friday presentation we did. So, basically, this year has presented, you know, amazing challenges for all, including us looking at how to help you manage inventory. These have been unprecedented times and there have been many unanticipated changes from when you were placing your USDA Foods orders to now. So, we recognize that and began to work closely with USDA, and also with HPC, we're sending us daily, weekly, and monthly reports on inventory to help us get a handle on what's moving and what's not.

9:42

So we initially put out the request to donate form, so that if you had a chance to assess that, there were products there that you knew you would not be able to use in your meal programs, and you um were not going to be able to take from the warehouse. We wanted to hear about it, so that we could put those out and offer those up to other districts. You know menus vary so much that for one district, where a product isn't working, now, it is working in another district, and we wanted to see if we can make those available. So you see the Green Lincoln, notice that talks about requesting

School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: January 15, 2021

USDA Food Stamps. So that has now started. So you have the week on Wednesday the 20th, I believe it is to put in a request. If you see items that are things that you are using in your program, and that you would be able to utilize in the next few months coming up.

10:37

Um let's see Fionnuala if you could just move it down a little bit to that list of foods that you'll see in the block down a little. There you go. Thank you. So A Little history on how this form came about it.

10:50

We wanted to make this a process that was as uncomplicated as possible, believe it or not, despite how it seems, and doing an online platform seemed the way to go, versus having to fill out a paper form, so to speak, and send it in and all. So we work closely with our dear friend Sybil at SERC who works with us on so many other parts of our program, and utilize the platform they had to develop the order form.

11:16

So, the order form, and this took some work and some time, and it's not easy to change, so we put our entire inventory on that order form.

11:23

But we clearly noted in this, notice that only the items that we're listing here, that Fionnuala is showing you on the screen now, that was in that week's notice, are the items that are available currently to order, okay. So, for those who haven't placed an order yet, if you see it on the order form, it doesn't mean it's necessarily available.

11:42

We had to create that form to reflect the entire list of the entire inventory that we have there. And then each month, we will post what are the available items based on what people submitted as things that they could give back so to speak, because they weren't going to be able to use it. So you see things from, you know, beans and dairy, fish and fruits and juices and there's also some meats and other items. These are the items to look at, determine if there's something that you can use in your program and then fill out the order form and get it to us by end of day on Wednesday the 20th.

12:18

Um, and, do know, then, you know, if we do get a big pool of requests for certain items, and we actually get more requests than what we have, we'll use the randomized and tool that we've used in the past to help us, then fairly distributed. So, you know, your orders are requests. We will do our best but you may get all you may get some. You know, and there is a possibility. You may not get any of it depending on the responses on. These items will certainly do our best to be able to meet these requests and do a fair distribution as we can.

School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: January 15, 2021

12:50

Um, and do know too that we're going to also take a look at your usage of your other items. You know, we want to be careful that, you know, that, we don't see in order for 50 cases of applesauce, yet.

13:00

You haven't moved any of your other product in the warehouse. So to the types of things when we talk about reports from HPC, we're getting information regarding that as well. So, you know, there may be a question back from us saying, you know, you best for this, but you haven't touched, you know, 80% of your other items still in the warehouse and haven't offered it up for donation, if you don't think you can use it. So we'll, we'll delve into that a little bit more if we need to.

13:29

Just a few other little quick tips, if you folks have found that when you enter into that order form online, if you hit the button enter before you've completed filling out the form, it submits it. So be careful that you have filled out all the fields that you want items for before you hit the enter button, because that's how it gets submitted.

13:50

And then we did have a question sent in, which was a great question, that asks that if you do request items, and then when it comes onto your allocation, do you have to take it all at the same time, like with that next delivery? And no you don't, so if you see, you know, you want 50 cases of something, because it will last you for the next four months worth of meal service. You don't have to take off 50 cases on your first delivery.

14:13

Will just want to see that you took 10, 15 cases each time and that you're using it up. So don't feel you have to take everything from what you request on the very first allocation. And, do know, too, there's a lot of transfer.

14:26

And logistics behind the scenes said, you know, once our deadline comes up on Wednesday, it's going to take us a few weeks before you'll see that show on your next allocation. This is unfortunately a bit of a cumbersome process.

14:36

You know, no, it's not an easy upload type of a situation, so we got to create some documents to.

14:43

But through these transfers and an HPC has to do their part. So we're working as a team to help this work out for you guys. And we're hoping that this is going to be successful. And then you know we can provide you some additional items to meet your needs and also help alleviate some of the excess inventory issues that we know are happening.

School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: January 15, 2021

15:01

All right, I think that covers that one Fionnuala if you want to move on to the next topic, which is not too difficult, it really is just a quick notice.

15:12

As of December 30th, web supply did some updates that may have affected your ability to login.

15:20

So, this is just a quick step by step process. If you are having difficulty logging into web supply, please take a moment to follow these steps. This should take care of the problem with the information they provided on the site. It's not always easy to find, or notice, so we want to just bring this to your attention. So, if you are having difficulties, follow these steps, pretty clearly outlined what you need to do, and that hopefully should resolve it. But please note, if you are still having problems, the contact information for web supply, both phone number and e-mail are at the bottom. This is a federal platform. Allison, I don't have a lot of the behind the scenes. Access to correct these types of problems that has to unfortunately go through them.

16:01

So, contact those folks if you are continuing to have any issues.

