

September 2023

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Welcome to the 2023-24 school year! As the new school year gets underway, we wanted to take a moment and introduce ourselves as the new foodservice provider for Elmwood Park. We couldn't be happier to have the opportunity to serve breakfast and lunch to students every day. Over the course of the year, we will be introducing new menu options, gathering feedback, and making other changes to enhance the mealtime experience. 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 the new recipes, concepts, and programs we'll be introducing this fall.

Food Kids Love to Eat

Chartwells' team of chefs and dietitians are working to bring even more variety to our menus featuring new recipes with kid-approved foods. This year we're serving up:

Fun Lunches, Pizza,

- Waffles, Butter Pancakes
- Pasta, Specialized Pizza
- New Hot and Spicy Crispy Chicken Sandwich

The value of school lunch is top of mind as families continue to experience inflation and growing food costs at home. In addition to giving kids the chance to try new foods and cut back on food waste, school lunch provides students with healthy, balanced, and safe meals at an affordable price, while saving families time and stress.

Meal Cost and Free and Reduced-Price Meal Applications

For the 2023-24 school year, breakfast will cost \$2.25 and lunch will cost \$3.75 Free or Reduced-Price Meals are available again this year to students who qualify for these benefits, but all students, regardless of family situations, are encouraged to dine in the cafeteria together.

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 online at [Elmwood Park School District / Homepage \(elmwoodparkschools.org\)](https://www.elmwoodparkschools.org). It's an easy and confidential way to ensure your child stays well-nourished at school.

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 and that you receive confirmation from Jose Melendez 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 Jose Melendez 201-273-6073 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. 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 Jose Melendez. 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:

Global Eats: Highlighting the unique ingredients and authentic flavors from cuisines around the world, Global Eats brings a world of flavors to the cafeteria. Our newest signature program takes students on a food exploration that celebrates cultural heritages, traveling through China, India, Italy, Mexico, and more.

- **Discovery Kitchen:** Designed to make nutrition education fun and entertaining, Chartwells chefs and dietitians have worked together to create curriculums that get kids cooking, trying new foods, and learning about what they're eating. Each month has a different theme and activities will be adapted for the current meal programs.
- **Mood Boost:** This innovative program helps elementary and middle school 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 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.

Inviting Environments & Happy Cafeterias

Students need a place to eat where they can connect with others, recharge, and enjoy a sense of happiness and a with their classmates.

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 [elmwoodparkschools.nutrislice.com]

Thank you,
Jose Melendez
201-273-6073