

# memo

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: ALL GPS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS, PTA PRESIDENTS, VP COMMUNICATIONS AND VP HEALTH & WELLNESS REPS

From: PTAC HEALTH & WELLNESS COMMITTEE AND JOHN HOPKINS, FOOD SERVICES

Date: October 9, 2017

Re: **FOOD SERVICES UPDATE & DISTRICT SURVEY RESULTS – PLEASE DISSEMINATE THIS INFORMATION TO YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

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Data from the survey conducted this past March 2017 on the elementary school lunch program plus continuous feedback from parents are the primary reasons for the latest changes in Food Services across the District. The following small but significant changes are being made:

- Raising the quality and lowering the number of snack ("extras") options. For example, Rice Krispie treats and General Mills cereal bars will no longer be a K-8 grade offering. All Frito Lay chips have been pulled from elementary schools. Ice cream offered to grades 3-5 will be free from high fructose corn syrup, artificial colors and nuts.
- Some replacement snack offerings are Smartfood Popcorn, Pirate's Booty, Popchips, Whole Grain Goldfish, Nutrigrain bars and granola bars.
- A new offering being tested is yogurt parfaits with fresh fruit and nut-free granola (currently served at the high school and very popular). These parfaits are now on offer every day in both elementary and middle schools as a meal or an a la carte snack.
- School lunches will include more *fresh* vegetables. Frozen veggies will be limited to corn, edamame and some oven crisp potato options. No more "potato smiles."
- By the second half of the year, the district is looking to roll out new "Mini Vegetable Bar" carts - offered to anyone buying a school lunch.

Below are some highlights from the elementary school lunch parent survey that support the above referenced changes:

- Over half (52%) of parent respondents across the district indicate they have children who *never* eat school lunch or do so *1 day a week or less*. Nearly a third (30%) of respondents participate in school lunch *4-5 days/week*.

- Among those that never buy school lunch or do so infrequently, reasons cited most were *I do not like the quality of the food* (47%) and *I do not like the lunch menu choices* (45%).
- Over 65% of all parent respondents do *not* allow their children to buy a la carte snacks or “extras.”
- Top two improvements parents would like to see are *healthier snack and/or dessert options* (64%) and *better variety of lunch options* (57%).
- Two-thirds of parents would like to see *more lunchroom guidance* provided by an adult to assist children with making healthier food choices.
- The vast majority (72%) are willing to pay more (between \$1-3 more) for a higher quality lunch offering.

The participation rate was an average of 36% across the district. Overall, there were 1,575 survey responses. The table below shows a breakdown of response rates by school:

<u>School</u>	<u># of Students</u>	<u># Respondents</u>	<u>% of School Population</u>
Cos Cob	447	160	36%
Glenville	454	212	47%
Hamilton Ave	403	104	26%
Dundee/ISD	386	144	37%
Julian Curtiss	342	99	29%
New Lebanon	264	84	32%
North Mianus	507	189	37%
North Street	433	152	35%
Old Greenwich	438	169	39%
Parkway	263	67	25%
Riverside	476	195	41%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4413</b>	<b>1575</b>	<b>36%</b>

The PTAC Health and Wellness Committee is committed to continuing to work with the GPS Food Services’ department to evaluate ways to improve our school lunches and school lunch environment. This year, in addition to an ongoing review of school lunch offerings, the Committee will be introducing the new Traveling Food Ambassador Program (TFAP) in some elementary schools. Additional information on the program will be forthcoming.

Please also note the PTAC Health and Wellness in partnership with GPS Food Services is conducting surveys at the middle school and high school level at this time. We will provide an update on those survey results and any related food services changes in the coming months.