

November 1, 2023

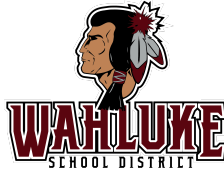
All three elementary school in the Wahluke School District are among 197 schools across Washington to have been selected and approved by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to participate in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program for the 2023-24 school year.

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) is a federally assisted program providing free fresh fruits and vegetables to children during the school day at eligible elementary schools. The goal of the FFVP is to introduce children to fresh fruits and vegetables, to include new and different varieties, and to increase overall acceptance and consumption of fresh, unprocessed produce among children.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has been awarded the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) FFVP grant for the 2023-24 school year. This is the 22nd year that the state of Washington has had the opportunity to participate in the FFVP. Washington was among the first states to participate in the pilot program in 2002-03 school year. Since then, the program has been expanded to include all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the territories of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

Student Support Services Director, Gigi Calaway is a big supporter of this program. “I sincerely believe this program will help our elementary students have early exposure to fruits and vegetables that they wouldn’t otherwise have. Research indicates that early exposure to fresh fruit and vegetables sets a healthy behavior pattern and improves health outcomes. In our district where we focus on equity and education for all students, it is wonderful to have an opportunity to engage students in a fun and educational opportunity that will set them up for a healthy future.”

Federal guidance requires that priority for the FFVP program be given to schools with the highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students, as students enrolled in these schools generally have fewer opportunities to regularly consume fresh fruit and/or vegetables. To be selected for the FFVP, a school must be an elementary school, represent the highest percentage of students who qualify for



free or reduced-price meals, be currently approved to participate in the National School Lunch Program, and complete an annual application. The 197 elementary schools selected to participate meet these criteria, have diverse enrollments, and represent 67 school districts with over 75,000 students.

The primary goal of the USDA FFVP is to create healthier school environments by providing healthier food choices. To achieve this goal, the FFVP offers public schools the opportunity to expand the variety of fruits and vegetables for children, increase their overall fruit and vegetable consumption, and make a difference in children's diets to impact their present and future health. The fruits and vegetables purchased with FFVP funds must be in addition to those served as part of the school breakfast and lunch programs. On days the FFVP operates, school nutrition staff prepare a fresh fruit or vegetable snack that students receive during the school day mid-morning to mid-afternoon.

Ideally, the more students are exposed to fruit and vegetables, the more they will begin to choose them again in the future. Principals, teachers, and school nutrition personnel in participating schools are encouraged to promote fresh fruit and vegetables to students. OSPI aggregates lessons, activity ideas, and resources from the Washington State Dept of Agriculture on fruits and vegetables grown in Washington and served through School Nutrition Programs to share with FFVP schools to assist in providing nutrition education to students.

Questions regarding the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program may be directed to (OSPI, Special Programs Specialist [Rachel Floyd](#).) ([Gigi Calaway](#), Director of Student Support Services at Wahluke School District.)