

High Schools Consider Cutting Back On Food Service

By Sophie Braccini



Students line up at Campolindo High School to buy lunch Photo SophieBraccini

The Acalanes Union High School District's food service program expects to lose about \$270,000.00 this school year. As a frame of reference, this is about the cost of three teachers. "We cannot continue to sponsor this program at this level through our General Fund," says AUHSD Superintendent Jim Negri.

AUHSD Board member Richard Whitmore is chairing the meetings at which possible solutions are discussed. "We have had small deficits off and on in the past but none of this magnitude," says Whitmore, "We have to meet a mandate to provide food but the program could be pared back to a "sack lunch" option if it cannot become financially self supporting."

The group decided to poll the community and a survey to find ways to improve attendance and profitability of the program is now online. "We need better options for

our students and a food program that breaks even," he said. In order to collect feedback and suggestions on the issue, Whitmore is asking every parent, student and employee to fill out a short survey, available online at: <http://www.acalanes.k12.ca.us/food-services/>. There are questions for parents, students and staff, ranging from frequency of using the service, to level of satisfaction about what is offered now, to elements that would increase the probability of using the service, types of foods that could be added, and ideas to balance the food budget.

School food service programs across the nation are experiencing similar fiscal issues. Rising food costs, low student participation, labor costs and new strict California guidelines for nutrition have contributed to the current situation. The question should come back to the Board at the end of June.