

		SUBJECT	
		UNIVERSAL FREE MEALS PROGRAM POLICY	
DATE ISSUED	DATE REVISED		NOVA POLICY #
10/24/2019	8/02/2022; 5/01/2024		
ISSUED BY	REVIEWED BY	APPROVED BY	COA POLICY #
		NOVA BOARD	

SUBJECT

Universal Free Meals Program Policy

The NOVA Academy Early College High School (“NOVA Academy” or the “Charter School”) Governing Board (the “Board”) recognizes that adequate nutrition is essential to the development, health, and learning of all students. The Chief Executive Officer or designee shall facilitate and encourage the participation of students from low-income families in the Charter School’s food service program.

POLICY CONTENT

each NOVA Academy school site shall make available a nutritionally adequate breakfast and a nutritionally adequate lunch free of charge and with adequate time to eat, to any student who requests a meal without consideration of the student’s eligibility for a federally funded free or reduced-price meal, with a maximum of one (1) free breakfast meal per and one (1) free lunch each school day. This shall apply to all pupils in kindergarten through grade twelve (12).

Definitions

“*School day*” means any day that pupils in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, are present at a schoolsite or school facility for purposes of instruction or educational activities, as defined in Section 49010, including, but not limited to, pupil attendance at minimum days, state-funded preschool, transitional kindergarten, summer school including incoming kindergarten pupils, extended school year days,

school-sponsored field trips, independent study when a pupil is onsite during the schoolday, and Saturday school sessions.

“Nutritionally adequate breakfast” is one that qualifies for reimbursement under the most current meal pattern for the federal School Breakfast Program, as defined in Section 220.8 of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

“Nutritionally adequate lunch” is one that qualifies for reimbursement under the most current meal pattern for the federal National School Lunch Program, as defined in Section 210.10 of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

Universal Free Meals Application and Notification

If the Charter School participates in the National School Lunch Program (“NSLP”) and/or federal School Breakfast Program (“SBP”), the Charter School will continue to collect meal application forms aligned with federal regulations. Regardless of eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, ALL students who request meals will receive meals free of charge, consistent with this Policy and Education Code Section 49501.5. The Chief Executive Officer or designee shall ensure that the application form for the universal meals program and related materials include the following statements:

1. Applications for school meals may be submitted at any time during a school day.
2. Regardless of federal eligibility for free or reduced-price meals pursuant to NSLP and/or SBP, ALL students who request a meal will receive meals free of charge.

Children participating in the federal NSLP and/or SBP will not be overtly identified by the use of special tokens, special tickets, special serving lines, separate entrances, separate dining areas, or by any other means. The application packet shall include the following notifications and information using simple and culturally appropriate language:

1. A notification that the child may qualify for free or reduced-cost health coverage.
2. A request for the applicant’s consent for the child to participate in the Medi-Cal program, if eligible, and to have the information on the school lunch application shared with the entity designated by the State Department of Health Care Services to make an accelerated determination and the local agency that determines eligibility under the Medi-Cal program.
3. A notification that the Charter School will not forward the school lunch application to the entity designated by the State Department of Health Care Services to make an accelerated determination and the local agency that determines eligibility under the Medi-Cal program, without the consent of the child’s parent or guardian.
4. A notification that the school lunch application is confidential and, with the exception of forwarding the information for use in health program enrollment upon

the consent of the child's parent or guardian, the Charter School will not share the information with any other governmental agency, including the federal Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration.

5. A notification that the school lunch application information will only be used by the entity designated by the State Department of Health Care Services to make an accelerated determination and the state and local agencies that administer the Medi-Cal program for purposes directly related to the administration of the Medi-Cal program and will not be shared with other governmental agencies, including the federal Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration for any purpose other than the administration of the Medi-Cal program.
6. Information regarding the Medi-Cal program, including available services, program requirements, rights and responsibilities, and privacy and confidentiality requirements.

