

August/September 2022

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We are thrilled to be serving your child for the 2022-2023 school year! To kick off the new year, we wanted to share a few things you and your child can look forward to when it comes to mealtime and get an inside look at concepts, and programs we'll be introducing this fall.

Free Meals Update

The Nationwide Waiver which allowed free lunch to all students during the 2021-2022 school year has ended. However, during the transition back to normal school operations in the school year 2022-23, Lebanon Public Schools has opted into the School Meals Assistance Revenue for Transition (SMART) funds providing meals (breakfast and lunch) at no cost for all students at the beginning of the school year. Please note that meals at no cost to all students are unlikely to last all year and are subject to the availability of district funds. Because the availability of meals at no cost will expire when all funds have been expended, it is critical that households submit a free and reduced-priced meal application to determine a student's eligibility for this school year and to avoid unpaid meal charges once we transition away from the free meals.

Our goal is to continue to support all students and families by ensuring those who need free meals at school continue to receive them – especially understanding that the pandemic has created new hardships for many families, including those who have never previously relied on school meals. We also understand that many households have not submitted a meal application in two years.

We encourage all families, regardless of income, to complete and submit a short, confidential school meal application prior to the start of the school year to ensure that there are no gaps in meal benefits for students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Parents or guardians can submit this application in person at your child's school office. It's an easy and confidential way to ensure your child stays well-nourished at school.

www.MyPaymentsPlus.com is an online service that provides you the convenience and information you need to manage your student's meal account.

This system speeds up serving lines in the cafeteria, eliminates the need to send checks to school or worry about lost or forgotten lunch money, and ensures that your child will receive a nutritious meal.

MyPaymentsPlus allows any family to:

- **Create a free, secured account to manage all of your student's accounts**
- **Check your student's account balance 24/7 online.**
- **Monitor the items your student has been purchasing in the cafeteria**
- **Create settings to receive email notifications when the account reaches a low balance**
- **Download the FREE mobile app for iPhone, iPad and Android for payments on the go!**

Food Allergies and Special Dietary Needs

We recognize the critical importance of our approach to supporting students and families who manage food allergy issues every day and work closely with the families of students who have food allergies and medical conditions that require a modification to their menu. Our approach involves coordination between parents and guardians, school nurses, school administrators, and food service professionals in the school's/district's food allergy and medical conditions protocol.

If you would like your child to receive meal accommodations for food allergies or a medical condition impacting the diet, please ensure that you submit the required documentation to your child's school nurse and that you receive confirmation from a school official that documentation has been received and a modification plan is in place.

In order to modify the school meal, we must have a written Medical Statement on file signed by a licensed medical provider (physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner). The statement must identify the following:

- Information about the child's impairment that is sufficient for understanding how it restricts the child's diet,
- An explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child's disability, and
- If appropriate, the food(s) to be omitted, texture modifications, and recommended substitutions.

For any children who are currently receiving meal accommodations, please contact Carlos VeraCruz, 860-642-3524, or Carlos.VeraCruz@lebanonct.org to review the meal accommodation plan, which may require additions or amendments based on the ongoing supply chain issues.

As part of our protocol, café managers review food labels for foods used to produce special meals daily; however, we are facing unprecedented food supply issues and while we are doing everything we can to minimize disruptions to our program, we do expect to experience continued shortages and substitutions. Therefore, we may encounter situations where product substitutions are made that contain different allergens or have a different nutritional profile than our usual menu items. As a result, we may need to provide a meal that is different than previously identified for students with special dietary needs to ensure that the meal served to them remains in adherence to their needs as outlined in their medical forms.

While we have posted signs in the cafeteria encouraging students with food allergies or other dietary concerns to speak up, we encourage you to remind your child to be sure to check with the cafeteria manager regarding product substitutions that may not be reflected in the posted menu. We will make every attempt to update Nutrislice in real-time, but please do not solely rely on nutrition or allergen information on Nutrislice to accommodate allergies or medical conditions in the event of last-minute menu changes.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your student's allergies or dietary needs, please don't hesitate to reach out to Carlos VeraCruz 860-642-3524. We are committed to providing safe meals for all students.

Programs that Encourage Fun and Discovery

Chartwells continues to inspire healthy eating habits and spark a culinary curiosity to last a lifetime through fun and engaging programs, including:

- **Mood Boost:** This innovative program helps elementary students connect what they eat with how they feel. It features recipes and characters that focus on six moods: Smart, Happy, Confident, Alert, Strong and Calm.
- **Student Choice:** Giving middle and high school students a voice in deciding what food concepts are featured and new menu items that will be available, Student Choice brings the latest food trends to school menus.

Menus, Nutrition Facts at Your Fingertips

Through Nutrislice, an innovative app, students, parents and faculty have access to school menus, including nutrition information, allergens and photos. Nutrislice can be downloaded for free from the App store (iOS) or Google Play (Android) and is available on desktop and mobile devices. Menus are also available at <https://lebanonct.nutrislice.com>

Celebrating Our School Lunch Heroes

As kids advance from grade to grade with new classes and different teachers, the dedicated lunch ladies and men in the school cafeteria are often one of the few constants throughout the academic journey. Whether they're at the ready with a spoon, spatula, or welcoming smile, these school lunch heroes go above and beyond to not only serve foods kids love to eat, but to ensure that students leave the cafeteria happier and healthier than they came in.

We are always looking for talented individuals to join the dining services team with perks including, family friendly schedules, no night or weekend work, hiring incentives, and more. For more information, contact the district director at 860-642-3524.

Through sharing our passion for great tasting food, instilling a desire for food discovery, and most importantly, providing nourishing meals, we're excited to continue serving up happy and healthy to your children in the year ahead.

We love hearing from parents, and your feedback is important to us. Please reach out to our team with any questions or comments. We're looking forward to a great school year!

Thank you,
Carlos VeraCruz
Director of Dining Services
860-642-3524
Carlos.VeraCruz@lebanonct.org