

Frozen food: Fremont schools pass out meals on frigid day

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FREMONT - Thousands of free and reduced-price meals have been distributed to hungry students in the Fremont City School District since the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools in Ohio to close.

Even as the schools began reopening plans, many, like FCS, were using a hybrid model to educate their students.

With free and reduced-price lunches a big part of the children's diets, Fremont schools began sending meals home to families last spring.

Wednesday was no different for the district as officials braved frigid temperatures to pass out meals to families, as the thermometer registered temps in the mid-to-high teens.

The free meals are given to children ages 1 to 18 living in the FCS district each week through the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

Tracy Rusch, child nutrition supervisor at FCS, said the meal distribution will continue as the district prepares for a full-time return to in-person learning on March 22.

"All the virtual students are eligible for the same number of meals that in-seat students are eligible for," Rusch said.

Pickup times are still being worked out as FCS superintendent Jon Detwiler noted that many of the workers helping with the distribution of meals will go back to working inside after students return to classes full-time, meaning fewer people will be available to pass out meals during distribution days.

Rusch said the district may stagger times to give parents different options to obtain meals.

With uncertainty about the pandemic and the ongoing vaccination of locals uncertain, Detwiler said he believes the option for online learning is a likely reality moving into the fall semester that starts in August.

"We are planning to back in as normal as possible but I still think, depending on what I'm hearing about vaccinations, I don't think we will not be able to offer an all-virtual option in the fall."

Detwiler said the hope is that all kids will be back in class and moving forward, and noted that districts across the state are having meaningful conversations about what online learning may look like in the future after experiencing virtual learning over the past 11 months.

Though online options could improve and be readily available, Detwiler still believes students will learn more with in-person learning and being able to develop and continue social skills they learn when going to school with classmates.

"We still believe face-to-face learning is the best way to learn but we also know an at-home learning option is good for everyone involved. We just don't know where that line is at," Detwiler said.

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