If NOVA Academy elects to post its school meal application online, it will include the following:

1. Include a link to the Internet Web site on which translated applications are posted by the United States Department of Agriculture, with instructions in that language that inform the applicant how to submit the application.
2. Require completion of only those questions necessary for determining eligibility.
3. Include a clear statement that regardless of federal eligibility for free or reduced-price meals pursuant to NSLP and/or SBP, ALL students who request a meal will receive meals free of charge.
3. Include clear instructions for families that are homeless or migrant.
4. Comply with the privacy rights and disclosure protections established by Public Laws 113-79 and 105-277.
5. Include links to all of the following:
 - (i) The online application to CalFresh.
 - (ii) The online single state application for health care.
 - (iii) The Internet Web page maintained by the State Department of Public Health entitled "About WIC and How to Apply," or another Internet Web page identified by the State Department of Public Health that connects families to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children.

(iv) The Internet Web site of a summer lunch program authorized to participate within the city or school district.

NOVA shall ensure that a pupil is not denied an available reimbursable meal of the pupil's choice and is not shamed or treated differently from other pupils due to the pupil's eligibility for free or reduced-price meals. This paragraph does not prohibit NOVA from serving an alternative reimbursable meal to a pupil who may need one for dietary or religious reasons, or as a regular menu item.

If NOVA is required to provide to the department or to the United States Department of Agriculture a copy of the meal charge policy required pursuant to memorandum SP 46-2016 issued by the United States Department of Agriculture, NOVA shall make that policy public.

NOVA personnel and volunteers who serves nutritionally adequate meals to pupils during the instructional day shall not allow any disciplinary action that is taken against a pupil to result in the denial or delay of a nutritionally adequate breakfast or a nutritionally adequate lunch, as defined in Section 49553, to that pupil.

NOVA shall not take any action directed at a pupil to collect school meal fees.

Direct Certification

Although every family should submit an application for school meals, in certain circumstances, NOVA Academy may be able to determine student eligibility without further application. NOVA Academy shall directly certify as eligible the following students:

1. Any child who is a member of a household receiving assistance under the supplemental nutrition assistance program as eligible for free lunches and/or free breakfasts under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966.
2. Any child who is a member of a household that receives CalWORKs (also known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or "TANF") or CalFresh aid.
3. Any child who is a member of a household that receives the assistance of a Food Distribution program on Indian Reservations.
4. Any child identified as a foster, migrant, homeless or runaway youth, as defined by the California Education Code.

It is the policy of the Board that non-paying students shall not be shamed, treated differently, or served a meal that differs from the meal of a paying student. This Policy prohibits the Charter School from disciplining a student which would result in the denial or delay of a nutritionally adequate meal to that student.

Confidentiality/Release of Records

All applications and records related to the universal school meals program shall be confidential and may not be released except as provided by law and authorized by the Board or pursuant to a court order.

The Board authorizes designated employees to use individual records pertaining to the universal meals program for the following purposes:

1. Disaggregation of academic achievement data
2. Identification of students eligible for alternative supports in any school identified as a Title 1 program improvement school

If a student transfers from the Charter School to another charter school, district, county office of education program, or private school, the Chief Executive Officer or designee may share the student's meal eligibility information to the other educational agency to assist in the continuation of the student's meal benefits.

The Chief Executive Officer or designee may release the name and eligibility status of a student participating in the free or reduced-price meal program to another charter school, school district, or county office of education that is serving a student living in the same household as an enrolled student for purposes related to program eligibility and data used in local control funding formula calculations.

The Chief Executive Officer or designee may release the name and eligibility status of a student participating in the free or reduced-price meal program to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for purposes of determining funding allocations under the local control funding formula and for assessing accountability of that funding.

The Chief Executive Officer or designee may release information on the school lunch program application to the local agency that determines eligibility for participation in the Medi-Cal program if the student has been approved for free meals and if the applicant consents to the sharing of this information.

The Chief Executive Officer or designee may also release information on the school lunch application to the local agency that determines eligibility for CalFresh or to an agency that determines eligibility for nutrition assistance programs if the student has been approved for free or reduced-price meals and if the applicant consents to the sharing of this information.

This information released shall adhere to the following requirements:

1. Individual indicators of participation in a free or reduced-price meal program shall not be maintained in the permanent record of any student, unless otherwise authorized by law.

2. The public release of information regarding individual student participation in a free or reduced-price meal program is not permitted.
3. All other confidentiality requirements imposed by law or regulation are met.