



Alexandria Nutrition Newsletter

At Alexandria Public Schools, we're proud to say we have the best school nutrition team around! This dedicated group of professionals works hard every day to ensure students receive the nutritious meals they need to thrive—both in and out of the classroom.

But they do more than serve food—they're also "lunch teachers" who help students discover new foods, build healthy habits, and learn the value of good nutrition for life.

A heartfelt thank you to our incredible Food and Nutrition Team for fueling success and inspiring a healthier generation!

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

What Do I Feed My Kids This Summer?

DON'T STRESS, WE GOT THIS!

Summer is here, and we know that planning healthy meals every day can be a challenge for many families. That's where we come in—Alexandria Public Schools is offering FREE breakfast and lunch all summer long for all kids 18 years old and under. You do not need to be a student of APS to take part in this program.

Each day, students can choose from two different nutritious entrees, enjoy a fresh garden bar filled with fruits and vegetables, and have milk to round out the meal. Our meals are made fresh daily, and whenever possible, we use locally sourced ingredients to highlight the best of the season. Summer is the perfect time to enjoy delicious, peak-season produce!

No registration is needed—just come by and enjoy! While meals are free for children 18 and under, we also welcome adults to join us for a meal. We'd love to see you there!



Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (or Summer EBT) also known as “SUN Bucks” will be provided this summer to all eligible school-age children who receive benefits through SNAP, TANF, FDIPOR, or certain other income-based benefits included qualifying for meal benefits. USDA provides up to \$120 in grocery benefits per child who qualifies.

Your Student May Qualify For Some Great Educational Benefits for 2025-26

BENEFITS FOR SPORTS AND OTHER FEES CAN BE COVERED

During the school year, APS offers healthy meals each day. All students can get one breakfast and one lunch free of charge each day at school. Although no application is required to receive this free meal benefit, filling out the Application for Educational Benefits is still important! Your child(ren) may qualify for other benefits like reduced fees at school for sports and activities. Your application may also help the school qualify for education funds, discounts, and other meal programs. If you feel you may qualify, please complete an online application starting in July. If you have completed an application in the past, you will need to re-apply every summer.

Fueling the Future: 2025-26!



Thanks to a generous grant from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, we're excited to announce that all Alexandria schools will be serving locally sourced Tree-Range® Chicken next year!

Tree-Range Farms, located just down the road in Northfield, MN, raises chickens in rich, "jungle-like" habitats that honor their natural environment—leading to healthier animals and better-quality food.

We've been busy preparing for the 2025–2026 school year, and student taste tests across all grade levels gave the chicken two thumbs up! To help bring out the best flavors, our Food and Nutrition Team has teamed up with local Chef Matthew Jensen to refine our cooking methods. Get ready for new and delicious chicken dishes coming soon to our school menus!

FINDING A PROCESS TO UNPROCESS FOODS IN OUR SCHOOLS

At Alexandria Public Schools, our Food and Nutrition Department is committed to reducing processed foods on our menus while still making sure students enjoy every meal we serve.

We believe that healthy food should also taste great! That's why we'll be taste testing new, less processed recipes with students throughout the year. These gradual changes will help us go above and beyond USDA guidelines—supporting student health while keeping meals kid-approved.



🌱 Why Less Processed Foods Matter in School Meals

✅ More Nutrients, Less Junk

Whole, minimally processed foods like fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins provide more vitamins, minerals, and fiber—without the added sodium, sugar, and preservatives found in many packaged foods.

✅ Supports Better Focus and Learning

Meals made with real, whole ingredients fuel growing bodies and brains. Kids who eat nutritious meals are more likely to stay focused, energized, and ready to learn throughout the day.

✅ Fewer Additives and Artificial Ingredients

By reducing highly processed foods, we also reduce kids' exposure to artificial dyes, flavors, and preservatives—some of which have been linked to behavioral or health concerns in children.

✅ Teaches Lifelong Healthy Habits

Serving meals made from scratch with simple, recognizable ingredients helps students develop a taste for real food and encourages better food choices beyond the cafeteria.

✅ Supports Local Farmers and Food Systems

When we cook more from scratch, we can buy more local produce and ingredients—keeping our food fresher and strengthening our community food system.

✅ Better Taste = More Participation

Fresh, less processed meals often just taste better! When kids enjoy their meals, they're more likely to eat them—and waste less food.

Stay Healthy and Happy Throughout the Summer

Summer break is a great time for kids to relax and recharge—but it's also important to keep healthy habits going! Here are some fun and easy ways to help your child stay healthy all summer long:

- 🥬 Eat the Rainbow: Make meals colorful with a variety of fruits and vegetables. Farmers markets and local produce stands are great summer spots!
- 💧 Hydrate Often: Warmer temps mean kids need to drink more water. Keep a reusable water bottle handy!
- 🚲 Get Moving: Encourage at least 60 minutes of activity each day—bike rides, swimming, or even a backyard dance party all count!
- 😴 Stick to a Sleep Routine: A consistent bedtime helps kids stay rested, focused, and ready for summer fun.
- 🧴 Stay Sun Safe: Don't forget sunscreen, hats, and sunglasses when heading outdoors.



🧑‍🏫 Build Healthy Routines

Without the structure of a school day, it's easy to fall into unhealthy patterns. Here's how to keep balance:

- Set regular meal and snack times
- Limit screen time and encourage creative play
- Plan weekly outdoor family activities
- Make time to read, do puzzles, or visit the library

Small habits can lead to big results—start with one or two and build from there!

🍏 Smart Summer Snacking

Kids love snacks—and summertime is the perfect chance to introduce healthy options:

- Fresh fruit like berries, melons, or frozen grapes
- Veggie sticks with hummus or yogurt dip
- Homemade smoothies with low-fat milk or yogurt
- Trail mix with whole grain cereal, seeds, and a few dark chocolate chips

Let kids help prep their own snacks—it teaches independence and healthy choices!