



WELCOME TO OUR

## Nutrition Newsletter



### A Wellness Update



Alexandria Public Schools is committed to prioritizing your child's health and well-being. This newsletter serves as a way to keep you informed about exciting health-focused events happening at your child's school. We believe that wellness extends beyond the classroom, and we encourage families and the community to stay engaged in fostering a healthy lifestyle. As the saying goes, "If you don't have your health, you have nothing". That's why we are dedicated to promoting good health, as it plays a crucial role in supporting student learning and success.

### In this newsletter you will find:

Updates on Student Wellness, Food and Nutrition Activities, and Health and Wellness Information for Pre-K through 12th grade

# Is Your Child Not Wanting To Eat Veggies?

## START EARLY AND OFTEN

Fruits and vegetables are rich in key nutrients. We hear much about us as adults consuming adequate intakes of both as we age. This is just as important in younger years. Diets rich in vegetables can help bolster the immune system, reduce the risk of chronic illness and keep a healthy weight throughout life.

It's typically not too difficult to get your child to eat fruits. The sweet taste of fruit can be more enticing. Veggies may be a more difficult. For this reason, most brands of baby food use fruit to mask the taste of vegetables. Taste buds, at an early age, become trained to prefer fruits over vegetables. Although fruits are rich in nutrients as well, veggies must be included in a healthy diet.

# Reasons Why Vegetables Are Often Overlooked

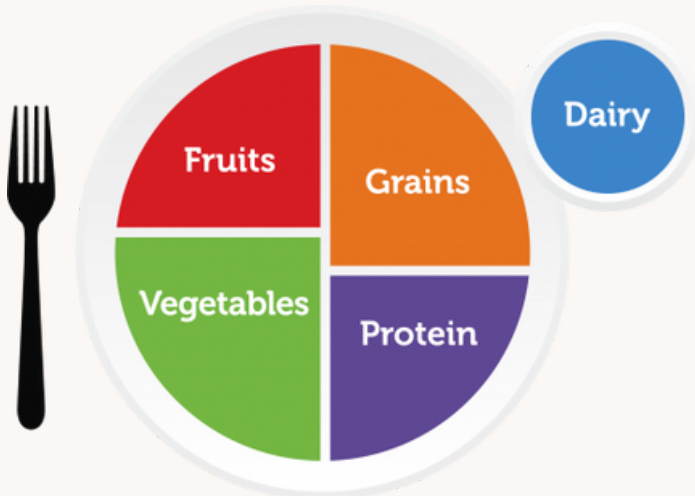
Younger children often have more sensitive taste buds. They dislike foods with bitter or spicy flavors. Broccoli for example tastes much different than they do as adults.

Another reason is enough time to eat. "Chew Time" is needed to consume fruits and veggies as compared to snack foods that go down a little faster. Also, the more you pressure your child to eat their veggies, the more likely they will resist.

# What Can A Parent Do?

## YOU CAN MAKE A BIG IMPACT ON WHAT YOUR CHILD EATS

In families who share most meals around the table, kids are more likely to eat their veggies. Keep the conversation positive around veggies; if you protest they very likely will develop the same biases. Also plan enough time to eat and finish vegetables served. Often veggies are the last to be consumed. Don't let the clock dictate your child's diet. Lastly, serve veggies at an early age and serve them often. The United States Department of Ag (USDA) states that fruits and vegetables should consume at least half your plate. (Parents too!)



# Meet Your Student's FNS Team



At Voyager, we believe every child deserves nutritious, delicious, and well-balanced meals to fuel their learning and growth. Behind the scenes, our dedicated School Food and Nutrition Team works tirelessly to ensure that each meal is created and served to meet the highest standards of quality, taste, and nutrition.

From planning healthy menus to carefully preparing meals with fresh ingredients, this team is committed to supporting your child's well-being every single day. They bring their passion for feeding students. Their efforts go beyond the cafeteria-they are helping to build lifelong healthy eating habits!

Thank you Voyager "Lunch Teachers" for loving what you do and caring for students.



# “APS is a Learning Institution...Which Includes Learning In The Cafeteria”

## CAFETERIA CLASSROOMS

Serving nutritious and delicious meals every day is our passion! Beyond that, we are committed to helping students understand the importance of healthy eating and how their food choices impact their overall health and well-being.

Research from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) highlights that many children in the U.S. are not consuming enough fruits and vegetables. In Minnesota, approximately 22% of children eat fruit less than once a day, while 41% consume vegetables less than daily.

Every day, your child has access to a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. To make healthy eating fun and educational, we feature monthly themes that spotlight different foods and food groups. Our "Try It Tuesday" events introduce students to new and exciting foods—often fruits or vegetables—giving them the opportunity to taste something they may not have tried before while learning a little about its benefits.



## Is Juice Worth The Squeeze?

All foods can have a place in a balanced diet, with moderation being key. With this in mind, we offer juice twice a week instead of daily. While juice can be a tasty option, it is high in sugar and lacks important nutrients and fiber found in whole fruits and vegetables. Because of this, we encourage students to choose whole fruits whenever possible for a more nutritious option.

# Nourishing Minds With Farm Fresh Finds!

APS HAS PARTNERSHIPS WITH SEVERAL MN FARMS...SOME RIGHT HERE IN ALEXANDRIA

As parents, we all strive to give our children the best, especially when it comes to their health and well-being. One of the most powerful ways to support their growth and development is through proper nutrition. That's why the Farm-to-School movement plays a vital role at Alexandria Schools, bringing fresh, locally sourced foods to our students.

## What Is Farm-To-School?

Farm-to-School programs bridge the gap between local farmers and schools, bringing fresh, locally grown fruits, vegetables, dairy, and other nutritious foods to students. By creating a direct connection from farm to cafeteria, these programs ensure children have access to wholesome meals while also helping them develop a deeper appreciation for where their food comes from.

## Farm To School Benefits We Value

- Fresher food retains more nutrients and flavor due to reduced travel time and quicker farm-to-table delivery.
- Introducing children to fresh, locally sourced foods encourages healthier eating habits and a preference for nutritious options.
- Strengthens local farming communities and boosts the economy.
- Promotes environmental sustainability by reducing transportation emissions and supporting eco-friendly farming practices.

## Our Local Farm Partnerships

- ✓ Peppa And Poppy's in Alexandria, MN
- ✓ Mary Lund's Farm, Brandon MN
- ✓ Country Blossom Farm, Alexandria, MN
- ✓ Stony Creek Farm, Melrose, MN
- ✓ Real Food Hub, Wilmar, MN
- ✓ Ferndale Farm, Cannon Falls, MN
- ✓ The Good Acre, Falcon Heights, MN
- ✓ Revol Farms, Owatonna, MN
- ✓ Hugh's Gardens, MN



## NEW AND UPCOMING PARTNERSHIPS

Alexandria Public Schools, Food & Nutrition Department recently was awarded a \$25,000 grant to partner with and purchase chicken from Tree Range Farms. Tree Range farmers focus on "jungle-like" habitats that honors the true and natural environment of chickens. Check out their website, <https://treerangefarms.com/>