May 11, 2017

Using SIP money for FOOD:

Good afternoon! I am not aware of any AG opinions on the subject. The use of school improvement funds (i.e., the amount of up to $5.00 per student from the district discretionary lottery fund allocation) is outlined in section 24.121, F.S.

Section 24.121(5)(c), F.S., states

(c) A portion of such net revenues, as determined annually by the Legislature, shall be distributed to each school district and shall be made available to each public school in the district for enhancing school performance through development and implementation of a school improvement plan pursuant to s. 1001.42(18). A portion of these moneys, as determined annually in the General Appropriations Act, must be allocated to each school in an equal amount for each student enrolled. These moneys may be expended only on programs or projects selected by the school advisory council or by a parent advisory committee created pursuant to this paragraph. If a school does not have a school advisory council, the district advisory council must appoint a parent advisory committee composed of parents of students enrolled in that school, which is representative of the ethnic, racial, and economic community served by the school, to advise the school’s principal on the programs or projects to be funded. Neither school district staff nor principals may override the recommendations of the school advisory council or the parent advisory committee. These moneys may not be used for capital improvements or for any project or program that has a duration of more than 1 year; however, a school advisory council or parent advisory committee may independently determine that a program or project formerly funded under this paragraph should receive funds in a subsequent year.

From these guidelines, I do not see where the purchase of food would not be allowed, so long as the purchase is directly tied to a barrier, strategy, or action step in the school improvement plan and the School Advisory Council has approved the purchase through an official vote. However, as the amount of funding SACs receive is limited, it is recommended that they be judicious and strategic when selecting activities to ensure they have the most impact on student achievement. As a SAC member and steward of public funds, I would want to pursue other funding sources and reach out to school business partners before deciding whether to use school improvement funds to purchase food.

Let me know if you have any additional questions.

Wishing you well,

XXXXXX
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