

Statement of Purpose

Food Service Management Shared Service Agreement between Lordstown Local Schools and Austintown Local Schools

A major goal at Lordstown Local Schools is to promote a student-centered environment. We have attempted as a team of educators and support staff to provide our students with opportunities such as authentic learning experiences, increased technology in the classroom, increasing the number of athletic teams and extra-curricular opportunities available to our students, improving school safety measures while meeting curriculum goals that continue to see changes at the state level.

While parents and community members have been open to providing the school with valuable ideas and assistance we have also sought opinions of our student body. While it was good to hear some of the initiatives of the district were being well-received by our students we found that one of the major areas of needed improvements was our food service department. We also have heard this from parents during previous meetings with them and critiques from some staff as well.

Our food service staff consists of some very committed workers who also are parents and grandparents of students in the district and who are dedicated to what is best for our students. One thing that we identified that was lacking was professional leadership in the form of a director that includes expertise in school nutrition, dietary guidelines, and a focused ability to promote new and creative menu items. While we have five employees in our food service department (Head Cook, Assistant Head Cook, and three Cafeteria Workers) it was determined that help was needed in terms of the professional leadership mentioned in this paragraph.

Sales data from our regular lunches (Type A Lunch) further demonstrate a decreasing interest on behalf of our students and staff in purchasing school lunches. Below is a snapshot of that data:

Year	Numbers of Students K-12	Total Type "A" Revenue
2012-2013	484	\$48,613.75
2013-2014	494	\$44,795.75
2014-2015	504	\$40,371.25
2015-2016	506	\$27,886.85

*The student numbers include Lordstown students that are in the building for lunch and not those that attend schools outside of Lordstown such as TCTC. The revenue also does not include lunches we are reimbursed from the federal government.

As options were explored to improve our school lunch program one of them included forging a shared service agreement with another school district that provided services

that included access to a Director with extensive nutrition experience that more closely met federal guidelines and that also provided necessary support services. One option that was explored was likely to cost in excess of \$100,000.00 which would not be affordable for our district food service department. It should be noted that payment for this service will be coming out of the food service account and not the district general fund. Based on this, a limited budget and food service reputation discussions took place with Austintown Local Schools. Upon reviewing their food service operations and determining our needs as a district a proposal was brought to the board. It should be noted that the food service issues were discussed in board of education work sessions as well.

The first year of the contract with Austintown is \$31,664.83. The amount includes the shared services of the Director of Food Services at Austintown Local Schools as well as the assistance of a part-time employee at Austintown Food Services that will assist with reporting and other support paperwork for our food service department. This is far less than hiring someone specifically for Lordstown with the appropriate qualifications and nutrition experience. Realizing that any additional spending is a tough call for a school the decision to try and improve our food service to our students was made with a great deal of thought.

It is our goal that student satisfaction with our food offerings will increase sales leading to additional revenue to help pay for part of this contract. We also have identified additional pay that totaled nearly \$15,000.00 for the past three years that should be eliminated due to this shared service agreement and the services that will be provided. It is probable that some additional hours will be worked by our cafeteria workers to provide additional options such as salad bars that require a little additional labor but we plan to be able to pay for this from the additional revenue it will generate.

We understand that everyone will not agree with this decision. Anyone with questions is also welcome to contact the Superintendent's office at 330-824-2535 to set up a meeting with the Superintendent to discuss this issue as he will be very happy to answer any questions. This could also provide an opportunity for our school families to get accurate information concerning decisions made in terms of deciding not to spend thousands of dollars on food service equipment that were not needed. The desire of the district is to provide our students with a student-centered culture that includes improving food service to them in a manner that is affordable to the district at the same time better complying with the increasing standards set by the government.

In an effort to better provide information concerning what we can expect from this shared service agreement here are some activities that have taken place in November and just a sample of what to expect in the coming months:

Scope of work undertaken this November:

- Observation of meal service at lunch

- Discussion in cafeteria with students during lunch about meal items and customer service
- Consulted on improving service at Elementary School. Several have demonstrated concerns about how slow the K-3 students get through the line. Through consultation provided by our shared service agreement we identified that the implementation of swipe cards for these students would assist the students and staff in getting the young students through the line in a more efficient manner
- Consulted on equipment purchases to assist with providing necessary equipment for operation of the food service department in a cost effective manner
- Recommended the creation of a focus group of students that will assist with taste testing of new products and making recommendations
- Worked with support staff planning guideline compliant menus for December and distributed to appropriate personnel. December will also see a Holiday Meal for students and staff incorporated into the meal planning. It should be noted that the November menu was not created through the shared service agreement as it was created in October. Developed new breakfast menu in accordance with guidelines
- Met with on-site administration to set up appropriate clerical procedures that included setting up a food service email, providing free and reduced lunch applications on-line, setting up protocol to get menus uploaded to website in a timely manner.
- Incorporated new menu items into menu
- Began process of food vendors coming in to taste test and demonstrate new products. Student workers in the cafeteria and in the future a team of students will be part of a student focus group to explore these new items.
- Contacting appropriate government agencies and vendors, in consultation with appropriate staff, to set up necessary user accounts and passwords
- Discussed reimbursable meals with staff
- Facilitated training by Gordon Food Service to begin training support staff on online ordering
- Began planning process for alternate choice menu items for elementary students

The above are some of the activities that have taken place the first sixteen school days of the shared service agreement. We realize there are questions about some other things that can be expected...here are just a few:

- Implementation of Salad Bars (Our school nurse wrote a grant to receive two free salad bars that will be utilized)
- Implementation of guideline appropriate beverages for high school (Coffee options)
- A priority to make information more accessible about menu items and the cafeteria

- Branding of Food Service Department Logo
- Regular meetings of Focus Group of students to discuss food items, taste test and discuss advertising options
- Implement service at the high school that offers guideline appropriate serving sizes to grade levels. Appropriate planning needed as guidelines for 7th and 8th graders is different than those in 9th through 12th.
- Implement mandatory signage to educate students what is offered and required on a meal service tray for reimbursable meals
- Facilitate and implement Youngstown State University dietetic students for internship and community wellness rotations. This has been done with great success at other districts.
- Improve policy and procedure manuals
- Implement improved smart snack and balanced documents
- Develop improved Program Food and Non Program food tracking forms mandated by USDA
- Develop and implement continuing education plan mandated for all food service employees by USDA
- Develop profit and loss statements
- Implement online inventory manager through GFS website to monitor real time pricing of inventory and stock
- Pull and process all meal application in the Food Service Department through shared service agreement

We are excited by this opportunity. As with all initiatives we hope this improves the overall experience for our students. We hope this document provides some answers to some questions that the district has been made aware of concerning this shared service agreement. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Terry Armstrong, Superintendent
Lordstown Local Schools