

# School Earns Money by Ditching National Lunch Program

A year ago, Minnesota's Prior Lake High School made waves when it announced it would not participate in the National School Lunch Program during the 2015-2016 school year. At that time, the *Star Tribune* [reported](#) the school district's reasoning as follows:

*"Prior Lake High School is just the third Minnesota school to withdraw from the federally funded meal program, choosing to provide school breakfast and lunch all on its own. The move will let the cafeteria serve higher-calorie meals and a wider variety of foods than controversial federal nutrition rules allow. A petition by Schult and other students last fall spurred the switch.*

*'Mainly our students have told us they are interested in portion sizes that better meet their needs,' said Janeen Peterson, food services director in the Prior Lake-Savage district. 'The school lunch program is not meant to meet the needs of very active students.'"*

Such a decision was not made without qualms, however, particularly in regard to funding. In order to run a program that better served the needs of students, the Prior Lake school district had to give up nearly \$200,000 in state and federal funds.

But a year later it appears that such fears were groundless. In fact, the Prior Lake High School lunch program has turned out to be a windfall for the school:

*"This year's revenue at the high school, just over \$1*

*million, surpassed expectations of \$900,000, and even further exceeded what the district was projected to receive if they'd opted to stay on the program: \$613,000."*

[Local news media](#) went on to report that student satisfaction with the lunch program has risen by 30 percent, and students have switched from complaining about the food to complaining about the long waiting lines.

Not surprisingly, the district intends to take another year off from the National Lunch Program and continue with its own.

In recent years, the federal government has tied many of its education policies and desires to the promise of federal funds, which many struggling school districts are convinced are a necessity. But as the Prior Lake School District will attest, sometimes local schools end up happier and in better financial shape without the federal government's funds.

Is it possible that other school districts will discover the same if they step out on their own?

*Image Credit: Twitter*