



St. Vrain Valley Schools Nutrition Services

2929 Clover Basin Drive

Longmont, CO 80501

5/24/2021

Ms. Carolina Neri

Carolina Neri et al

ELPASO VOZ Longmont

655 Aspen Ridge Drive

Longmont, CO 80026

Dear Ms. Carolina Neri :

Thank you for your dedication and commitment in cultivating a greater community partnership for the success of St. Vrain Valley School's students and their families. We agree, healthy students are better learners. School programs that account for the individual, family, school and community can positively influence both student health behaviors and outcomes (1). As parents ourselves and advocates for student health and equity, we appreciate the research ELPASO VOZ Longmont has done regarding the importance of providing healthy, fresh, balanced and great tasting meals each day

In Longmont (St. Vrain's largest community), 10% of children under the age of 18 live below the poverty level and with the recent pandemic the number could be higher. Research shows a strong connection between healthy behaviors and academic achievement (e.g., grades, standardized tests, graduation rates, attendance). Data from the [2019 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey \(YRBS\)](#) illustrates the prevalence of health behaviors among children and adolescents that can have a significant impact on learning and a lifetime of healthier living. Since 2001, there has been a steady increase in the number of students who qualify for free/reduced lunches (FRL). Over 26% or about 8,300 St. Vrain students qualified for FRL prior to Covid-19. In addition, one-third of St. Vrain schools have a FRL of 50% or greater, and seven of those schools in a non-pandemic year qualify for the Universal Free program. St. Vrain Valley Schools participates in four (4) nutrition programs through the USDA: [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#), [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#), [Child & Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#), and [Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#). Not only are we committed to creating balanced and nutritious meals, we are mandated to do so based on the recently released [Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025](#). Because of these programs, St. Vrain is able to meet two thirds (2/3) of the daily caloric needs of its students utilizing wholesome foods.

We are pleased ELPASO VOZ will be touring Warehouse Services. It is incredible to see the procurement path of our food, and how we are able feed roughly 25,000 students each day!

In response to actionable steps, we would like to make you aware of our current good works and programming ELPASO VOZ Longmont may not be aware St. Vrain has in place. On a policy level, we have a full-time school wellness program. This program promotes and educates students on healthy eating, Farm to School, environmental sustainability, social emotional learning, as well as emphasizing a need for physical activity among our students and staff each day. School Wellness programs are supported through a collaborative partnership between St. Vrain Nutrition Services and the Board of Education. To align with the USDA National

School Lunch Program (NSLP), SBP, CACFP, SFSP, CDE and wellness, St. Vrain has created guiding documents, as well as utilizing instruments that ensure compliance, best practice and accountability. They include:

[School Wellness Policy \(LWP\) - ADF](#)

- Board-approved Wellness Policy outlining district level wellness guidance, goals and framework

[School Wellness Procedures -741-ADF](#)

- Procedure Document that supports goals for school wellness per Board Policy. St. Vrain shall promote student wellness in accordance with these procedures.

[Well SAT: 3.0 Wellness School Assessment Tool](#)

- Quantitative assessment tool to help score and improve the local wellness policy (LWP)

[Colorado Healthy Schools Smart Source Inventory](#)

- Help inform programs and policies to improve student health equity

ELPASO MOVEMENT Actionable Steps:

Using at least 75% of fresh ingredients in main dishes, sides, appetizers, scratch-made within a 12-month period.

- We can always do better and more scratch cooking is our goal. Through a Scratch Cooking Grant in 2017, St. Vrain was able to implement two school kitchen sites known as production kitchens. These sites make scratch made items on our menu such as dressings, bean and pasta salads, breakfast burritos, breakfast sandwiches; staff prepare all fresh vegetables for all our kitchen sites.
- Prior to COVID, all St. Vrain Valley Schools offered a daily salad bar to all students who participate in our lunch program. Some of those successful outcomes have been increased student access to fresh fruits and vegetables, increased participation in the school lunch program (NSLP), increased school, staff, parents, administrator support of salad bars and healthy behaviors; Decreased food waste. We will anticipate salad bars again when safe to do so from the local health departments; although, salad bar items are still offered at the cafeteria lines at this time.
- In a single school year, St. Vrain provides over 900,000 pounds of local produce in our cafeterias.

Using at least 80% of organic ingredients or with no preservative, no colorants or dyes, no additives or flavorings, no high fructose corn syrup

- St. Vrain Valley Schools Nutrition Services collaborates with local farms throughout the Front Range and Western Slope of Colorado. Some of our partners include Wacky Apples out of Hotchkiss, Colorado where we procure and serve over 102,000 pounds of organic apples to our students every year.
- When purchasing items, St. Vrain makes sure to choose items that are both nutritious and desirable to our students. When configuring nutrition components for our meals, none of our food contain trans fats. Menu items must fall within USDA dietary guidelines regarding whole grain, lean protein, sodium, cholesterol, fat and added sugars.
- St. Vrain partners with US Foods, American Produce and uses vendors such as Tyson, Jennie-O et al. We purchase [whole muscle white meat chicken breasts from chickens raised with no antibiotics](#). The same goes for our [whole grain breaded chicken crispy patties](#). These are made with no artificial flavors

or preservatives. Our [hamburger patty](#) is all beef and contains no more than 30% fat. All of our item sourcing comes from Colorado first and in-season, when available.

