

Dear Parents,

My name is Melanie Romano and I am very happy to announce I will be the new Food Service Director for your school. I am a Registered Dietitian who completed a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics from Kent State University, Master of Science in Human Nutrition from Winthrop University, and Dietetic Internship from Be Well Solutions.

As an advocate of health and wellness in both my personal and professional life, the importance of proper nutrition deeply resonates within me. My passion for school nutrition stems from seeing the opportunity to influence a child's life. Becoming involved in your school nutrition program, I am not only feeding hungry children to fuel their bodies, I am promoting lifelong healthy eating habits which fuel their education and futures.

As we begin to gear up for the new academic year, I'd like to discuss our initiatives within the school lunch program which include providing optimum nutrition and safety for our students. As the CDC suggests parents pack lunches, I'd like to bring light of the benefits of participating in the school lunch program. While following the National School Lunch Program standards, research has demonstrated school lunches are typically more nutritious than packed lunches. Meals from home are shown to contain higher calories, sodium, saturated fat, and sugar. In addition to containing less protein, dietary fiber, iron, vitamin A and calcium, and did not meet National School Lunch Program standards. School lunches emphasize components like whole grains, lean proteins, fruits and vegetables creating a nutritionally sound meal. Because of these components, children who participate in the school lunch program were proven to demonstrate a decreased prevalence of nutrient inadequacies, improved learning, and overall health.

Safety against Covid-19 is amongst top priority, but we must also keep in mind food safety in regard to foodborne illnesses. Food poisoning imposes an increased risk in packed lunches due to improper temperature holding of temperature sensitive food items. Within our kitchen, there are multiple measures taken to ensure food safety. Our staff is trained and certified in food safety and participate in inspections by the health department, along with monitoring food temperatures and following proper sanitation protocols. This is significant in limiting foodborne illness and providing students with safe meals. Additionally, packaging of meals acts as a physical barrier against covid-19 and other possible cross contaminations.

I am beyond excited to be a part of the team and look forward to the upcoming school year.

Melanie Romano MS, RDN, LDN