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SYNOPSIS
Requires each school district with middle school or high school to establish food services advisory committee to consider menu options that reflect students’ cultural, traditional, and dietary preferences.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.
AN ACT concerning school breakfast and lunch menus and supplementing chapter 33 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. a. The chief school administrator or a designee of each school district that includes a middle school or high school, where a need is determined pursuant to subsection f. of this section, shall establish a food services advisory committee to consider and recommend school breakfast and lunch menu options that better reflect the cultural, traditional, and dietary food preferences of the student body including, but not limited to, vegetarian and vegan meal options. The committee shall serve in an advisory capacity and make recommendations to school principals, the chief school administrator or a designee, and the food services provider.

b. Members of the committee shall be selected by the chief school administrator or a designee and shall include a principal or a designee, a food services employee of the district or contractor as applicable, the chief school administrator or a designee, at least four students enrolled in the school district’s middle schools or high schools, and one or more parents of those students. A student who expresses an interest in participating on the committee shall be considered for membership. In the event that a school nurse expresses an interest in participating on the committee, the chief school administrator or a designee shall appoint a school nurse to the committee.

c. The committee shall convene at least three times during each school year with at least one meeting in each half of the school year.

d. In making its recommendations for new menu options that better reflect the cultural, traditional, and dietary food preferences of the student body, the committee shall also consider: available funding for the school breakfast and school lunch program, equipment, and other issues that may serve to limit food choices; the ability of the food services provider and its employees to comply with the recommendations; and the nutritional value of the new menu options.

e. Any new menu options offered by the school district shall meet nutritional standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

f. To determine the need for a food services advisory committee in a particular school district, a district shall provide a written form to each student enrolled in the district’s middle schools and high schools to inquire on whether the student has an unmet cultural, traditional, or dietary food preference. At a minimum the form shall include an area for the student’s name and contact
information, an area for the student to describe any unmet food preference requested to be addressed, a question on whether the student would like vegetarian or vegan meal options offered in addition to the current meal options, and an area where the student may request to participate on the food services advisory committee. The form shall also be made available to students and parents on the school district’s Internet website.

g. The requirements of this section may be suspended for one school year at the discretion of the chief school administrator in the event that:
   (1) no student indicates an unmet food preference on the written or Internet form; or
   (2) the response of students on the written or Internet form is de minimis in nature and the food preferences of those students can be met to the satisfaction of the students without a food services advisory committee.

h. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection g. of this section to the contrary, if a student expresses an interest in vegetarian or vegan menu items, the school district shall make all reasonable efforts to expand its school breakfast and school lunch menus to include hot and cold vegetarian and vegan meal options.

i. In the event that on the effective date of this section, a school district has a method for resolving student grievances that includes student representation, the school district may substitute that body in the place of a food services advisory committee and that body shall fulfill the requirements established pursuant to this section. If at any time that body is no longer functional, the school district shall comply with the requirements of this section within 60 days.

2. This act shall take effect in the first full school year following the date of enactment.

STATEMENT

This bill directs the chief school administrator of a school district that includes a middle school or high school to establish a food services advisory committee to consider and recommend school breakfast and lunch menu options that better reflect the cultural, traditional, and dietary food preferences of the student body, including vegetarian and vegan meal options. The committee will serve in an advisory capacity and make recommendations to the chief school administrator, the school principals, and the food services provider.

Under the bill, the members of the committee will be selected by the chief school administrator or a designee and will include a principal or a designee, a food services employee, the chief school administrator or a designee, at least four students enrolled in the school
district’s middle schools or high schools, and one or more parents of
those students. In the event that a school nurse expresses an interest in
serving on the food services advisory committee, the chief school
administrator or a designee will appoint a school nurse to the
committee.

In making its recommendations for new menu options, the
committee is directed to also consider: available funding for the school
breakfast and school lunch programs, equipment, and other issues that
may serve to limit food choices; the ability of the food services
provider and its employees to comply with the recommendations; and
the nutritional value of the new menu options. Finally, the bill
provides that any new menu options offered by the school district must
meet nutritional standards in the National School Lunch and School
Breakfast Programs.

To determine the need for a food services advisory committee in a
particular school district, a district must provide a written form to each
student enrolled in the district’s middle schools and high schools to
inquire on whether the student has an unmet food preference. The
form will also be available on the school district’s Internet website.
The bill’s requirements may be suspended for one school year at the
discretion of the chief school administrator in the event that 1) no
student indicates an unmet food preference on the written or Internet
form, or 2) the response of students is de minimis in nature and the
food preferences of those students can be met to the satisfaction of the
students without a food services advisory committee.

In the event that on the bill’s effective date a school district has a
method for resolving student grievances that includes student
representation, the school district may substitute that body in the place
of a food services advisory committee and that body will fulfill the
requirements established under the bill.