- St. Vrain collaborates with local partners. SVVS understands the value of using local farmers to provide fresh and nutritional products on our menus. When in season, we purchase goods from Ela Farms, Royal Crest Dairy, Rocky Mountain Fresh, Ollin Farms, Colorado Tortilla, Aspen Moodn Farm, Tito's Beans and more.

Developing nutrition and health classes weekly for children and two education programs for parents within a 12-month period. Some examples of topics that we suggest should be fresh ones, health risks of processed foods, the importance of ecological, organic or biological agriculture, implications of food waste, the importance of exercising, the importance of getting enough sleep and how to control through food.

- We appreciate the suggested topics. School wellness and nutrition services prioritize student health developing programming and community partnerships around the [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child \(WSCC\) Model](#)
- St. Vrain Physical Education/Health teachers work hard during their classes, which bring in a nutrition component within their lessons.
- [School Education Gardens & Outdoor Classroom Movement Spaces](#) are being constructed from a CDE Student Wellness Grant and healthy eating, fresh fruits and vegetables. These gardens must be sustainable and written into each school's curriculum.
- [Food Rescue Programs](#) have begun formally in 13 elementary schools in partnership with Eco-Cycle. This program has an education component that teaches students the environmental, fiscal and food insecurity impact within their local and global community. The program is student-led. In a three-month period, food rescue at a single school site saved over 600 cartons of milk, 700 apples and oranges from going to the landfill and \$2000 in fiscal savings. Due to COVID, food rescue has been on hold. We plan on resuming when safe to do so from the local health departments.
- Nutrition Services, School Wellness, Environmental Sustainability partners with Eco Cycle to offer [Green Star Programs](#) to schools within St. Vrain. These schools are offered education on composting, recycling alongside food waste diversion. Due to COVID, this program is currently on hold. We plan on resuming when safe to do so from the local health departments.
- [100 Mile Club](#) – 4000 students in 21 elementary, k-8 middle schools champion physical activity through this once a week before or after school program.
- [Trip Tracker](#) – Education program, which incentivizes student to walk, bike, ride, carpool or bus to school in partnership with Boulder County Youth Transportation. There were 4,299 student and staff within eight elementary schools who participated in Trip Tracker. Student and staff logged 87.8 million steps to and from school, reducing 24,495 car trips and 27,123 lbs. of CO2 in the atmosphere. Students can now redeem their reward bucks for fruits, vegetables, and seeds at the Boulder County Farmer's Markets. Due to COVID, this program is currently on hold. We plan on resuming when safe to do so from the local health departments.
- Mindfulness Rooms – Schools are creating their own student mindful rooms that focus on well-being, self-regulation spaces that promote an area where a student can take a break and learn those social emotional skills to call and refocus themselves.
- Healthy Eating on a Budget – Partnership with school Cafecitos educating parents/guardians on the importance of eating healthy meals. Due to COVID, this program is currently on hold. We plan on resuming when safe to do so from the local health departments.

- Added Sugars Student Talks – School Wellness educated students at school-level health and wellness fairs about the importance of reducing intake of added sugars and choosing water. Water bottle refill stations have been installed to encourage consumption of water through a CDE Student Wellness Grant along with other funding sources.
- [Colorado Proud School Meal Day](#) – With the exception of COVID years, nutrition services and school wellness highlight one school and collaborate with farmers as a part of farm to school programming. Students were taught where their foods come from and were offered fresh, local samples of fruits and vegetables. Columbine Elementary even had a visit from a real pig sponsored by Colorado 4-H.
- [Cooking Matters Classes](#) – We collaborated virtually during COVID and in-person prior closing our schools. We offered cooking classes to our underserved communities. Students and families took 6-week classes, including students enrolled in our Teen Parenting Program. They learned skills, healthy snacking, reducing sugary drinks, making nutritious and quick meals, etc.
- Student-Led Farmer’s Markets – Elementary and middle schools created and planned their own Farmer’s Markets to raise money for their school education gardens. These fundraising events also helped local farmers by us purchasing the produce directly from the farmers.

School Lunches are served after recess and that the time provided be suitable for children to eat most of their food serenely.

- Nutrition Services and School Wellness encourages administrators to adopt USDA and [CDC’s best practice](#), scheduling recess prior to lunch as well as at least 20 minutes of undisturbed seated time to eat.

As we move forward in our ongoing, cooperative relationship, we invite ELPASO VOZ Longmont members to be a part of our upcoming District Health Advisory Council (DHAC) in the fall 2021 and quarterly. The DHAC is comprised of district administrators, community partners, health professionals and many more. The DHAC’s role is to address health issues that impact our school community such as the above asks brought forth in your proposal.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Shelly Allen

Director of Nutrition & Warehouse Services

c.c. Don Hadaad, Ed.D.
 Superintendent
 c.c. Brian Lamer
 Asst. Superintendent of Operations
 c.c. Johnny Terrell
 Asst. Superintendent of Student Services
 Director of Equity& Community Engagement
 c.c. Theresa Spires, RD
 School Wellness
 c.c. Olga Cordeo
 Director of Equity& Community Engagement

References

1. Center for Disease Control. (2021). Health and academics. Retrieved March 18, 2021 from https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/health_and_academics/index.htm