

12 November, 2023

Karim Hachlaf, SD40 Superintendent/CEO
By email: khachlaf@sd40.bc.ca

SD40 Board of Education
By email: boardofeducation@sd40.bc.ca

Re: Feedback From Families on the FuelUp Lunch Program

Dear Superintendent Hachlaf and SD40 Trustees,

At our October 19th, 2023 regular monthly meeting, DPAC membership passed the following motion:

That DPAC write a letter to the District to express concerns with the current lunch provider re: quality, health and safety and equity of the lunch program.

We would like to share some constructive feedback concerning the new caterer for the FuelUp lunch program. As we understand it, the original intent of the FuelUp program was to provide an optional subsidized meal program that delivers healthy lunches that kids want to eat, ensuring that participation in the subsidy program does not carry any stigma.

While we appreciate the District's efforts to provide nutritious meals to our students, it is with concern that we have received feedback from parents and caregivers as well as from PAC executives indicating that the food quality is so poor that many students and families do not want to continue participating. This is particularly disheartening given that many had been avid participants in the program with the previous caterer. The current supplier seems to be missing the original goal of providing appealing and high-quality meals to ensure continued participation and support from families.

Beyond the emerging stigma of participating in the FuelUp program, it is now costing families more money to participate in the subsidized program. We have heard from families participating in the subsidized FuelUp program that they have to send additional food from home every day so that their child doesn't go hungry. High-quality food in a subsidized meal program is essential to ensuring the meals are consumed by students so they can provide needed nutrition.

Additionally, the inclusion of more culturally diverse options would enhance the overall appeal and accessibility of the program. This would align with the original intent of providing meals that students enjoy while maintaining a positive perception of the program and eliminating any potential stigma associated with participation. For families that do rely on the FuelUp program to provide essential nutrition to their children, there is a concern about the equity of not providing these students with nutritious and enjoyable meals.

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We understand that a survey is being prepared for students and families to provide feedback on this program, and we are glad this action is being taken. Families appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on their own student's experience with meals from the new caterer.

Thank you for your consideration of this feedback, and we look forward to continuing this dialogue through your parent feedback survey.

Sincerely,

Laura Kwong,
Chair, SD40 DPAC

CC Rick Bloudell, Manager of Community Partnerships and Projects