

I would like to take this opportunity to address your concerns over lunch prices and purchases made by the students of Westford Public Schools.

We belong to the National School Lunch Program, a federally funded program which is monitored and regulated by the USDA and the DESE of Massachusetts. Schools operating under this program adhere to the following: A student meal (reimbursable meal) must include a minimum of three selections from five food groups – meat or meal alternate, grain, vegetable, fruit and fluid milk. Of those components, students must have a serving of fruit or vegetable, the other selections are their choice. For example: chicken nuggets, sweet potato fries and a dinner roll would be a complete meal (meat, grain and vegetable). A slice of pizza (grain and meat alternate) and a cup of salad would also be a complete meal. A slice of pizza and a milk would not since there is not a serving of fruit or vegetable with the meal. When students elect to take only a slice of pizza or only two slices of pizza, they are not charged for a reimbursable meal, they are charged A La Carte for each slice of pizza. In Westford we also offer dessert items at lunch. Dessert is \$.50 per piece and is always an A La Carte purchase.

At the Robinson Elementary School there is a milk program for children who wish to have a milk with their morning or afternoon snack. If you have enrolled your child in the milk program, you will see that additional charge on the child's account every day.

Every month a menu is published on the WPS website. Prices for each grade level are listed. The complete, reimbursable meal with all of its components is posted. Every school offers a vegetarian option and usually an alternate meal choice. Those meals are also complete, reimbursable meals provided the child takes the components necessary to make it.

Our goal is to feed each child a complete, well balanced and nutritious meal. If a child takes advantage of all of the components offered each day, the meal should satisfactorily "fill him up". From the first day of kindergarten students who buy school lunch are guided through the process and very soon understand what it is they must take from the lunch line to make their lunches complete. Servers, cashiers and lunch room aides are quite diligent in reminding children of how to build that reimbursable meal. We do not, however, force them to make it. By the time a child enters the high school he/she is fully aware of what he/she should be taking to make a complete meal.

At the high school there are many more choices for students because there is a snack shop located at one end of the cafeteria. All snacks sold there are in compliance with the John Stalker Institute of Framingham State College's A-List for Massachusetts school snacks. Bottled water and flavored seltzer are also available. The price list for all of these items is posted at the snack shop so students know what they are being charged for each item.

Last spring the residents of Westford voted to adopt a polystyrene ban, effective in July, 2017. Prior to the Town Meeting I presented to the School Committee the impact this ban would have on the school lunch prices. Alternative products to the Styrofoam serving pieces used in the cafeteria are at a minimum 3 to 4 times more expensive. In order to comply with this ban as well as to meet increasing food and fuel costs, the School Committee approved an increase in the cost of student meals. We have begun the transition from polystyrene products in our cafeterias and plan to be completely compliant by the end of the school year.

If you have any questions or concerns about your children's purchases, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I will address your concerns as quickly as possible.

Regards,

*Colleen*

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