

## **Raymond School Nutrition Service**

**Fall Update - October 16, 2019**

**Judith DiNatale, School Nutrition Service Director**

This year was a more transitional start. Just before school was about to begin, we found ourselves short by 2 staff members at RHS. Shuffling folks for coverage, we opened short by one at each RHS and LRES, while at the same time adjusting to a new one less person staffing pattern at IHGMS. There were also new lunch schedules at RHS and LRES, with challenges of their own to be met.

Our fine professional staff stepped up and met the task head on at an exhausting pace on many days. We were delighted to be fully staffed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of school, and finding ways to better work with the new schedules.

We continue to work with our vendors, some of whom were new to us last year. The growth of relationships includes increased communications and sometimes opportunities for products or services that may be investigated as the year unfolds. The connections with our 3 new RFP vendors from 2018 were such good overall experiences that we have extended those RFP's to this school year. Our Grocery bid through the New Hampshire Buying Group is in now in its final year, and the vendor has been very positive in adding items of interest to it as requested by our group from across the state. The paper and supplies bid was rewarded this year, with price structure very near to what it had been on the previous bid.

Our returning staff participated in the opening day training on August 26<sup>th</sup>. The networking with colleagues from the entire district and from other departments was a bonus during a wide opportunity for learning.

On the first weekend of September, 3 of our Nutrition Service staff attended the School Nutrition Association of New Hampshire's Fall Conference and Food Show. There we were able to soak in even more positive influence, concepts and training. We also picked up several new ideas for menu items at RHS, and samples of items that could become a part of the rotation in our LEAP snacks.

This year we are working closely with Pat Arsenault and his coordinators as the After School Snack has been included in our National School Lunch Program application as a Reimbursable Snack. This makes requirements and tracking more specific than in past years, but has the potential to create more nutritional encouragement for the students involved.

Our Managers continue to work with the strategies that were initiated last year. Students in all 3 schools have enjoyed the theme days and are at the very least, amused and intrigued by our Foodie Holidays! The new menu template and added website view seem to have included convenience with merchandising.

We are grateful to the office staff and IT department in all 3 school for their assistance and support in getting menus and application information out to families. We are also still striving to connect with events in each school in a timely enough manner to create a menu that celebrates accordingly. Even if a classroom unit comes up with something on a short lead, we can try to find a way to make some part of the menu or a la cart item coordinate.

Our opening numbers, by percentage, reflect stability in our programs. Even at LRES, where we had an increase in meal price, the participation rate remains a good start up position. Actual counts, however, are dipping with the enrollment at RHS & LRES. Customer satisfaction and positive response from those who participate still run high all over.

Below is a snapshot comparison of August/ September 2018 and 2019 numbers.

School	Enrollment	Total Lunches	Daily Average	% participation
<i>August-September 2019 (21 days)</i>				
IHGMS	374	3820	174	51
LRES	465	4607	209	44
RHS	355	2626	119	38
<i>August-September 2018 (24 days)</i>				
IHGMS	383	4048	186	52
LRES	456	4406	184	44
RHS	385	2948	123	35

Along with our decrease in enrollment over recent years continued to have an impact on the percentage of students who are eligible for Free & Reduced price meals. This phenomenon is being experienced in a good number of communities across the state.

Vending income for both IHGMS and RHS increased significantly last year. This was largely due to an increased number of available Smart Snack items available thru our new vendor. We also set a timer on the lobby beverage machine at IHGMS, enabling us to utilize Middle School Smart Snack standards from 30 minutes past the end of the school day. This opened up more appealing options to the public for purchase and consumption. We expect that this trend will

continue this year, especially as manufacturers take advantage of somewhat relaxed whole grain requirements in snack items.

The numbers presented below reflect the true picture of students whose households have qualified for Free & Reduced Price Meals for the 2019-2020 school year.

School	Enrollment	Free	Reduced	Total % F&R	Enrollment	Free	Reduced	Total % F&R	
<i>11-Oct-19</i>					<i>12-Oct-18</i>				
IHGMS	374	58	32	24	IHGMS	386	90	28	31
LRES	465	78	35	23	LRES	463	120	20	28
RHS	355	35	17	15	RHS	387	58	13	18
21% F&R					26%F&R				

As earlier stated, it was a different kind of start this year, but things are settling down to create pockets of opportunity. Menu celebrations, items being designed that respond to student input, new product availability and taste testings are all ahead of us on the horizon. While we are not utilizing the theme week to celebrate School Lunch in October, we do plan to develop our own School Lunch Week during National Nutrition Month in March.

Stay tuned for further delicious developments....