16:06

And the last one, if you would Fionnuala, for the rooting for Winter campaign.

16:17

So, here, I'm going to switch my hat's and go from food distribution to Farm to School and I just wanted to bring attention, we had put this out, because, put local on your tray is providing, and promoting the rooting for winter campaign. And they did this last year. So it's taking advantage of the fact that there are some great supplies of some of the root vegetables that do well through the winter months.

16:45

I'm available at a lot of our local farms and producers, and they're trying to help co-ordinate getting some of this product into schools.

16:53

And I know many of you may be thinking, well, you know, at a time like this, I don't have time for farm to school, but please remember, Farm to School can be an easy part of your program. It's a complement.

17:05

And the local on your tray team are there waiting and willing to help and make this as easy as possible. They really are trying to think of things that are going to benefit your program, in these very uncertain times. They are recognizing, obviously, the challenges being faced, and they're really trying to come up with ways to just still assist you.

School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: January 15, 2021

17:25

So if you really think about some of the great information that was shared yesterday during the conference, by the schools team, the areas focus was increasing participation and also increasing alternate, excuse me, alternative sources of revenue.

17:44

And those two topics really can be assisted by looking at some of these other options. So if you're looking to increase participation here, you have an option to promote something, a little, different, maybe tie it into some sort of celebration day, especially as we're in the winter months. There's less of the holidays and things to focus some of your menuing on.

18:08

And there are also providing free materials. There's some really neat, they're pulling them Blake Placemat that the kids can get, that have meet graphics and little games, and quizzes, and coloring areas, and that also, I think they even provide a little one of those little mini four packs of crayons and those materials are available.

18:26

And you can request to sign up to receive these free materials to help put in maybe your Grab and Go program.

18:33

Maybe it goes with, if you're doing any in person classes, you know, maybe you're doing meals in the classroom, this could go out with those meals. Something to change things up a little bit for the kids.

18:47

And the root vegetables could be highlighted on the menu, and certainly, know, maybe it's just that little thing that brings a change of pace to the program and spark some interest in and helps to increase that participation. The other thing to think about, it was talked about alternate revenue sources and perhaps family meals and selling, you know, the family for pack meals, I think I heard or you know, meals for, for staff, to take teachers to purchase from you. And certainly you know you could potentially include some root vegetables and really highlight the fact that this was locally sourced it and where it came from as a way of again, sparking some interest in your meals. That I think it has a special place right now with all the logistics and issues of food sourcing, especially early on in the pandemic.

19:39

There are unprecedented volumes of people now looking a little bit more at the, the old-fashioned way of doing things, you know gardening, canning and putting up your own produce for the winter.

School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: January 15, 2021

19:51

And certainly sourcing more locally are seeing high, high numbers among the populations right now, as some of our grocery stores had bare shelves for a while. and that really kind of was a wakeup call to folks just to look closer to home for some other items.

20:05

So you can certainly reach out to the local on your trade team, Shannon Rater Ginsburg's e-mail is, right in there, she is a farmer.

20:14

She loves to help connect folks to local farms and what they're producing, and they're a great resource for you guys, to, well, maybe, think outside the box. I know, remember, that said a few times yesterday, you know, thinking outside the box to bring either increase participation in the school meals or some other alternate revenue sources with using your local produce. So if you have any questions on that, reach out to Shannon. You can certainly reach out to me as well.

20:42

I'll be happy to answer any questions or guide you in any direction you need. And I think that covers it for me, Fionnuala.

20:53

Speaker 1 - Thank you so much, Monica, for covering those first few items on the School Lunch Tray, USDA Foods, and then Farm to School. We did have one question come in Monica regarding the excess USDA Foods, and the Director wants to know how will we know what quantities of these USDA Food products we order will be allocated to our account? Not sure if you've covered that or if this came in early, but I just wanted to throw that out there.

21:25

Speaker 3 - No, it's a very good question. It will show up on your allocation report.

21:29

So it will be on the allocation report.

21:34

And there is also, I believe, a receipt of sorts that you will be getting, that will also tell you the value of the USDA Food. It's an average value, so that you can include that in any of your financial tracking. As well as what the final numbers are and what you'll be receiving. So, um, that should come via e-mail, very good question. Thank you.

21:54

Speaker 1 - Okay, great, and I think, I think that's it for the questions.

22:02

Just double checking here, that's all I see that has come in, um.

School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: January 15, 2021

22:13

Okay, we have one more question, on the form it asks for the WBSCM number, what is that? Yeah?

22:23

Speaker 3 - That is the, let's see, the seven digit number, it starts with 400 and then four digits and that is your, your identifying number in Web-Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM). So if you don't know that number, it can be found in some reports. I think if that's being asked it might be a new person. They can certainly reach out to me or Allison and we can help guide them and show them how to get that number.

22:46

Speaker 1 – Okay, fabulous.

22:47

So um, so I think that's it, we went through the School Lunch Tray in a different order. And uh thank you so much Monica and Susan Alston for covering those topics. And that concludes our School Lunch Tray Table Talk for today. Thank you all for those of you that have joined.

23:10

And we will be hosting this again next week, same time.

23:17

Same place, so, we'll see you then. Have a wonderful weekend, hopefully a long weekend, and we'll see you all next week.

23:27

Take care, bye, bye.

23:29

Speaker 3 - Bye all!

School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: January 15, 2021



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