

Banquete Independent School District

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For Immediate Release:

May 30, 2023

Banquete High School Transitions Back to Application Requirement for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals

Back to School and Back to Normal in the Cafeteria

Banquete, Texas — During the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress authorized spending that allowed schools to serve free meals for all students. Those funds are not authorized to continue for the 2023-2024 school year. As a result, Banquete High School must return to charging for school meals and offering free and reduced-price meals based on student eligibility. Starting on August 10, 2023, Banquete High School will begin distributing letters and applications to the households of the children in the district about eligibility benefits. Families are encouraged to complete the Application for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals.

The application will determine a child's eligibility for free and reduced-price meals and may assist in the determination of eligibility for other state or federal benefits. Only one application needs to be completed per household. Schools will notify the household of the child's eligibility. The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) administers school nutrition programs in Texas and offers an eligibility calculator at www.SquareMeals.org/ProgramEligibility.

Decisions regarding payment for school meals are made at the national-government level, not by the school nutrition team or TDA. The dedicated staff at Banquete High School is looking forward to serving healthy, balanced meals to students in the new school year. These meals, whether paid, free, or reduced-price, offer a good source of nutrition for children.

Criteria for Free and Reduced-Price Meal Benefits

The following criteria will be used to determine a child's eligibility for free or reduced-price meal benefits:

Income Eligibility

1. Household income that is at or below the income eligibility levels

Categorical or Automatic Eligibility

2. Household receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

Program Participant Eligibility

3. Child's status as a foster child, homeless, runaway, migrant, or displaced by a declared disaster
4. Child's enrollment in Head Start or Even Start

Income Eligibility

For those households that qualify for free or reduced-price meals based on income, an adult in the household

must fill out a free and reduced-price meal application and return it to **Stephanie Garcia at 361-387-2551 ext. 156**. Those individuals filling out the application will need to provide the following information:

1. Names of all household members
2. Amount, frequency, and source of current income for each household member
3. Last 4 digits of the Social Security number of the adult household member who signs the application or, if the adult does not have a social security number, check the box for
"No Social Security number"
4. Signature of an adult household member attesting that the information provided is correct

Categorical or Program Participant Eligibility

Banquete ISD is working with local agencies to identify all children who are categorically and program eligible. *Banquete ISD* will notify the households of these children that they do not need to complete an application. Any household that does not receive a letter and feels it should, can contact Stephanie Garcia at 361-387-2551 ext. 156.

Any household that wishes to decline benefits should contact *Stephanie Garcia at 361-387-2551 ext. 156*.

Applications may be submitted anytime during the school year. The information households provide on the application will be used for the purpose of determining eligibility. Applications may also be verified by the school officials at any time during the school year.

Determining Eligibility

Under the provisions of the free and reduced-price meal policy, Stephanie Garcia at 361-387-2551 ext.156 or sgarcia@banqueteisd.net will review applications and determine eligibility. Households or guardians dissatisfied with the Reviewing Official's eligibility determination may wish to discuss the decision with the Reviewing Official on an informal basis. Households wishing to make a formal appeal for a hearing on the decision may make a request either orally or in writing to *Adrian Pena, Assistant Superintendent of Business at 361-387-2551 ext.404 or apena@banqueteisd.net*.

Unexpected Circumstances

If a household member becomes unemployed or if the household size increases, the household should contact the school. Such changes may make the children of the household eligible for benefits if the household's income falls at or below the attached current income eligibility guidelines.

Banquete ISD will only be taking applications for high school for the school year 2023-2024. However, elementary and junior high students will remain free (CEP).

In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, age, or disability. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, **the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs).**