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## **Child Nutrition Programs director retires after 26 years with SDE; successor named**

(BOISE) – Dr. Colleen Fillmore, who has overseen nutritious food programs for two generations of Idaho schoolchildren, will retire Tuesday, Feb. 15.

“Colleen has been a great partner in our shared mission to support schools and students to achieve,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said. “I thank her for her many years of tireless service, and for her compassion, commitment, grace and good humor.”

Fillmore joined the State Department of Education in the National School Lunch Program April 30, 1996, and was named director of Child Nutrition Programs in October 2004. She had already served under three superintendents of public instruction before Superintendent Ybarra was elected in 2014.

“During her time with the department the breadth of school nutrition programs, and the need for them, has grown continually,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “Federal regulations have become much more complex, and reimbursements to schools have grown from \$28 million in fiscal 1996 to \$122 million last fiscal year. Through it all, Colleen has provided strong leadership and support to districts.”

“Helping districts and charter schools navigate the thicket of regulations and applications has been especially challenging and important during this long-running pandemic,” the superintendent said. “And maintaining consistent, nourishing meal programs during disruptions in school schedules has been a tremendous challenge, especially in the spring of 2019, when COVID-19 forced a soft closure of public schools and most students were learning remotely.”

“Colleen and her team made sure schools and districts had maximum flexibility to meet local needs creatively, such as using school bus routes to deliver lunch or offering grab-and-go meals families could pick up.”

Offering support to such committed local leaders has been one of the pleasures of leading CNP, Fillmore said.

“This job and the people in child nutrition services throughout Idaho have brought a deep sense of purpose and belonging to my life,” Fillmore said. “Idaho has become a national leader in child nutrition programs, and it has been an honor to be part of that.”

“I have mixed feelings about retiring from SDE and leaving the talented and wonderful people on my team and throughout the department,” she said. “Although I will miss everyone, I am eager for the opportunity to spend more time with family cycling, kayaking and walking my furry babies.”

Superintendent Ybarra said the transition to a new Child Nutrition leader will be eased by the fact that Fillmore’s role will be filled by Lynda Westphal, herself a veteran of more than 21 years with the department. Since August 2011, Westphal has served as National School Lunch Program coordinator, the job Fillmore held before she became director.

“Colleen has been a tremendous boss and mentor,” Westphal said. “I have learned a lot from her during our 20-plus years working together. I wish her well in the next chapter of her life, but I will miss her encouragement, support and guidance.”

Westphal’s first day as the new director of Child Nutrition Programs will be Monday, Feb. 21,

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**Attached:** Photos of Dr. Colleen Fillmore and Lynda Westphal.