



School Meal Program (SMP) Information 2026-27



Dear Parent/Guardian,

The School Meal Program we know today is built on decades of leadership, volunteerism, and partnership.

Across our district, volunteers, parents, school staff, and local organizations have been feeding students for many years. These long-standing efforts laid the foundation for everything that has followed.

In Port Alberni we are partnered with **Nourish Cowichan** whose guiding belief is that when communities come together with love and compassion, incredible things can happen. Together we are working to ensure every child has the opportunity to learn and thrive with access to nutritious food.

How the School Meal Program Works:

What is the School Meal Program (SMP)?

The SMP ensures students receive a nutritious lunch and snack each school day, starting **September 14, 2026**, and continuing throughout the school year.

Who pays for the School Meal Program?

The School Meal Program is funded by:

1. BC's Feeding Futures initiative.
2. The National School Food Program.
3. Donations made to Nourish, which stay local to our district.

While government funding provides a strong foundation, community donations are essential to bridging the gap and keeping the program running sustainably.

What kind of food is served?

Meals are prepared fresh by our team at the EJ Dunn Elementary School kitchen, with a focus on nourishing, whole and minimally processed foods. We aim to source locally whenever possible and continue to expand the variety of meals we offer based on available ingredients and feedback from students, families, and schools.

Snacks Are Always Available

We want every student to feel supported throughout the day. **That's why we make snacks available for anyone who's feeling hungry.**

Whether your child is enrolled in the program or not, they are welcome to access snacks.

How do I enroll my student(s) and contribute to the School Meal Program?

Our School Meal Program operates on the principle that everyone is welcome, and nobody will be turned away because they are unable to contribute. Enrollment simply helps us plan, purchase, and prepare the right amount of food.

1. **To enroll:** Complete the form at the bottom of this letter and return it to your school. Your student will be enrolled for the 2026-2027 school year.

There is no obligation to participate, and the program is offered at no cost and without pressure to contribute. If you'd like to opt out, please contact your school secretary.

2. **To contribute,** donations made to Nourish are used to feed students right here in our district. While the suggested donation is \$100/month per student (about \$5 per school day), any amount helps – especially as food prices continue to rise. Contributions are voluntary and help us serve more students. Your support helps us keep the program running strong, reduce food insecurity, and ensure that no student goes without a meal.

Help Us Make School Food Better - and Enter to Win \$100 in Groceries!

We want to hear from **parents, caregivers and school staff**, whether your family uses the School Meal Program regularly, occasionally, or not at all.

Our School Food Program Feedback Survey takes approximately 10 minutes and will help guide future menus, services, and improvements. **After completing the survey, you will have the opportunity to enter a draw for a \$100 grocery gift card.**



Scan to complete the survey

SURVEY & DRAW CLOSE 15 OCTOBER 2026



School Meal Program: Highlights at a Glance

- ✓ 10% increase in student participation since 2024
- ✓ Over 21% of students accessing lunch via the School Meal Program
- ✓ Daily breakfast, lunch and snack programs across the district
- ✓ Major kitchen renovations at EJ Dunn and Wickaninnish Community School
- ✓ District-wide commercial cold storage upgrades
- ✓ Student Snack Fridges established at ADSS and EALC
- ✓ Breakfast programs support and growth across the district
- ✓ Focus on whole foods and local sourcing in partnership with central/north island districts
- ✓ **Planning for online registration and expanded menu options – watch for more information on this!**

DID YOU KNOW?

Research suggests that every \$1 invested in school meal programs can generate at least \$7 in long-term returns through improved health, education, productivity, and stronger local economies.

(Source: Frontiers in Public Health, 2020)

Want to Support School Food?

For families and community members who would like to support the program, there are several ways to help:

Donate: Donations help provide meals to students right here in our district. The suggested contribution is \$100 per month per participating student (approximately \$5 per school day), but any amount is appreciated and all contributions are voluntary.

Volunteer: Opportunities are available to help with meal preparation and distribution, with flexible commitments depending on location and need.

Spread the word: Sharing information about the program and opportunities to support it helps strengthen school food in our communities.



Stay Connected & Learn More

Follow [Pacific Rim School Foodies](#) on Facebook and [@pacificrimsschoolfoodies](#) on Instagram to see food stories, student connections, and community moments from across our district. **#EveryoneAtTheTable**

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to student well-being.

Kind regards,

Kirsten Nesbitt

Healthy Schools Manager | Pacific Rim School District

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School Meal Program Enrollment Form 2026-2027

By completing this form, I indicate that my student would like to receive lunches as part of the School Meal Program for the 2026-2027 school year.

I understand that if I no longer want my student to participate in the program, I will notify the school secretary.

I acknowledge that any contributions I make to Nourish are used to support the School Meal Program as a whole, and that our School Meal Program operates on the principle that everyone is welcome, and nobody will be turned away. Enrollment helps us plan and order food effectively.

STUDENT NAME:
PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME:
PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE:

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM TO THE SCHOOL