

Dearborn Heights School District No. 7

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June 28, 2017

Dear District 7 Families:

At our last Board of Education meeting on June 20, 2017 there were concerns brought forward during audience participation about our school food service program. I listened to the concerns and took notes so that I could discuss those issues with our Sodexo General Manager, Fred Marinucci. After meeting with Fred, I wanted to follow up with the families to share this information.

One of the concerns that was voiced was that too much food is being thrown away. As I mentioned at the meeting, there are federal regulations that dictate what food must be served to the students who are receiving a school lunch. We do not have the option of letting students refuse the required items. However, we are in agreement that the food waste is excessive. Starting this fall, each building will have a "share table" in their cafeteria. The "share table" will be a place for students to place packaged items and fresh fruit that they are not going to eat. This will include items like apples and juice. Any items that could spoil will not be allowed to be placed on the "share table" such as milk. Any of the items on the "share table" can be taken by students to add to their regular lunch. Hopefully the implementation of the "share table" at each building will reduce the amount of food waste.

Another concern that was mentioned at the meeting was in regards to the quality of the food that is being served. The temperature of hot food as well as the condition of the food were discussed specifically. This seemed to be more prevalent at the elementary buildings where the food is prepared off-site and delivered to the schools. The food service staff follow very strict standards of temperature requirements for the food they are serving. Between each lunch period, temperatures are re-checked to make sure the food is still at the appropriate temperature. If the food has fallen below that required temperature, it is not served. If the elementary schools are running out of items, they communicate to the buildings where the food is prepared, and new food is delivered. There are rare occasions when a lunch choice runs out and cannot be replenished. Fortunately, there are 5 options each day for the elementary students (2 hot lunch choices, 2 sandwich choices and 1 salad). Typically, if a desired item runs out, students are able to choose something else without a problem. We also discussed quality of food over time. The example given at the meeting was about Bosco Sticks that become hard. Mr. Marinucci is going to review the standards of quality with his staff to make sure that food that has become hard is not served.

Finally we discussed the health standards of our lunches and the portions. As was mentioned at the meeting, there are strict guidelines and nutritional standards that Sodexo must follow. All food served has been approved and meets these standards. The portion of food that is served also is mandated by the government and is followed. Mr. Marinucci did remind me that students are always able to pay for a larger portion or a double portion if they choose. However, if a student is receiving a free or reduced price lunch, the extra portions would have to be paid for by the student.

I hope that this information answers the questions and satisfies some of the concerns brought forward at the meeting. We realize that there will be times when problems arise, but we also want our families to know that we are trying our very best each day to make the food program meet the needs of everyone. If you have other questions or concerns in the future, don't hesitate to contact Fred Marinucci at (313)203-3197. Have a happy and relaxing summer!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer Mast".

Jennifer Mast

Superintendent

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Educational Excellence and Lifelong Success