

Frequently Asked Questions

Hudson Public Schools Food Services Program Changes

August 15, 2012

Hudson Public Schools (HPS) announces a new food services program.

HPS will kick off the school year with a new food services management company, Whitsons School Nutrition, to replace our in-house, self-operated program.

Why is the school system making this change at this time?

It was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain quality food choices without incurring price increases. Food services management companies such as Whitsons leverage volume purchasing and are able to meet USDA food requirements and operate with more efficiency than is possible for smaller programs. Ongoing changes in federal regulations will continue to drive all schools' food requirements, adding more challenges for a small, in-house operation.

Will the cost increase?

No price increases will occur this year. Breakfast and lunch prices are set by the School Committee and are reviewed periodically and subject to change, but the committee strives to keep prices as low as possible.

Will my student notice changes in the cafeteria and food that is served?

Maybe. We anticipate that students will respond favorably to Whitson's healthy, fresh food choices. At the same time that we are switching to a new food company, we are also making some significant changes that all school departments and food services organizations in the country must now make to comply with new federal regulations that went into effect in July 2012. These changes require that schools serve only fat free and low fat milk, reduce the amounts of saturated fats, trans fats, and sodium in all foods, and limit serving grains that are not whole grain. This last change will likely be the one most noticed by students as the types of breads, rolls, pizza crusts, doughs, and other grain products will be changing to healthier options. More information is available at this USDA link <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/PressReleases/2012/0023.htm>

What other changes can be expected?

Whitsons will bring several new resources to our district, including a team of nutritionists that directly assist our on-site manager to prepare menus that meet government requirements. There is also a nutrition education program that will enable us to expose students to a variety of healthy foods in engaging and informative ways. A new point-of-sale system (POS) will be installed during the 2012-2013 school year to more efficiently process payments, and will enable parents to pay on-line into an account for their students. Parents will also be able to monitor their child's account, viewing food choices and putting restrictions on the items they may purchase.

How was Whitsons chosen as the management company?

Beginning last fall, a five-member team interviewed four interested management companies to first assess whether contracting for food management services was in the best interests of our students and families. The Food Services Evaluation Team felt strongly that it was and brought a recommendation to the School

Committee to approve the issuance of a Request for Proposals. The proposals of four companies were evaluated by the team and *Whitsons* was unanimously favored based upon criteria established in the proposal process. In June, the School Committee authorized the administration to move ahead on a contract with *Whitsons*.

How do I learn more about Whitsons, the new menus, and other aspects of the new program?

As before, menus will be available on-line. Whitsons comprehensive web site, customized for Hudson, will go live before school begins. It will have menus, parent information, and information about nutrition and health. The link to this site will be on the District home page and all school home pages.

What if I have more questions about the program or changes in menus or the food served to students?

Contact the main office at your child's school as they will be able to answer any questions about food services provided there. Drew Lauer is the new Food Services Manager. He was most recently the Assistant Manager for Whitsons in Newton, Massachusetts and can be reached at alauer@hudson.k12.ma.us or by phone at 978-567-6120.